Brand new translation, same old story? The perpetuation of female and racial stereotypes in (re)translation

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BRAND NEW TRANSLATION, SAME OLD STORY?

THE PERPETUATION OF FEMALE AND RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN (RE)TRANSLATION

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 European travels: how characters in novels may undergo a make-over in translation

The best ideas come when you least expect them. Twenty-odd years ago, having planned a holiday in Turkey, I decided to buy a discount copy of the latest Orhan Pamuk in English. Maybe a novel entitled *Snow* was not the most obvious candidate for a trip to a seaside resort, and it felt a little strange as a native speaker of Dutch to bring an English translation of a Turkish book instead of a translation in my own language. Little did I expect that my peculiar choice of holiday reading would turn out to sow a tiny seed for what would become this PhD research two decades later: a quartet of case studies into the impact of translation choices. Unbeknownst to me, my travel companion had purchased the exact same novel, but in its Dutch translation: *Sneeuw*. Both the English and the Dutch title are a direct, literal translation of the original Turkish title *Kar*. I started to read on the plane and was simultaneously transported to the sunny Turkish coast and the snowy landscape of Kars, a town near the Armenian border.

Ka, the story's protagonist, is a poet who has recently returned to his former home town Kars after years of exile in Frankfurt. He finds himself amidst great political upheaval: the murder of the town's mayor, a "suicide epidemic" among teenage girls, a nationalist coup against Islamist politicians. Pamuk, who wrote *Kar* around the time of the electoral victory of Erdoğan's AKP, recounts the grave subject matter of the various sociopolitical struggles in the region with a great deal of irony. Imagine my surprise, however, when halfway through the novel his narrator is no longer merely ironic, but instead displays an almost cheeky sense of humour. How come the overriding sense of melancholy and bleakness that that had gripped me until then was suddenly vying with an irreverent compulsion to laugh? Considering the grave situation and terrible events unfolding in Kars, it seemed odd to suddenly experience an impulse to frequently smile or even snigger out loud? Had *Kar* turned into a parody of Turkish society on page 201? Or could it have something to do with the fact that – on a whim – I had swapped the English translation of *Kar* for the Dutch one? If this was indeed the case, surely this change was not a result of Dutch being my native language? Obviously, I decided to put this to the test, and on the first page I compared I noticed several remarkable differences, of which the omission of a complete phrase presented below is just one example. The first version is a sentence taken from the 2004 translation by

Maureen Freely, the second version a rendering in English (my translation) of the 2003 Dutch translation by Margreet Dorleijn and Hanneke van der Heijden:

> 'Three gunshots sounded first over the radio frequency and then echoed outside the windows, albeit muffled by the snowy plain.'
>
> 'Three gunshots sounded through the walkie-talkie. A few seconds later the shots rang out once more, muffled by the snowy plain and Ka felt compelled to conclude that the pops sounded more beautiful when amplified by the walkie-talkie.'[1]

Not only had the incongruity of violence and beauty been erased in the English translation (assuming it was present in the original); with it, the opportunity had disappeared for a reader to quietly chuckle at the absurdity and flippancy of Ka's comment. For what kind of man thinks about the "beauty" of the sound of gunshots in the middle of political mayhem and social unrest? Although I did not have access to the Turkish original, and could therefore impossibly comment on the "quality" or "faithfulness" (however these terms are defined) of the respective translations, the numerous and considerable differences between them that I found on just a few pages sparked my interest: I started to wonder about the effect that translations may have on the way a character is portrayed or an idea is conveyed, rather than just on the aesthetics or understandability of a text. And while I was fully aware of the fact that I was reading a translation (or in fact two), my lack of command of the Turkish language meant that I would be unlikely to know what the degree of change involved in either.

It took almost a decade before I repeated the experiment, this time around with an English original and two Dutch translations. This meant that a difference in translational culture, if any, would be temporal rather than geographical. It also meant that I was sufficiently competent in both languages to make a comparison between the source text on the one hand, and the respective target texts on the other. The experiment was one I conducted out of curiosity about the way in which one of my former literary translation teachers at the *Vertalersvakschool* would have tackled a novel from almost a century ago that I remembered to be full

[1] The Dutch translation reads: 'Er klonken drie schoten over de portofoon. Een paar seconden later klonken de schoten opnieuw, gedempt door de besneeuwde vlakte en Ka moest concluderen dat het geknal mooier klonk als het door de portofoon versterkt werd.'

of male and female stereotypes. The differences between the 1947 and 2011 Dutch translations of D.H. Lawrence's 1920 novel *Women in Love* might have been somewhat less obvious than those in the English and Dutch translation of Pamuk's *Kar* (there were no instances of complete phrases being omitted in translation, for example) but they were no way less astonishing – perhaps even more so.

D.H. Lawrence, hardly a paragon of feminism (especially by today's standards), initially seems to portray his two female protagonists as modern and liberated women, although this "emancipated" image is rather flawed: female stereotypes still abound in this novel, and Lawrence makes his female characters submit to male dominance as the story progresses. Even so, the two sisters – a teacher and an artist – are presented to the reader on the first page as intelligent young women with a mind of their own. The image of emancipated young women, however, is altered to such a degree by the 1947 translator that there is little left of this impression – even before Lawrence himself wades in to put his female characters "in their place" in the original. Rather than 'sat.. talking', working on a 'piece of embroidery', and being 'taken aback' (Lawrence 1920, p. 5), the Dutch translator describes the women as 'chattering' ['*zaten… te babbelen*'], employs a diminutive form '*borduurwerkje*' (used to indicate that something is small, thus suggesting than they are engaged in a trivial activity), and turns a sense of surprise and shock into looking '*beteuterd*' [glum], a word in Dutch that one would say of a child rather than of an adult. These are just three of the instances that occur in the first ten sentences of *Liefde en Vrouwen* in which De Jonge, the 1947 Dutch translator reduces the women to girls who are not to be taken too seriously. In doing so, De Jong manages to make the text 'even more sexist than it already is', as one of my MA students remarked. The 2011 Dutch retranslation[2] by De Lange retains the characterization cues of the original: '*zaten… te praten*' and '*borduursel*' and '*verbouwereerd*'.

The above observations are just a small sample from a single novel, of course. Nevertheless, they beg several questions, one of which is: how large is the impact of a translator's choices on characterization? What are the implications of these choices on the perception of the reader? Even if it turns out that the impact of the translation choices is considerable, the sceptical response could be: does it really

[2] The definition of the term "retranslation" as used here is the one described in the *Handbook of Translation Studies*: "Retranslation (as a product) denotes a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language" (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010, p. 294).

matter if readers of a translation are presented with a text that differs from the original to a degree when it comes to literary works? The answer arrived at through the present research would be a resounding 'Yes'. When the differences in the way that female characters are portrayed in translation pave the way to enhancing negative stereotypes, it matters a great deal. The same applies to racial stereotypes being amplified in translation. Of course, sexism and racism are vastly different in many respects. Nevertheless, these two types of discrimination have something in common in that they both involve bias and stereotyping, and that a distinction can often be made between overt and covert discrimination and between conscious and unconscious bias. This thesis aims to address covert sexism and racism in the (re)translations of literary classics as a result of unconscious biases on the part of the translators, which in turn may result in the perpetuation of gender and racial prejudices in the readers of their translations.

1.2 Research gap and aim of the thesis

Up until fairly recently, retranslation was an under-researched area in Translation Studies (Deane Cox, 2014; Van Poucke, 2017). The term "retranslation" can refer to "indirect" translation, meaning the translation of a translation (Gambier, 1994), or to a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010), as well as to the process of producing such translations. The object of study in this thesis comprises retranslations in the sense of second translations, in accordance with Koskinen and Paloposki definition of "retranslation".

While over the last decade translation scholars have published a great deal on the topic of retranslation, studies have largely focused on the motives for and contexts of the commissioning of retranslations (Vanderschelden 2000, Collombat 2004, Tahir Gürçağlar 2019, Saeedi 2020), and the linguistic or cultural reasons behind individual translation choices (Van Poucke, 2017). Serious efforts are made by scholars to bring together the various strands that form the complex web of issues related to retranslations, e.g. the studies conducted into the relation between retranslation and reception (Tahir Gürçağlar, 2020; Cadera & Walsh, 2022). Much of this more recent research centres around 'the relationship between the appearance of new translations and historical, social or cultural changes' (Cadera & Walsh, 2022), and investigates the way in which 'retranslations are

a part of social change and shifting (self)images of source and target cultures' (Tahir Gürçağlar, 2020). These studies provide extremely valuable insights. Yet there are many facets of the interface between retranslation and reception still to be explored. Alvstad and Assis Rosa, for instance, have commented on the surprising lack of research that combines the topics of retranslation and voice (which includes subjective translation choices), expressing the widely-shared belief that 'the multiple retranslations of a source text into the same target language constitute a privileged corpus to help uncover both broad contextual motivations… and also help analyse both textual and contextual voices' (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015). Many scholars (e.g. Alvstad & Rosa, 2015; Hewson, 1995, Greenall et all, 2019; Monti, 2024) agree on the fact that studying retranslations can provide valuable insights into 'the traces that the translator leaves in their text' (Skibińska, 2010, translation mine).

Starting from the premise that retranslation research indeed 'helps reveal clues about the subjectivity of the translators' (Widman, 2019), this thesis' goal is to identify and analyze the translation decisions that can be attributed to the translator, i.e. the "translator's voice"[3]. This thesis posits that the combined topics of retranslations and the translator's voice have yet to receive the attention it deserves. In particular, the potential impact of subjective and individual translation choices on the average reader has been under-researched. Some scholars do mention the effects of translation choices, such as Kelly in her study on the ideological implications on 'stereotypes existing in the target culture regarding the source culture' (Kelly, 1998); nevertheless, comprehensive studies into the impact of translation choices, especially on the average reader, have been few and far between (Hickey 2003, Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015). The majority of research so far has been limited to "professional" readers (i.e. translation and literary scholars and critics), rather than "lay" readers or "real" readers, as they are often referred to (Assis Rosa 2006). Only a few years ago, Chan argued that 'critical evaluation of translated works remains only one mode of reading' (Chan 2016). Specifically (as far as I am aware), no extensive research has been done regarding the effects of translation choices on characterization or negative female and racial stereotyping, let alone into those effects on lay readers. All of the above certainly applies to (re) translations into Dutch.

[3] The concept of "voice" will be further discussed in section 1.4 of this chapter.

This thesis aims to fill the research gaps mentioned above – the lack of retranslation research into the potential impact of the translator's voice, in particular on negative stereotypes, and the lack of reception studies involving "real" readers – by taking a twofold approach: it will address the lack of studies on the consequences or effects of (re)translations noted by translation scholars (Alvstad and Assis Rosa 2015), while at the same time responding to the recent appeal to conduct more reception research (Cadera and Walsh 2017, Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018, Tahir Gürçağlar 2020, Cadera and Walsh 2022), 'since it seems to entail a different reception than "regular" translations.' (Monti 2024).

This thesis' main aim is to research the impact of translation decisions on gender and racial stereotyping. Its primary focus, therefore, is not on the reasons behind the translators' decisions, nor on the background of the translators or on the socio-historical context of the originals, translations and retranslations. Having said this, the fourth case study (chapter 5) does include a hypothesis that relates to the rationale behind the translation approach adopted in the retranslation. However, as is the case for the other studies, the main goal of this chapter, too, is to highlight the *effect* of the translation choices on the text and the potential *impact* on the reader of the translation in terms of negative stereotyping. Nevertheless, several extratextual aspects will be touched on briefly in section 1.3 of this introductory chapter, and in more detail in the following chapters, where relevant and insofar as the scope of the present research allows.

This thesis explores the potential ideological implications of translation choices – which in themselves are not necessarily ideological and not even necessarily conscious – and the way they may affect readers' perceptions. It focuses on the way women and Black Americans are portrayed in literary works (fiction and non-fiction) and in the (re)translations of these works, comparing the linguistic cues related to women or Black Americans in the source text (the original) to their translation in the target texts (the translation and the retranslation). The research concentrates on the role of the translators, and the question whether or not their translations show signs of increased gender or race stereotyping. It will also attempt to shed light on the extent to which actual readers' ideas about gender and race may be influenced as a result of translation choices. As pointed out above, this thesis in no way wishes to suggest that sexism and racism can be equated. Nor does it aim to be intersectional in its approach. There is, however, a common denominator that connects the following four chapters: negative stereotyping.

The claim made in these chapters is that the Dutch translations enhance negative stereotypes already present in the original, or even add negative stereotypes that were not present in the original. This thesis posits that the gender and racial prejudices displayed in the Dutch (re)translations are enhanced or brought about by decisions on the part of the translators, contending that these decisions may result from unconscious bias rather than being ideological.

In addition to contributing to the various areas of Translation Studies mentioned above, my aspiration is to bring greater attention to the power that translators have. I hope to highlight the importance of a general awareness of this power, and of the impact translators' own – unconscious – biases may have on characterization in fiction and the portrayal of groups in society, and thus potentially on the way that readers perceive women and people of colour[4], thus perpetuating female and racial stereotypes. Of course, each individual owes it to themselves and their fellow human beings to try and use their own moral compass. As to translational agents, the editors of a special issue for a Translation Studies journal on voice and ethics point out the ethic accountability of all participants engaged in translation (Greenall et all 2017). Though not involved in the translation and publication of texts, readers have a responsibility, too: to reflect on what they read, and to be aware and critical of their own interpretation of a text. Whatever the text type or genre, translators have a special responsibility. As literary translator and academic Gregory Rabassa once aptly put it: "A translator is essentially a reader and we all read differently, except that a translator's reading remains in unchanging print." (Rabassa 2005).

The following chapters comprise four case studies comparing two American canonical works and their Dutch initial translations and retranslations: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin. I have chosen these American classics – which differ widely in terms of genre, style, readership and date of publication – for several reasons. First, both source texts have been translated into Dutch more than once. The fact that *The Great*

[4] I am using the term "people of colour" here as a collective term, and for want of a better one, despite valid concerns and criticisms that it may be too broad (erasing differences among specific groups). The preference for "people of colo(u)r" (both with and without capitals) when used to refer to different groups of historically marginalized people (at the moment of writing, at least) is discussed by scholars working in various academic disciplines such as Vidal-Ortiz in the Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Society. Throughout this thesis I will be using 'Black person', 'Black people' or 'Black American', depending on the context.

Gatsby and *The Fire Next Time* have been translated into Dutch twice will allow me to better identify the discursive presence of the individual translators. Second, they are still frequently read in both the source and target language – something that their retranslations and new editions attest to. Third, the originals include important identity markers (gender and race, respectively) that often involve stereotyping: *The Great Gatsby* contains female stereotypes as it deals with "The New Woman", a term that refers to women in the US in the nineteen twenties who challenged gender norms in the US (Fryer 1989), while *The Fire Next Time* is regarded as one of the most eloquent works of literary non-fiction to address negative white-on-black stereotypes in the US in the nineteen sixties. Given the interval between the publication of the first and second Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Fire Next Time* (four and six decades, respectively), the fact that Dutch society has evolved might make for an interesting glimpse into changes – if any – in the way female characters and Black Americans are portrayed in translation. A concise justification of the primary materials will be provided in section 1.6 below.

I am well aware that a handful of case studies on subjective choices made by merely four individual translators are by no means representative of general sentiments and attitudes in society as a whole. I am also aware that the observations made and conclusions drawn are those of a single person, and that I undoubtedly have my own unconscious biases. The studies conducted, however, will hopefully help to promote further insight into the workings of unconscious bias and its damaging effects on people. In addition to providing background on the source and target texts (section 1.3) and a discussion of ethics and translator subjectivity (section 1.4), this introductory chapter will briefly outline the issue of unconscious bias as well as the potential consequences of such bias on readers of translations (section 1.5), which pertain to the research gap this thesis aims to address (section 1.6).

1.3 Positioning the source and target texts

Even though this thesis focuses on the textual rather than the paratextual and contextual aspects of the retranslations of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Fire Next Time*, the following section will discuss the status of the source text and the target texts – a status evidenced by the fact that these texts apparently were deemed

worthy of being translated more than once. In addition to defining the two related terms "classic" and "canon", it will explain the importance and implications of these labels for the readers' expectations and perceptions as well as for the translators' decisions (section 1.3.1). After a short overview of the status and reception of the originals, the status of the original authors and the reception of the Dutch (re)translations (section 1.3.2), this section will provide some information on the Dutch translators (section 1.3.3). All three subsections aim to contribute to a more complete picture of the reception of the source texts and target texts. What these subsections explicitly do *not* aim to do is to provide the socio-historical setting of the originals or the socio-historical background of the translations and retranslations. Obviously, this contextual information is important, in particular where societal views regarding racism and sexism are concerned. However, this type of information has been included in the individual case studies in chapters 2 to 5, and the scope of this thesis does not allow for discussion of these issues in further detail. Moreover (as mentioned earlier), the focus of this thesis is expressly on the textual aspects of the source and target texts, that is, on the explicit and implicit linguistic cues used to portray the main female character in *The Great Gatsby* and Black Americans in *The Fire Next Time*. The decision to do so is the presumption that these cues will provide valuable clues regarding the effect of translation decisions, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

1.3.1 Great or greatest? Readers' expectations and perceptions

The reason why it is necessary to briefly touch upon the issue of status is that the stature and reputation of a literary work affects not just the decisions of publishers to commission its retranslation, but that these may also affect translator behaviour, and quite possibly readers' perceptions or expectations as well, as Ziemann's study into extratextual factors shaping preconceptions about retranslation confirms (Zieman, 2019). According to Berk Albachten and Tahir Gürçağlar, Ziemann's study shows 'how extratextual factors and contextual information overshadow textual factors and determine the perception/reception of the retranslations' (Berk Albachten and Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019). It can therefore be safely assumed that the bar for the quality of retranslations is set high from the start: lay readers expecting to read a great work of literature by a famous author expect the translation to provide them with a similar reading experience, while professional readers such

as book critics might be comparing the retranslation to a previous translation. Translators are aware of these expectations and may treat retranslations differently than first translations (Schroth, 2014). Monti dubs producing retranslations as a 'typically self-conscious activity' (Monti, 2024), and this self-consciousness will probably be intensified by the idea that the stakes are higher when translating a literary work that has a high status in both the source and target culture, being labelled "a classic" or as "part of the canon". In a personal interview, the translator of the Dutch retranslation of *The Great Gatsby*, Susan Janssen mentioned that she was very much aware that she was asked to translate "a classic" (Janssen 2020, personal interview).

So what exactly *is* "a classic"? The terms "canonical" and "classic" are frequently used interchangeably. Although the two are related and sometimes overlap, they do not denote the same. Over the years, numerous writers and literary critics (Calvino, 1991; Coetzee, 2001; Bloom, 1996, 2000) have tried to both define the term "classics" and to describe which works are worthy of being included in "the canon". A fair few have been criticized for their American/European-centred approach, for their narrow interpretation of "Western" and for their failure to acknowledge the value – literary or otherwise – of authors as a result of their identity, as Malik observes in his obituary of one of the most prominent and influential writers of what the literary canon entails:

It's true that we should not value a work simply because of the identity of the author and that too much literary judgment today is rooted in the politics of identity. But neither should we be blind to the fact that many black, female and non-western writers have long been disregarded, refused entry to the canon precisely because of their identity. It's not for literary reasons that the likes of Rabindranath Tagore, Lu Xun or Zora Neale Hurston are neglected but because social and political considerations already shape judgment. (Malik, 2019).

Whatever the purpose of establishing a set of literary works deemed to be of importance to readers, 'canonizing acts as a kind of display, a showcasing of works that is meant to enhance and potentially control their reception by magnifying their significance.' (Ross, 2019). Moreover, while canonicity may influence readers' perception of a literary work, it does not define the intrinsic value of that work (nor, for that matter, does it necessarily determine a work's popularity). Ross clarifies the distinction between the idea of a work being canonical and a work being called a classic in a refreshingly down-to-earth manner:

Hailing it as a classic commonly prefaces an account of its value, while calling it canonical may be no more than saying that others have already agreed on its value, whether we concur with this agreement or not. (Ross, 2019, p. 9).

Furthermore, whereas the criteria for inclusion in a literary canon are a matter that many disagree on (literary professionals and the general reader alike), there seems to be more of a consensus on the definition of "a classic", even if (perhaps seemingly paradoxically) such criteria may vary over time. Classics may be defined as works that were both groundbreaking at the time they were written and offer food for thought for present-day readers because they have a story to tell that speaks to something universal, because they challenge how you can see the world.

1.3.2 Status and reception of The Great Gatsby and The Fire Next Time

With Dutch translations constituting such a small market for booksellers – and retranslations thus being a relatively uncommon phenomenon – one might argue that when a decision is made to commission a Dutch retranslation of a literary work, it may truly be regarded as "a classic", even if being labelled as such does not necessarily guarantee a place in the Dutch canon.

The Great Gatsby's journey was one of extremes, from a lacklustre reception when the book first came out to being hailed as "The Great American Novel". During his lifetime, Scott Fitzgerald was better known for his short stories, which he sold to magazines, than for the novel that made him one of the most famous twentieth century authors after the Second World War. His posthumous glory was largely owed to Edmund Wilson, one of the most influential literary critics in the US at the time, who edited and published a collection of Scott Fitzgerald's essays in 1945, and thus rekindled the interest in his other work. Another major factor that played a part in its popularity is the fact that an "Armed Services Edition" of *The Great Gatsby* was sent to American soldiers during the Second World War. Given its present status, it is hard to believe that a novel of such fame and stature as *The Great Gatsby* had such a slow start.

The renewed interest in Scott Fitzgerald's novels in the US, which prompted plans for a Hollywood production of *The Great Gatsby* that eventually came to the screen in 1949, was no doubt a factor in the decision by the Amsterdam-based publishing company *Van Oorschot* to commission the first Dutch translation in

1948. The other factor that led to the decision to publish a translation into Dutch was likely to be the increase of interest in American literature in the Netherlands caused by the changed world order after the Second World War. So how did *De grote Gatsby* fare after its publication in 1948? According to an entry in the Digital Library of Dutch Literature (*DBNL*), it is likely that Scott Fitzgerald's novel did not turn out to be an instant hit with Dutch readers either, at least not commercially: publishing company *Van Oorschot* decided not to keep the file in the archives, and the second edition of the translation – not even published by them but by *Contact* – did not come out until 1968.

The motley crew of literary reviews following the 1948 publication ranges from a rather lukewarm reception in a contemporary daily newspaper, which describes *The Great Gatsby* as 'a clever novel, not world-class' and 'not more than an ordinary novel with a remarkable structure, and a very well told story' (*De Tijd* 1948, translation mine) to being hailed as 'great literature' by a Dutch literary magazine (*Ad Interim* 1948), and even a 'warning' concerning the perceived 'decadence' of the novel (*Nieuwsblad van het Zuiden* 1948, translations mine). And while the judgment of Dutch novelist, poet and literary critic Vestdijk can be called benign at best (Vestdijk, 1948), the heading in the book section of one of the largest Dutch daily newspapers suggests that in literary terms it is a resounding success: a year after its publication *De Telegraaf* commends Scott Fitzgerald's work as a magnificent novel and declares *De grote Gatsby* to be 'a surprise in the desert of translations' (*De Telegraaf* 1949, translation mine). The fact that Cornils' translation, despite its initial lack of commercial success, was reprinted a number of times over the decades that followed, and a flurry of reviews in the nineteen seventies[5] both show that *The Great Gatsby* was recognized in the Netherlands as an important novel – enough to warrant a retranslation. This retranslation, made by Susan Janssen and published by *Atlas Contact* (Imprint *L.J. Veen Klassiek*), came out in 1985. It was well received in the press, and a revised edition was commissioned in 1999 by *Atlas Contact* (Imprint *L.J. Veen Klassiek*). The retranslation is into its 15th edition (2025).

[5] These reviews may have been triggered by the launch of the Hollywood production featuring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow in 1974. Pictures of this film are printed on the cover (both front and back) of the fifth reprint of Cornils' 1948 translation that came out in the same year. The film is also mentioned on the cover flap, quoting Wim Verstappen, a Dutch film director and producer, television director, and screenwriter, who despite being full of praise for the film concludes his review for *Vrij Nederland* by saying that he prefers the novel itself. The 2013 Baz Luhrmann film appears on the book covers of later editions of the revised version of the retranslation.

The interval between the publication of the two Dutch translations (1948 and 1985, respectively, both called *De grote Gatsby*) may be seen as representing an exemplary reflection of the maxim that every generation needs a new translation, and might invite the question if a new retranslation is needed for contemporary readers. The answer to that question depends, of course, on the novel's status in the receiving language and culture and whether or not a publisher thinks a new translation will be commercially viable. Both aspects are inextricably linked to a broader socio-historical context: is the literary work relevant to contemporary readers? In other words, what counts as "a classic" is far more fluid than what the word itself seems to suggest.

As for *The Fire Next Time*, this work of literary non-fiction sparked Baldwin's fame both in the US and abroad simultaneously, as many scholars have noted (Leeming 1995, Verdickt 2022). Baldwin's rising repute as an imminent writer and intellectual probably accounted for the "hot" (i.e. immediate) translation of the two essays into Dutch. In fact, in 1963 no fewer than three translations of Baldwin's prose appeared in the Netherlands: *The Fire Next Time, Another Country* and *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, all published by the same publishing company (*A.W. Bruna Uitgevers*), two of which were retranslated, in 2018 (*The Fire Next Time*) and 2019 (*Go Tell it on the Mountain*) respectively, both by another publishing house (*Uitgeverij De Geus*), who also brought out a new Dutch translation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* in 2018.

The reception of *The Fire Next Time* in the US seems to have paved the way for the translation of Timmers' translations (*Niet door water maar door vuur* and *Een ander land*) in the Netherlands, and of other Dutch translations of earlier works by Baldwin in a very short span of time: a first Dutch translation of *Go tell it on the Mountain* appeared in 1963 and *Notes of a Native Son* in 1964, both more or less a decade after their publication in the US, and *The Amen Corner* was performed in The Hague in June 1965 (in English, by Black actors) – all of which may serve an indication of Baldwin being recognized in the Netherlands as a writer and thinker of note. A regional daily broadsheet writes about him as 'a talented black author' (*Leeuwarder Courant*, translation mine), and one of the reviews in a national quality newspaper explicitly refers to the fact that *The Fire Next Time* appeared in *The New Yorker* highlighting its reputation as a respected and leading current affairs and literary magazine. The latter Dutch daily newspaper encourages anyone interested in racial issues to read Baldwin's 'brilliant, erudite analysis' (*Trouw*, translation mine).

A similar wave of interest can be observed more recently: in just seven years, no fewer than five of Baldwin's works were retranslated. New Dutch translations were made of *The Fire Next Time* and *If Beale Street Could Talk* in 2018 (both by Harm Damsma), followed by a retranslation of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* in 2019 (by Reintje Ghoos and Jan Pieter van der Sterre). Dutch retranslations (by Eefje Bosch and Manik Sarkar) of *Notes of a Native Son* and *Giovanni's Room* were published in 2024. All five retranslations were issued by *De Geus*, a publishing house that makes a point of giving translators the credit they deserve by not just mentioning them on the imprint page, but on the title page and cover as well.

Although Damsma is mentioned on the back of the cover of *Niet door water maar door vuur* (the retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*), reviewers in the Dutch media comment on the relevance and the literary value of Baldwin's writing, but not on the translation as such. The same was the case for Timmers' earlier translation: no comments or observations are to be found in any of the reviews archived in *Delpher*, the digital collection of newspapers, magazines and books management by the National Library of the Netherlands. The frequent absence of any discussion or more than a few cursory comments on the quality of a translation might be typical not just of literary reviews, at least in the Netherlands.[6] In a recent essay on the question of the need to recognize the art of translators without them necessarily being "visible" in the translated work, Translation Studies scholar Francis Mus discusses how most of the time translators remain fairly anonymous. The fact that they are more or less confined to the background is, however, not only a result of being ignored by reviewers failing to discuss their role, (the quality of) their work or even mentioning their name, nor just by publishers who do not give them a platform for their views in a foreword or afterword. Even when translators are given the opportunity to do so, it appears that they seldom take the chance to explain their interpretation of the original, the translation issues arising from differences in the source and target languages and cultures, and their translation decisions. Instead, they often 'cloak themselves in the guise of readers, critics, exegetist, literature specialists or spokespersons of the original author, before finally bringing up the actual translation, not seldom in the form of a "justification"' (Mus, 2024). This observation is largely confirmed by the translations and retranslations researched in the following chapters. The only

[6] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to comment on the phenomenon in other countries.

translation that comes with an afterword by the translator is the 2018 retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*, but Damsma's afterword indeed serves as a justification – and a very particular one at that: Damsma wrote his afterword to explain the difference in opinion between himself and the publisher on the use of the Dutch N-word in the retranslation. Since the nature of the dispute is inextricably linked to the topic of the close-reading study included in this research, it will be elaborated on in chapter 4. In the following section, I will include the scant information available regarding the four translators whose work features in this thesis: Cornils, Janssen, Timmers and Damsma.

1.3.3 The invisible ones

One of the names that appears on the copyright page of the first Dutch translation of *The Great Gatsby* is "L. Cornils". The absence of the translator's first name – together with the lack of archival information on the translation itself – makes the identity of this translator hard to trace.[7] Cornils' "invisibility"[8] may be telling both about the position of translators in the Netherlands in general and the initial reception of the 1948 translation of *The Great Gatsby*. None of the newspaper reviews mentions a first name, and only one of the critics comments on the translator's ability to convey the 'playful, unexpected style' (*De Telegraaf* 1948, translation mine). It is only through a *DBNL* entry on Albert Helman, a Dutch-Surinamese author, journalist, translator, composer, resistance fighter and politician, that the translator's identity comes to light: Lily Cornils, or Elise Wilhelmine Cornils (1907-1962), a German sculptress who naturalized as a Dutch citizen when she and Helman married in 1939 (Van Kempen 2002). Cornils met Helman (a pseudonym for Lou Lichtveld) in Spain in 1932, where she had moved feeling she could no longer stay in Hamburg with nazi-sympathizing father, and where Helman had moved with his first spouse in order to fight against Franco's fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Helman was a cosmopolitan and Renaissance man, who had many contacts with artists, writers and publishers (Leuwsha 2017).

[7] No-one at the two publishing companies who published Cornils' translation (*Van Oorschot* and *Contact* respectively) knew anything about Cornils – not even her first name. (Personal correspondence with the publishers and with Herbert Binneweg, the cover designer for the 4th edition published by *Contact* in 1974).

[8] It should be noted that here I use the term "invisibility" to refer to the varying degrees of anonymity of literary translators, about whose work nothing or very little is mentioned in media outlets. The term "invisibility" as used in the discipline of Translation Studies will be discussed in section 1.4 below.

It may well be through these contacts that Cornils was asked to translate *The Great Gatsby*, although this remains pure conjecture, as no paratextual information whatsoever is to be found regarding Cornils' translation – not even in the letters she wrote to Nico Donkersloot (a Dutch poet, writer, translator and politician), which are kept in the archives of the Museum of Literature in The Hague and cover a number of years before and during the Second World War. There is a remarkable aspect to the correspondence (in that Cornils writes in German, whereas Donkersloot's replies are in Dutch), but no information can be gleaned that relates to translation. Was her translation of *The Great Gatsby* a one-off or did Cornils translate other texts (into Dutch or into German)? There is simply no telling either way.

The 1985 Dutch retranslation of *The Great Gatsby* was made by Susan Janssen. Janssen's credentials as a translator are much more transparent than those of her predecessor. In addition to her work as an archivist at the Amsterdam broadcasting company AT5 and several publications in literary magazines, she translated novels, memoirs and short stories – primarily by American authors. The novelists and poets whose work she translated in the nineteen seventies and eighties include Charles Bukowski, Diane Di Prima, William Levy (Janssen's late husband), Somerset Maugham, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Joseph Mitchell. When she was asked to translate *The Great Gatsby*, she accepted on the condition that the publisher would allow her to research Scott Fitzgerald's life and writings. The retranslation had many reprints and a new edition was commissioned in 1995, both facts being evidence of its positive reception. And although the fact that in the Netherlands the status of translators is such that their work often remains unacknowledged in reviews, a four-star appraisal from a large literary blog (*Alles over boeken en schrijvers*) and a ringing endorsement from the largest readers' platform in the Netherlands and Flanders says a great deal about the reception of Janssen's retranslation: 'By the way, kudos to the translator, Susan Janssen, who does real justice to the atmosphere of the story and its tone of voice throughout the translation' (*Hebban*, translation mine).

The identity of the translator who made the first Dutch translation of *The Fire Next Time* is easy to find as well: Oscar Timmers, a writer (publishing under the pseudonym J. Ritzerfeld), a translator of English and German prose, and an editor for *Bezige Bij* publishers. However, precious little can be found regarding Timmers' work as a translator, even though he was just as prolific in this profession as he was

as an author in his own right. Besides *The Fire Next Time* and *Another Country*, he translated no fewer than seven other literary works in 1963 alone. Timmers translated three quarters of the literary oeuvre by Jerzy Kosinski, which, judging from an interview with that author, was not merely down to a decision by his publisher. Timmers was present at an interview with Kosinski in Amsterdam after the presentation of the Dutch edition of his latest novel at the author's explicit request. The interviewer, Ischa Meijer was a Dutch journalist who was to become well-known for his in-depth interviews, awarded Timmers with the following accolade: 'he is the sublime translator of *Steps*, *Being There* and *The Devil Tree*' (Meijer, 1973, translation mine) – high praise indeed from Meijer, who was both famous and feared as an interviewer. And how many translators receive laurels for their work like these: 'To Oscar Timmers, who knows how language undresses us all, the Author dedicates the Dutch edition of this novel'? (Kosinski, quoted in Meijer, 1973).

While Damsma is surely as well-respected a translator as Timmers was in his day, his 2018 Dutch retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* caused a huge controversy (albeit only in a small circle) regarding Damsma's decision to use the N-word in his translation. Damsa felt compelled to write an afterword – a rare phenomenon in the Netherlands, as already mentioned earlier. (Translator's forewords and translator's notes, frequently included in retranslation in other languages, are few and far between in Dutch as well.) Damsma wrote his afterword as a justification for his decision to use the N-word and the Dutch word for "white person" that is gradually becoming outdated, following the publisher's decision to replace the disrespectful and objectionable words with alternatives that are broadly regarded as non-offensive and which are increasingly used in contemporary Dutch. In his afterword, Damsma explained why – even though he respected the publisher's considerations – he regretted that the two offending words had been replaced. Since this issue will be discussed extensively in chapter 4, the only two matters to be pointed out in this introductory section on the translator are the fact that, first of all, an afterword only appears in *Niet door water maar door vuur* (and not in the retranslation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* by the same translator, which came out in the same year) and that secondly, views diverge on the rights or wrongs of wishing to use two contentious words in *Niet door water maar door vuur*. The retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*, meanwhile, has already been reprinted several times over the past few years and has received positive reviews, notwithstanding the difference of opinion between translator and publisher, and whatever other people's views on the matter. As for the

latter, readers (critics and "lay" readers alike) were divided into two camps, some taking the side of the translator, some that of the publisher. The rationale put forward by the publisher, in that they aimed 'to do justice to the author in the language used in contemporary Dutch society, taking the principle of inclusiveness as a point of departure'[9] and the criticism Damsma received from a number of "professional" and "lay" readers, appears to tally with the observation that '… the passage of time may not necessarily "age" translations… but transforms audiences and producers, creating new segments of readers and new translational needs' (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019). The debate regarding the use of the N-word in the Dutch retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* touches on the issues of ideology, "voice" and ethics in translation, notions that will be outlined in the following section (1.4) and which also apply to the other translations discussed in this thesis.

1.4 Ideology, ethics and voice in translation

The notion that readers of literary works may well be unaware of the influence of translators and publishers on the texts they read is one that has been widely discussed in the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies (Lefevere, 1992; Hermans, 1996; Venuti, 1995). The idea that the translator of a text more often than not remains "invisible" to the reader of a translation is perhaps even one of the most cliched adages in Translation Studies. The notion of the "invisibility of the translator" was popularized by Venuti, who argues that translators – at least in dominant cultures – tend to adopt a so-called "domesticating" translation strategy, erasing 'linguistic and stylistic peculiarities' of source texts in order to generate idiomatic, 'readable' translations that appear to reflect the original, resulting in 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values' (Venuti, 1995/2018). Venuti argues that these practices are the result of asymmetrical power relations and therefore favours "foreignizing" translations that allow their readers to be aware of the cultural and linguistic differences between a translation and its original.[10] His call to resist cultural hegemony and ethnocentricity clearly point to his view of translation as an ideological instrument.

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[9] James Baldwin, *Niet door water maar door vuur*, trans. H. Damsma (Amsterdam: De Geus, 2018), credits page (my translation).

[10] Although an influential voice in Translation Studies, Venuti has received a fair deal of criticism. While some have pointed out a lack of clear definitions, others have criticized his claim that a foreignizing approach is always the preferred approach (Gentzler and Tymoczko, 2002; Myskja, 2013).

Venuti's views on power relations, ethics and ideology in translation as presented in his influential work *The Translator's Invisibility* were part of the broader debate in the discipline of Translation Studies known as the "Cultural Turn". Representatives of the Cultural Turn emphasized the importance of placing translation in a wider context and of considering texts and translators in their socio-cultural environment. This development in Translation Studies came in the wake of research by representatives of the so-called Manipulation School, which owed its name to their assertion that 'from the point of view of the target literature all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose' (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). Many of the translation scholars associated with the Manipulation School (Bassnett, van den Broeck, Hermans, Tymoczko amongst others) were also proponents of the Cultural Turn. These translation scholars 'began to explore issues of power and translation' (Gentzler and Tymoczko, 2002, p. xiii), primarily in literary translation. They argued that 'translation is a rewriting of an original text' (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2004, p. vii) and that 'all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way', whereby it should be noted that contrary to the usual connotations of the concept "manipulation" in the context of translation as a form of rewriting is expressly defined as potentially positive as well. In other words, "manipulation" is not necessarily an underhanded, objectionable act, resulting in the corruption and distortion of the source text brought about by deliberately misrendering its meaning and form, but simply a translation practice creating a representation of a source text that suits – as Hermans would describe it – 'a certain purpose'. This 'purpose' might simply involve the adoption of a translation strategy that caters to a particular target readership without ideology[11] necessarily playing a role. Nevertheless, translation may also be an instrument used to promote a particular world view through patronage (Lefevere, 2000). According to Gentzler and Tymoczko, the scholars of the Manipulation School 'demonstrated that translations were… one of the primary literary tools that larger social institutions – educational systems, arts councils, publishing firms, and even governments – had at their disposal to "manipulate" a given society in order to "construct" the kind of "culture" desired' (Gentzler and Tymoczko 2002, p. xiii).

[11] Lefevere defines ideology as "the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach text" (qtd. from Hermans, 2004, p. 127).

There is unquestionably a great deal of truth to the assertions that translation is a form of rewriting and that power dynamics play a role in translation. Bassnett and Lefevere's claim that 'rewriting is manipulation *undertaken in the service of power*' (Bassnett and Lefevere, 2004, p. vii, italics mine), however, ought perhaps not be accepted lock, stock and barrel, as this maxim suggests that those involved in translation are by definition ideologically motivated. Not only that, it implies intentionality as well. The fact that social institutions are in a position to use translations 'for their own purposes pertaining to ideology and cultural power' (Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002) does not mean that they do so automatically. Certainly, the institutions mentioned by Gentzler and Tymoczko may play a role in what gets published and how, and their influence also extends to literary translations, in particular to retranslations of literary works: commissioning and publishing a second or later translation of the same source text constitutes a deliberate choice to produce a "rewriting", as can be concluded from the concise overview of motives for retranslation in the *Encyclopedia of Translation & Interpreting* (Monti, 2024). In her seminal article "The 21st Century: The Age of Retranslation", Collombat, too, explicitly mentions ideology as a factor that plays a role in the decisions to retranslate literary works, identifying changes in socio-political context as 'catalysers of ageing of a translation' (Collombat, 2004)[12]. According to Deane-Cox, 'Venuti frames retranslation as a purposeful act of differentiation which seeks to (re)inscribe particular cultural, religious, economic and so on values into a selected work' (Deane-Cox, 2014, p. 13). Naturally, translators, too, are part of this practice of "rewriting". This thesis does not deny the importance of ideology, nor does it dispute the influence of society on translators, the circumstances and conditions in which they work, and their own socio-cultural background. After all, 'translation is not made in a vacuum' (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001, p. 14). Rather, it chooses to focus on what has become known as the translator's "voice", otherwise known as the "translator's discursive presence".

The term "voice" has been used in various ways within the discipline of Translation Studies (Venuti 1995, Schiavi 1996, Hermans 1996). In their seminal article 'Voice in Retranslation', Alvstad and Assis Rosa provide a clear and concise explanation of the different "voices" involved in translation:

[12] Unsurprisingly, the studies by Benhamou and Lavoie that Collombat quotes to illustrate her point are on retranslations of literary classics featuring Black main characters.

> Within Translation Studies it is relevant to distinguish between two main types of voice: textual voices and contextual voices. Textual voices are part of the product (narrative voice, the voices of characters and the translator's textually manifested voice), whereas contextual voices are related to the sociological translation process and hence to the multiple agents that produce, promote and write about translations. The contextual voices too are generally textually expressed, but they are labelled 'contextual' as they arise in the context around the translated text, and not as part of the translated text in its strictest sense. (Alvstad & Assis Rosa 2015)

This research focuses on what Alvstad & Assis Rosa refer to as 'the translator's textually manifested voice' (ibid.) and on the perception of readers, in particular the (re)translations themselves, although paratextual information and contextual voices included where relevant and available. It starts from the basic premise that translations are just as much shaped by the subjectivity of the translators – perhaps even more so – than by extratextual causes, and that "[a]ll literary translation in an act of interpretation which crystallizes a series of (un)conscious (mis)readings of a given source text" (Deane-Cox, 2014, p. 18). The translator's subjectivity is reflected in their translation choices, some of which – but certainly not all – will be conscious decisions. This thesis aims to show that a translator's subjectivity is not always a matter of intentionality, but that translation choices are frequently a result of unconscious bias. Whether conscious or unconscious, the translator's voice is a powerful one, especially given what Alvstad calls the 'translation pact', that is 'a rhetorical construction through which readers are invited to read translated texts as if they were the originals' (Alvstad 2014). In that sense, it could be argued that the translator is "invisible" no matter what their translation strategy. What is more, this "pact" implies a kind of "willing suspension of disbelief" on the part of the readers, encouraging them to rely on the translator to convey the original author's intention, or as Jansen puts it: 'The pact invites readers to "trust" the translation, promising that the translator has not tampered with the original and that the translation indeed "provides a true account of the foreign text"' (Jansen, 2019, quoting Alvstad, 2014, p. 275). Over the years, literary translators have started to become more assertive, appealing to publishers that they be mentioned on the cover of the translation. Literary translators not only wish to be given credit for what they do, some of them also question the desirability of the translation

pact, arguing that the practice is 'disrespectful not only to us, but to readers as well' (Croft, 2021) and that 'it doesn't hold us accountable for our choices'. Such views underline that the various forms of the translator's invisibility cannot be seen as separate from the translator's ethical responsibility and from the perception of readers.

As for the "voice" in retranslations: new translations are pre-eminently useful for determining the influence of translators' subjectivities, simply because they allow for a comparison of individual and unique translation choices with earlier translations – choices that are part of 'the translator's textually manifested voice' (Alvstad and Assis Rosa, 2015). According to Monti

> Retranslation… is the perfect place for the emergence and analysis of translators' subjectivity (Skibińska, 1994; Alvstad & Rosa, 2015). Retranslations are more rarely invisible, and their added visibility – as opposed to most "regular" translations – stems from their own status: doing something anew (against common sense) ends up drawing attention to the normally neglected aspect of translation. (Monti, 2024)

Conducting individual case studies of retranslations and applying the method of careful and scrutinous interpretation of texts, enables one to distinguish the "voice" of the translator, to determine to what degree their choices are subjective and hence to uncover the potential impact of these translation choices. Each of the studies included in this thesis aims to highlight the subjectivities of the Dutch translators likely to appertain to unconscious bias on their part and potentially have a bearing on gender or racial stereotyping, influencing their translation choices and consequently impacting reader perceptions.

1.5 Bias in translation

None of us are free of biases, whether unconscious or not, in particular when it comes to gender, race or class. This section will discuss the importance of acknowledging unconscious bias and the implications of translation choices resulting from such bias, tackling key notions related to sexism and racism. This section will also provide an overview of research conducted into sexism and racism in various academic disciplines – including Translation Studies – to point out an

under-researched topic in Translation Studies. The discussion of these issues will be brief for two reasons. First of all, the scope and focus of this thesis does not allow for a more extensive discussion. Secondly, the aspects of these issues that are the most salient to the individual studies will be explored in those studies themselves. What follows below, therefore, will thus be a very concise overview[13].

1.5.1 Covert sexism and covert racism

The myth that gender and racial equality has been achieved has long been debunked. While outright sexism or racism may be less prevalent (at least in some parts of the world) in the twenty-first century, more subtle forms that are equally harmful have taken their place. These more "subtle" (that is, less blatantly obvious) forms of gender discrimination and racism are often rooted in unconscious biases, and are frequently unintentional. As a result, they are harder to identify (and therefore harder to address), which is why these forms of gender discrimination and racism are labelled "covert". (De Coninck et al., 2024; Lennartz, Proost, & Brebels, 2019; Sue & Spanierman, 2020; Williams, 2020)

Remarks, actions and everyday realities involving insults and indignities that may be less plain or evident to persons not personally affected by them, are referred to as "microaggressions". This term, coined by psychiatrist, Harvard professor and Sesame Street consultant Chester Pierce in the nineteen seventies gained traction when psychologist and diversity training specialist Derald Wing Sue defined this phenomenon as 'brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership' (Sue et al. 2007). Covert manifestations of sexism and racism may be less obvious and more difficult to detect; nevertheless, they are offensive, demeaning and harmful to those at whom such slights are directed, and who are confronted with non-inclusive behaviour on an everyday basis.

Although until recently most research into microaggressions has focused primarily on (covert) racism, there has been an increase into research on microaggressions experienced by other oppressed groups, including women (Nadal, 2008). A definition of the term, an explanation of the mechanics and

[13] For the same reasons, this overview does not include research into broader issues of sexism, which would include research into sexism regarding non-binary and trans persons. The same applies to the reason for not taking an intersectional approach.

impact of microaggressions (whomever they affect), with a concise list of seminal studies is provided by Johnson and Johnson. They explicitly mention the impact of microaggressions on negative stereotypes.

Across the board, contemporary scholars contend that microaggressions are now commonly understood as subtle affronts, directed towards a person or a group of people, as a way of putting them down – regardless of intent (or the lack thereof) (Sue et al., 2009; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Though widely accepted as pejorative, microaggressions remain distinct in their relation to more overt, deliberate acts of bigotry, such as the use of racial epithets. That is, those who micro-aggress often lack ill-intent and, thusly, are unaware of the harm they are inflicting (Berk, 2017; Campbell & Manning, 2014; Dovidio, Gaetner, Kawkami, & Hodson, 2002; Flagg, 1993; Lau & Williams, 2010; Paludi et al., 2010; Rowe, 2008; Sue et al., 2009; Sue, 2010; Wells, 2013; Yosso et al., 2009). These acts, according to Sue and colleagues (2009), tend to affirm or reaffirm stereotypes about the marginalized group or demean them in an understated, subtle manner." (Johnson and Johnson, 2019)

Over the past two decades studies have proven the detrimental effects of covert sexism on women (Criado Perez, 2019; Sieghart, 2021). Research has also been conducted into the effect of narratives on people's attitudes in various academic disciplines ranging from (cognitive) psychology and sociology, social psychology to sociolinguistics (e.g. Ellemers, 2018; Hoeken and Fikkers, 2014; Pennebaker, 2011; Ravenscroft 2012) and literary studies (Eberhardt, 2017). Language issues related to racial bias, both conscious and implicit, and both in terms of its causes and effects, such as covert racism, linguistic othering and racial stereotyping have also been researched by many scholars (Alim, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Coates, 2011; Essed, 1991; Hill, 2008; Kroskrity, 2021; Pandey, 2004; Wekker, 2016).

1.5.2 Sexism and racism in translation

Translation Studies, too, has contributed to research on gender discrimination (Flotow, 2011; Ségerat, 2019; Federici and Leonardi, 2012; Leonardi, 2009 and 2011, Miletich, 2016; Massardier-Kenney, 2015; Simon, 1996; Baxter, 2021; Castro, 2013; Santaemilia, 2014) and racism in translation (Hanes Lopes Lourenço, 2018; Bradford, 2024; Wekker, 1991; Benhamou, 1990). Much of the research on women and translation focuses on translating feminist texts, activist translation, feminist linguistics, perceptions of gendered ideology, and the identity

of the translator. Studies that do discuss gender stereotypes are generally either on ideology and power manipulation, in particular regarding the translation of children's literature (Tsai, 2022) or on translating misogynist and sexist originals (Gutiérrez Lanza & Gómez Castro, 2023; Li, 2023; Wang, Yu & Chen, 2000). Most studies that highlight racism or unconscious racial bias in translations tend to either focus on the translation of racist source texts (Bradford, 2024; Kujawska-Lis, 2008; Sartori, 2016), racial slurs and racial epithets (Filmer, 2011; Mastropierro & Conklin, 2019; Mereu Keating, 2014) or on the translation of the language variety that has widely become known as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) or African-American English (AAE)[14] (Berthele, 2000; Le Gall, 2022; Wekker & Wekker, 1991), which is used as a stylistic feature in literary fiction and sometimes translated in such a way that it creates or enhances negative racial stereotypes. To the best of my knowledge, however, hardly any attention has been paid to the effects of translation choices regarding more general semantic, grammatical and syntactical features of 'standard' English on the perpetuation of racist stereotypes. On the whole, the effect of translation decisions on negative female and racial stereotypes has not received the attention I feel it deserves. And while research into the perception of readers – both on those being stereotyped themselves and on others – has been conducted in literary studies (e.g. Hakemulder, 2000; Kneesker & Reeder, 2020), it is an under-researched area in Translation Studies. The present thesis aims to explore the effect of translator decisions on negative female and racial stereotyping and on the potential impact thereof on readers.

1.6 Research questions and methodology

1.6.1 Research questions

In order to achieve the aim of this thesis, the following research questions will be addressed, in the full knowledge that the four studies making up the core of this thesis have a number of limitations:

1. What are the potential effects of translation choices on the way women and Black people are portrayed in works of fiction and non-fiction respectively?

[14] AAVE has been defined as a 'non-standard' language variety, an ethnolect, or simply as 'English as it is spoken by or among African Americans' (Mufwene, 2001). On names (AAE or Black American English) and definitions of this language variety, see Bloomquist et al., 2015.

2. What are the actual effects of translation choices on the perception of readers regarding female characters in works of fiction and regarding Black people in non-fiction?
3. To what extent may translators play a role in contributing to gender and race stereotyping in society?
4. What are the effects of "risk-minimizing" translation strategies that aim to make translations accessible and understandable to contemporary readers on the impact that translation choices may have on the reader?

1.6.2 Selection of primary materials

The case studies comprise close readings of the Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin respectively (chapters 2, 4 and 5), and a reader reception study of *The Great Gatsby* (chapter 3).

The main reasons for selecting these two works have already been explained in section 1.2 of this introductory chapter. A slightly more extensive justification of the primary materials covers a number of key variables of the source and target texts:

1. *The Great Gatsby* and *The Fire Next Time* have both been translated into Dutch twice, allowing for a comparison between the first translations and the retranslations, which will help detect the subjectivities of the translators.
2. Both works are 20th century American classics, still frequently read in English and in Dutch. The fact that they are still frequently read in Dutch makes them suitable for reader response surveys related to translation choices.
3. The interval between the first translations and the retranslations is sufficiently large (37 and 55 years, respectively).
4. At least one salient variable regarding the identity of the translators is the same: both the first translation and the retranslation of *The Great Gatsby* were made by translators of the same gender (and race), while both the first translation and the retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* were made by translators of the same race (and gender).
5. The source texts include important identity markers that often involve stereotyping: *The Great Gatsby* contains common negative female stereotypes in the US in the nineteen twenties, while *The Fire Next Time*

addresses negative white-on-black stereotypes and white innocence in the US in the nineteen sixties. These issues are still relevant in contemporary Dutch society.

1.6.3 Methods

The methods adopted in the following chapters will involve:

1. the selection of: a) the linguistic cues containing gender-related identity markers in the first chapter of *The Great Gatsby*, in which the novel's female protagonist is introduced, and b) the linguistic cues pertaining to race and racism found in *The Fire Next Time*, which occur throughout both essays contained therein;
2. a close-reading and analysis of the differences found in the linguistic cues used to portray women and Black people respectively, comparing the linguistic choices made in the source text to the choices made in the (re)translations, using Culpeper's (2001) model for characterization to analyze *The Great Gatsby* and an analysis of the linguistic cues used to portray Black Americans and white people displaying white innocence in *The Fire Next Time* that is similar to Culpeper's model, except that the linguistic cues do not refer to characters but to groups of people (*The Fire Next Time* being a work of non-fiction);
3. the conduction of a reader response survey to gage the perceptions of real readers regarding gender stereotypes in the translation and retranslation of *The Great Gatsby*.

To conclude with, a few notes regarding the rationale behind the analyses and the chosen method may be in order. While it goes without saying that translation is an interpretative act, and that differences between the source text and a target text are part and parcel of translation, chapters 4 and 5 expressly refer to the importance of conveying the "essence" of a text. This does not necessarily imply a stubborn clinging to what Venuti calls "instrumentalism", a paradigm that sees translation 'as the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text, an invariant form, meaning, or effect' (Venuti 2019).

Describing translations as "faithful" or "unfaithful" and 'evaluating translations merely by comparing them to the source text' (ibid.), as Venuti

points out, is unhelpful and potentially damaging. Indeed, the essentialist and instrumentalist views and practices that have dominated translation and Translation Studies for the longest time should be challenged. I agree with Venuti, who certainly is not the only scholar who has an issue with essentialist assumptions. Pym, for instance, postulates that 'There is very rarely just one purpose at stake' (Pym 2015, p. 77). Venuti's and Pym's views and statements are valid and valuable. Nevertheless, maintaining that every source text always invites multiple interpretations of every detail does not take into account that some texts do indeed have a principal aim and function. *The Fire Next Time* in particular, is such a text. After all, Baldwin's essays have a clear purpose: to expose white innocence, to make white readers aware of their collective denial of racism and their disavowal of their own accountability, and to show both white and black readers how race is a social construct. In other words, it is possible to refer to the "essence" of a text without necessarily adhering to instrumentalist views of translation. So while it is true that there is no such thing as 'just one ideal translation' and that 'there are many possible solutions to a translation problem and no infallible rule-based way of deciding between those solutions' (Pym 2025, p. 1), in the case of *The Fire Next Time* there are words and phrases that *do* have a fixed meaning contained or implied in the text. These words and phrases contain the essence of Baldwin's message – the message that there will never be justice unless white people acknowledge their racism and become conscious of the crimes they have committed against Black people in the past and continue to commit today. Or in Baldwin's own words: 'and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it' (*TFNT*, p. 14). Allowing for multiple interpretations of that message would defeat the purpose of the translation. It is also the reason why the examples taken from *The Fire Next Time* and its translations in chapters 4 and 5 are discussed at such length.

With regard to *The Great Gatsby* the practice of 'evaluating translations merely by comparing them to the source text' criticized by Venuti (2019) serves an express purpose, too. The individual words and phrases analysed in chapter 2 constitute the type of linguistic cues involved in the characterization of the female protagonist. It is through the comparison of the translations of these cues that a better understanding can be gained of the effect of translation choices on female

stereotyping. The model for characterization proposed by Culpeper itself, which is the method adopted for the case study on gender stereotyping in Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*, will be explained in the following chapter.

As for the practice of close reading, this method has gradually been pushed to the margins of the field of Translation Studies. I hope to show that now as much as before there is merit to be found in this method, since 'We still do not understand the cultural and social implications of the translator's verbal choices' (Venuti 2013).

Together with the reader response survey, the three close reading studies included in this thesis aim to explore some of the social implications of translator decisions and to make an appeal to translational agents and readers alike to examine their own biases.

CHAPTER 2

A beautiful little fool? Retranslating Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*

This chapter explores how ideas about gender are captured in literary works, and how such ideas are reinforced, revised or rejected in (re)translation. It does so by examining the two Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on the characterization of Daisy Buchanan. The analysis draws attention to the influence that translators may – either consciously or unwittingly – have on gender stereotyping. By cataloguing the differences in the portrayal of Daisy Buchanan between the first translation and the retranslation, this chapter sheds light on the ideological implications of translation choices and the way they affect how readers perceive characters and their gender roles. The analysis shows that both translations, but the older translation in particular, paint a more negative picture of Daisy than the original does: both make Daisy more manipulative and emphasize her perceived seductiveness. The comparison shows that translation decisions may have serious impact on the way in which female characters are portrayed, and how preconceived ideas about gender may be reinforced as a result of a (mis)reading of the original.

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2.1 Gender in The Great Gatsby

"One is not born, but rather becomes woman" (De Beauvoir, 1949). Gender roles, identities and stereotypes are debated as heatedly today as when De Beauvoir wrote this famous sentence in 1949, the year that *The Second Sex* sold over 20,000 copies in a single week. This chapter will explore how ideas about gender are captured in literary works, and how such ideas are reinforced, revised or rejected in translations that may be quite far removed from the source text both temporally and culturally. It will do so by conducting a case study of the two Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby* (widely recognized as one of the most important American novels of all times) and focusing on the characterization of one of the main female characters in this novel, Daisy Buchanan.

Though canonical classics have been the subject of studies on retranslation before, the focus of research so far has mainly been on the reasons for retranslation while the study of the effects and consequences of retranslation has been largely neglected (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015, p. 15). And while feminist translation

scholars (e.g. Flotow, 2011; Leonardi & Taronna, 2011; Massardier-Kenney, 2015; Simon 1996) have extensively written on translation and gender as a cultural construct, most of their research has focused on feminist translations and the translation of feminist texts. This chapter does not propose feminist readings of literary classics like *The Great Gatsby*, nor does it champion the production of feminist-interventionist translations of such works. Rather, it aims to draw attention to the influence that translators may – either consciously or unwittingly – have on gender stereotyping.

When aiming to explore the possible effects of translator decisions on characterization and gender stereotyping, *The Great Gatsby* is an ideal candidate for a case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, one of the main themes of the novel is relationships between the sexes. Secondly, the narrative structure of the novel is based on the use of a male narrator – Nick Carraway – whose comments and judgements on women cannot be taken at face value, as will be discussed in more detail in section 2 below. Finally, there is the setting: New York City in the Roaring Twenties, an era in which gender roles were being openly challenged.

The story takes place only a few years after the First World War, which had triggered major changes in American society, with women obtaining the right to vote, joining the workforce in increasing numbers, and enjoying greater personal freedom than before. The predicaments of two of the main female characters in *The Great Gatsby* (Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker), however, suggest that women's liberation was far from complete. Though Daisy and Jordan may seem to be the prototypical 'flapper' (confident, assertive and sexually liberated), they are clearly held back by social conventions, some of which are connected to their elite ('old money') background. Jordan appears to succeed in being a free agent, but only at the cost of holding up a façade, while Daisy is a Southern belle who is expected to marry within her own class. Though Daisy was genuinely in love with Jay Gatsby and did go out with him (despite her parents objecting to her seeing a man below her standing), their relationship was cut short by him going off to war. She ends up marrying Tom Buchanan, who comes from a wealthy background. Tom is a bully, has sexual affairs, and is quite indiscrete about them to boot.

It is easy to see why some may regard Gatsby as a wonderful romantic living the American Dream. Yet one could also argue that Gatsby is more in love with what Daisy represents, i.e. the world of wealthy socialites that she inhabits, than with Daisy as a person. One's perspective depends on whether one buys into Nick's

account of Gatsby's and Daisy's characters and actions. When the story culminates in the death of Tom's mistress Myrtle in a car accident with Daisy behind the wheel and Gatsby, who is willing to take the blame, getting killed by Myrtle's husband, the picture Nick presents is too simplistic: Gatsby is a tragic hero whose flaws are easily forgiven, whereas Daisy is cold-hearted and chooses money (Tom) over love (Gatsby). The theme of relationships between the sexes in *The Great Gatsby* is thus not only inextricably linked to its setting, but also to the narrator's subjective point of view. The three narrative elements discussed above (theme, setting and point of view), in turn, have an impact on characterization in the novel (the focus of this chapter) and on potential gender stereotyping by readers – including translators.

In addition to the narrative itself, there are also extra-textual factors that make characterization and gender stereotyping in *The Great Gatsby* and its (re-) translations an interesting topic for research. One such factor is the availability of the author's personal correspondence, in which Fitzgerald describes his own mind as "half feminine" (Scott Fitzgerald quoted in Turnbull, 1964, p. 259). Then there is the radical change in reception and appreciation of the novel, from its initial lack of success in 1925 to becoming a contender for the epithet 'The Great American Novel' after it gained wide-spread popularity after World War II. The novel has generated numerous academic articles, books and dissertations over the decades (e.g. Fetterley, 1978; Settle, 1985; Kerr, 1996; Preston, 1997; Sanderson, 2006; Turner, 2015) as well as non-academic publications – mainly reviews – on both sides of the Atlantic commenting on its female characters (e.g. Hitchens, 2008; Geoghegan, 2011; Steinz, 2011; Etty, 2012). In addition, there is the fact that *The Great Gatsby* has been translated into over 40 languages, with re-translations having been published for a number of languages. This yields a very promising area for future cross-linguistic follow-up comparisons of how Daisy Buchanan's character (and female characters more generally) has been translated and retranslated into different languages, at different times, and against different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Following Culpeper's (2001) model for characterization, the present study investigates how Daisy Buchanan's character is constructed through the linguistic choices made in the source text, and subsequently translated in the two Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*. The first translation, by Lili Cornils, was published in 1948 by G.A. Van Oorschot. The second translation, by Susan Janssen, was published in 1985 by Agathon, with a revised translation by Janssen

in 1999 by Atlas Contact. It is important to note here that retranslations are not common in the Netherlands. Even great classics, like *The Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice, Mrs Dalloway* or *The Fire Next Time*, often yield no more than 2 or 3 retranslations. This is very different from the situation in countries such as France or Italy, as evidenced by the 15 Italian translations of *The Great Gatsby* used by Wardle (2018) in her analysis of the translation of culture-specific references and stylistic devices by Italian translators and the reception of the text in Italy.

By cataloguing the linguistic differences in the characterization of Daisy Buchanan between the first translation and the retranslation (in its revised edition of 1999), this chapter will shed light on the ideological implications of translation choices and the way they affect how readers perceive characters and their gender roles. Starting from the premise that although retranslations are "more or less temporarily sequential, their interpretative motions are not" (Deane-Cox, 2014, p. 189), the central question addressed will be: Does the more recent translation demonstrate a greater sensitivity regarding issues of gender stereotyping in its characterization of Daisy Buchanan? A key issue in the analyses below will be the frequent ambiguity of Fitzgerald's novel in this respect.

2.2 Characterization and the Voice of the Narrator

As pointed out by Culpeper (2001), gender is "one important way in which readers comprehend most [fictional] characters" (p. 12), and it is important to note that the impression readers have of male and female characters in a novel or play is largely constructed through their linguistic descriptions, a point also made by Van Peer (1989, p. 9):

> Character, it can hardly be denied, is what readers infer from words, sentences, paragraphs and textual composition depicting, describing or suggesting actions, thoughts, utterances or feelings of a protagonist. Thus the linguistic organization of a text will predetermine to a certain degree the kind of 'picture' one may compose of a protagonist. Therefore the particular forms by which this is achieved need to be studied in detail.

In Culpeper's (2001) model, this linguistic organization is studied by determining the different "characterization cues" (p. 164) in the text. This includes *explicit*

characterization cues ("where we find characters explicitly presenting themselves or others — that is, making character statements about themselves or others"), *implicit* characterization cues ("where we have to infer [via causal schemas, for example] character information from linguistic behavior"), and *authorial* cues ("where character information comes relatively directly from the author" [i.e. via stage directions in plays, via third-person narration in novels]).

This is where *The Great Gatsby* becomes particularly interesting, as Fitzgerald's views, his narrative technique, and the novel's societal context affect the way in which the female characters in *The Great Gatsby* are portrayed and perceived. In the case of *The Great Gatsby*, authorial characterization cues might lull readers into blindly accepting the narrator's views of other characters – views which are not always clear to begin with. For one thing, the narrator of the story is in many ways a bundle of contradictions: Nick Carraway is a sharp observer who is sometimes very naïve; he claims to have high moral standards but is himself morally ambiguous at times; he is given to reflection yet seems restless and drifting – the list of paradoxes is endless. And even the explicit cues used by Daisy and Jordan themselves may not always be sincere, given their position in a society where appearances are everything.

The idea that there may be more to an individual than what they wish to reveal about themselves is enhanced by the novel's narrative structure. The opening, in which Nick considers the value of reserving judgement, is, of course, telling in this respect. In a way, his introduction points forward to one of *The Great Gatsby's* main themes, namely that appearances can be deceptive. Although Fitzgerald and his narrator show us the world of New York socialites in the nineteen twenties through contrasts (appearance vs. reality, insiders vs. outsiders, old money vs. new money, honesty vs. dishonesty, innocence vs. immorality – to mention but a handful), these contrasts do not present a straightforward, black-and-white picture of the novels' characters, nor of the society they live in. Daisy, Tom, Jordan, Nick and, of course, Gatsby himself are complex characters who each unite paradoxical or seemingly paradoxical qualities, actions and comments.

Everything that is disclosed about the characters and events is told to us by Nick, who is both the narrator of the story and a participant, but a spectator rather than an actor. A key reference from the novel that ought to make us aware of the fact that the narrator´s observations present us with a limited point of view is Nick's own assertion that "life is much more successfully looked at from a single

window" (GG, ch. 1, p. 10). What we read is Nick's version of events and his – possibly biased – judgement of the other characters' behaviour and personalities, and it is important to bear this in mind when evaluating the descriptions of these characters – especially when it comes to comments made regarding the female protagonists.

What makes it so important to highlight the significance of *The Great Gatsby*'s narrative structure and the character of the narrator in relation to characterization in the novel is the fact that Nick's prejudices are an illustration of the two of the novel's central themes: class and gender, two attributes that form the hinge on which his criticism of Daisy and Jordan turns. And whenever Nick criticizes one of the other characters (and he is critical of almost everyone), the reader – or in this case, the translator – is faced with the fact that interpreting his words is not always a clear-cut exercise. Characterization in *The Great Gatsby*, in other words, is far from a straightforward matter, owing to the narrator´s subjectivity and the ambiguity of his words. These factors should be borne in mind when analyzing the characterization cues for the female characters and the translation of such cues into Dutch.

2.3 Translating Daisy into Dutch

2.3.1 Daisy in The Great Gatsby: textual and contextual voices

If ever a book showed the truth of the maxim that all translation is an act of interpretation, it is Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. While the reader of the original is presented with Nick´s limited point of view, the reader of a translation is presented with an even more limited point of view, that is, Nick´s observations seen through the "single window" opened by the translator. As Wardle (2018) puts it in the concluding paragraph of *Gatsby? Which Gatsby?*:

> Ultimately, we can say that, just as (narratively speaking) we discover Gatsby the character through the eyes of Nick Carraway—we must rely on him for our information—so we discover … the foreign language novel, through the words of the translator. Perhaps, rather than the words, we should say through the *voice* of the translator. (Wardle 2018, p. 231, italics added)

As for the "voice" of the translators of *The Great Gatsby*, the many ambiguities in the text are not the only reason why determining whether translator decisions are deliberate or unconscious will prove to be both an interesting and a difficult issue. For one thing, (re)translations, translation practices and translation traditions have, until fairly recently, been regarded as facts of life rather than topics worth describing, let alone as worthy of academic research (Van Poucke, 2017). It has only been over the past decade that retranslation has become a research area that is being fully explored (e.g. Jansen & Wegener, 2013; Taivalkoski-Shilov & Suchet, 2013; Deane-Cox, 2014; Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015; Koskinen & Paloposki, 2015; Cadera & Walsh, 2017; Van Poucke 2017).

Even where canonical works are concerned, very little information is usually available about what Alvstad and Assis Rosa refer to as 'contextual voices'; as Van Poucke observes in his survey of case studies on retranslation: "While the assumption that every generation deserves its own translation of canonical literary works is taken for granted, particularly by non-academic critics of literary (re) translations, this notion does not seem to be as prevalent in academia" (2017, p. 91). Unfortunately, the lack of academic interest is all the more true for the Dutch (re)translations of *The Great Gatsby*.

Outside academia, translation is often treated like the proverbial 'poor relation' compared to the original work – at least in the Netherlands (Bergsma, 2012). Written records such as interviews with translators hardly exist, and other extratextual (including paratextual) information about the Dutch translations is virtually non-existent. There is no *published* information on the reasons for the respective publishers to commission a (re)translation of *The Great Gatsby*, nor on the background of the translators: none of the editions contain introductions, and there are no translator's prefaces (only a one-line acknowledgement in the 1985 translation where Janssen thanks Bruccoli for his help in interpreting a number of expressions). The only other extratextual information available consists of the cover designs of the Dutch language editions, the blurbs on the covers, and a few non-academic reviews of the translations. We can therefore only guess at the reasons for the publication of the 1948 Dutch translation. With the Netherland's focus in terms of politics, economics and culture being on other European countries until 1945, it is possible that publishers saw no reason to publish a Dutch translation of a novel revolving primarily around American themes. The end of the Second World War sparked an interest in the US, and the influence of the US on the Netherlands on all fronts increased dramatically. It is

quite conceivable that this contributed to Van Oorschot's decision to commission a translation. Another factor that might have played a part in the publisher's decision is the film adaptation directed by Elliott Nugent (which, although it did not come out until 1949, had been in the pipeline since 1946).

What little we do know for certain that may help outline the context of the first translation is the peripheral position of the target language and culture, the canonical status of the source text, and scant information regarding the translator. Her identity could only be established because her private correspondence with her husband (Lou Lichtveld) during the Second World War was included in the archives of the Dutch Museum of Literature. As for the social context, the Netherlands in 1948 was very much a conservative society. It would take considerable time before the traditional roles of men and women would be challenged; the feminist movement in the Netherlands did not really take off until the nineteen sixties (Kool-Smit, 1984). It would be interesting to see whether Cornils' translation choices regarding gender stereotypes in any way reflect the traditional views still prevalent in the Netherlands in 1948. By the time the retranslation was published in 1985, Dutch society had certainly changed, but women's roles were still fairly traditional compared to emancipatory ideals, and general ideas about women and their place in society stereotypical – as is evident from the equal opportunities monitor published by the Dutch Department for the Coordination of Equality Policy (Dutch National Archives, 1994). Janssen was part of a progressive intellectual circle in Amsterdam in the nineteen sixties and seventies, but the group's focus was on (female) sexual liberation, rather than wider emancipatory issues.

To a certain extent the lack of contextual information also applies to Janssen's retranslation. In a personal interview, Janssen recounted that publisher Bert Bakker (whom she knew personally) had asked her whether she "fancied retranslating *The Great Gatsby*" (Janssen, 2020). There seems to have been no real rationale for the commission beyond Bakker's individual motive to enable Dutch readers to properly enjoy Fitzgerald's novel. According to Janssen, Bakker felt that the 1948 translation did not do justice to the original. The reason for retranslation appears to have been not so much that the first translation had aged, but its lack of quality. Before accepting "the challenge of recreating this magical tale for a new generation of Dutch readers" – as Janssen herself described it in a letter to Bruccoli (Janssen, 1984) – she asked for time to consider the offer and, once she did accept, for ample time to conduct proper research into the setting of the story.

When asked about her impression of Daisy, Janssen suggested that she may have had her own preconceptions prompted by her aversion of the type of woman she represented – that of a spoiled, class-conscious Southern belle – and that this may possibly have affected some of her translation choices, although 35 years on, she was not sure *if* – and if so to what extent – that may have been the case, adding that she had not made any conscious translation choices to present Daisy or any of the other female characters in any particular light. The degree to which Janssen's perception of Daisy may have been affected by her personal views or by views commonly held in society thus remains a matter of conjecture – even if there is slightly more extratextual information than is the case for Cornils' translation.

Although the lack of information on the 'contextual' voices (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015) is limited, the current study will focus on 'textual' voices, i.e. on the explicit, implicit and authorial characterization cues that construct the female characters' identities in both the source text and its two Dutch translations. How these characterization cues have been translated may still give valuable clues in terms of the *effect* of the translators' decisions on the portrayal of female characters, if not on the (ideological) reasons behind these decisions.

So what *is* that effect? In other words: what is the impression that readers of a translation will get of the novel's female characters? Does Sanderson's claim that "Fitzgerald's early and widely publicized association with the flapper… has led many readers to misconstrue and to oversimplify the author's portraits of women and of relations between the sexes" (Sanderson, 2006, p. 143) apply equally to the Dutch readers and translators of *The Great Gatsby*, or even more so? Even if one is not convinced that translators may be influenced by such external factors, Deane-Cox' observation that "[a]ll literary translation in an act of interpretation which crystallizes a series of (un)conscious (mis)readings of a given source text" (Deane-Cox 2014, p. 18) will – given the many ambiguities in Fitzgerald's classic – undoubtedly go for its two Dutch translations as well.

Many scholars (male and female alike) have pointed out that the female characters in *The Great Gatsby* are often treated too harshly as a result of an over-simplistic reading of the novel. Person lists a number of critics who have done exactly that, especially where Daisy is concerned:

> … few, it seems, write about Daisy without entering the unofficial competition of maligning her character. Marius Bewley, for example, refers

> to Daisy's "vicious emptiness" and her "monstrous moral indifference." To Robert Ornstein she is "criminally amoral," and Alfred Kazin judges her "vulgar and inhuman." (Person, 1978, p. 250)

Over the past few decades, however, literary scholars (e.g. Fetterley, 1978; Fryer, 1989; Curnutt, 2007) have called for a more nuanced view of Daisy's character and behaviour. But whereas views in academic circles appear to have changed, Daisy often still gets a bad press in mainstream media. She has typically been characterized as shallow, materialistic, insincere, selfish, careless, weak, and as a seductress with a siren's voice. A number of these alleged qualities may be illustrated by a quote from an 2018 article in *The Atlantic*, one of a spate of recent articles devoted to parallels between the age of Trump and the world presented in *The Great Gatsby*:

Even Daisy, idealized as she is, demonstrates the relationship between money and its power to override reality. As Tom's wife, she personifies the kind of wealth that he possesses and other men can only pursue: In Gatsby's words, "Her voice is full of money," which is to say it's *seductive*, hard to catch, and compels her listeners to belief, though she rarely says anything she means. (Smith, 2018, italics added)

In another magazine article that discusses the issue of money and class in the US and observes the fact that the novel still feels relevant to contemporary readers, the author asks: "And is there anything in American fiction more frigid and careless than Daisy's treatment of the little daughter she appears to have?" (Hitchens, 2008).

Readers less likely to read magazines on current affairs or popular culture may well have been exposed to negative views about Daisy as teenagers: text guides for secondary school students suggests Daisy is "shallow and materialistic and… only attracted to Gatsby because of his expensive lifestyle" (CGP Text Guide, 2011), and that "Daisy is weak and easily controlled by material things" (E-notes 2020); the author of such a student text guide is quoted as follows: "Trying to buy that love shows the failed thinking of Gatsby and the shallowness of Daisy" (Dowling in Geoghegan, 2011). Wikipedia, arguably the most widely read information platform, attributes similar traits to Daisy, and describes her as "attractive, though shallow and self-absorbed".

2.3.2 Daisy in Translation

The following analysis compares Daisy's characterization cues in the original and the two Dutch translations, including the revised edition (1948 and 1985/1999). It is based on a selection of lines from the first chapter, in which Daisy is first introduced to the reader. These lines therefore play a key role in terms of Daisy's characterization and the impression she makes on the reader. The examples discussed concern a number of instances in which the decisions made by the translator(s) are likely to have an effect on the way in which readers perceive Daisy's character and behaviour. Although the possible reasons for these translation decisions will occasionally be discussed, they are not the focus of the analysis. The focus will be on how these decisions may influence the information readers infer about Daisy's character. The words and phrases from the translations discussed below were selected because of their potential effect on gender stereotyping. In Daisy's case, this stereotyping amounts to her being typecast as a shallow, weak, insincere and manipulative woman (as illustrated by the citations from mainstream media in the previous section).

One of the first scenes in *The Great Gatsby* shows Nick entering a room in the Buchanan residence, where his cousin Daisy and her friend Jordan Baker are lounging on a couch. When Nick greets Daisy, she does not get up, but she holds his hand for a moment "looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see" (GG, ch. 1, p. 14). Nick's subsequent comment is "That was a way she had." (GG, ch. 1, p. 14). The import of this phrase is that Daisy regularly acted in a similar manner, that is, she would give the person she was talking to the feeling that they were special (even if she did not necessarily mean it).

With no similar idiomatic expression in Dutch, there are different ways of tackling this phrase, one of which is to use a modulation such as '*Dat deed ze wel vaker*' or '*Zo deed ze wel vaker*' (EN 'She did this quite often' / 'She quite often acted like this.'). Both translators, however, chose to maintain the source text sentence structure, using a diminutive form of the noun '*manier*' (EN 'way', or 'manner'). The diminutive form (made by adding a suffix, in this case '*-tje*') is a feature of the Dutch language that can be used to indicate that something is small, adding either an endearing or deprecating connotation. In the case of '*maniertje*', the connotation is pejorative by default. It automatically turns the noun 'way'

into 'mannerism' or 'affectation'. There is no such connotation in the original; Fitzgerald leaves it to the reader to decide what to make of Daisy here – just as he leaves his narrator in two minds about his cousin. The diminutive chosen by both translators – '*maniertje*' (TT2, p. 17) and '*maniertjes*' (TT1, p. 11) instead of '*manier*' – therefore results in a more negative portrayal of Daisy, as it implies that she lacks sincerity and is habitually manipulative. By adding '*een van haar*' (EN 'one of her') TT1 (p. 11) makes her out to be even more disingenuous.

Another example from the two TTs that colours our perception of Daisy is her famous voice. As pointed out by Culpeper (2001, p. 215):

> There is a strong relationship between certain voices and certain personality types. The notion of vocal stereotypes, the idea that particular vocal characteristics are conventionally associated with particular personality traits, is a well-established finding (see for example Addington, 1968, p. 493; Scherer and Scherer, 1981, p. 131). The precise nature of this association is, however, still little understood.

Almost the first observation Nick makes about his cousin is about the quality of her voice, which he describes as 'low' and 'thrilling'. While 'low' in this collocation means that her voice is neither loud nor high-pitched, Dutch does not have a word with the same polysemous quality. Both translators therefore resort to '*zacht*' (EN: 'soft'), with an additional connotation of 'smooth', making Daisy's voice in translation more velvety and suave than in the original. The word 'thrilling' has several denotations ('exciting', 'animated', or 'vibrating'). In this context, 'thrilling' most likely refers to the rising and falling of Daisy's voice – a characteristic of a typical Southern belle like her, although perhaps going up and down more quickly than the usual languorous lilt of the American South (as Daisy desperately attempts to sound 'gay', if only to make herself believe that she is happy). After all, the phrase "in her low, thrilling voice" is immediately followed by "It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down" (GG, ch. 1, p. 14).

Other occurrences of 'thrilling' in the novel include "those breathless, thrilling words" (GG, ch. 1, p. 19) and "thrilling scorn" (GG, ch. 1, p. 22), which are both evidence that 'animated' and 'vibrating' are legitimate contenders when it comes to the interpretation of 'thrilling'. Finally, "the excitement in her voice" (GG, ch.

1, p. 14) points to the possibility that Daisy sounds 'animated'. Whereas readers of the original are left to interpret what Daisy sounds like by themselves, the readers of a Dutch translation are dependent on the way in which the ambiguity has been tackled by a translator, and they will be unaware of the fact that the original contained an ambiguity that could not be preserved in Dutch. Both translators opted for "*opwindend*" (TT1, p. 12; TT2, p. 18) (EN: 'exciting', with connotations of 'erotic' and 'titillating') rather than '*levendig*' (EN 'animated', 'lively') or '*trillend*' (EN 'quivering'), leaving the reader of the Dutch translations with the impression that Daisy's voice is beguiling rather than perhaps exuberantly cheerful ('gay') or typically Southern, and not realizing that the narrator may have given mixed messages when describing Daisy.

The image of Daisy as an enchantress is also foregrounded by both translators as a result of the decision to translate 'a singing compulsion' with '*een zingende bekoring*' (TT1, p. 12) (EN 'a singing charm / temptation') and '*een onweerstaanbare zangerigheid*' (TT2, p. 18) (EN 'an irresistible lilt') respectively. When Nick continues: "there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen'" (GG, ch. 1, pp. 14-15), with the 'singing compulsion' wedged in between the reference to the fact that men found it difficult to forget the excitement in Daisy's voice and the whispered 'Listen', it may be tempting to immediately assume that it is the men who are being compelled by Daisy's voice. This idea is certainly hinted at, but the 'singing compulsion' is more ambiguous than either TT suggests. After all, the word 'compulsion' means 'urge', 'impulse', implying that it is in the very nature of Daisy's voice to 'sing': her voice cannot help but go up and down. Apart from the effect that Daisy's voice has on Nick (and undoubtedly on other men), the word 'compulsion' also hints at her voice sounding bubbly, even if Daisy's excitement may come across as artificial, as a result of her acting in such an over-the-top way in her attempt to make herself cling on to the idea that she is 'gay' instead of sad.

The 1948 translation reinforces the impression of Daisy as a siren, when her voice is described as "glowing and singing" (GG, ch. 1, p. 19), which TT1 has down as '*haar bedwelmende stem*' (TT1, p. 16) (EN 'her intoxicating voice'), as opposed to TT2, which is a direct translation of the more neutral observation of the original '*haar stem gloeiend en zangerig*' (TT2, p. 24) (EN 'her voice glowing and singing'). True, Fitzgerald gives Daisy a voice that is enthralling, but

TT1's implication that Daisy's voice is clearly a siren-like voice of a seductress ('temptation' and 'intoxicating'), and TT2's focus on the effect Daisy has on others ('irresistible') both disregard the fact that the inflection in Daisy's speech are also a natural characteristic of her southern accent – and *not* necessarily a calculating way to make people do what she wants. Even if she used the sing-song quality of her voice to charm them, the source text never explicitly states that Daisy uses it to manipulate or seduce. The translations' interpretations therefore seem rather simplistic, or at least too one-sided, especially in TT1. Given the fact that different (types of) voices, and especially Daisy's voice, play a prominent role in *The Great Gatsby*, the translation decisions in these examples will have an impact on the reader's perception of Daisy. The tone in the 1948 translation has been set: Daisy is a temptress.

Besides the motif of voices another recurring feature in the novel is the appearance of faces. In the same paragraph where Nick talks about Daisy's voice, he also comments on Daisy's face: 'Her face was sad and lovely' (GG, ch. 1, p. 14). The translation issue to be dealt with in this sentence is a common one: a source text word ('lovely', in this case) has two or more different denotations, and the target language lacks a word that comprises the same multiple meanings. In other words, the translator is forced to make a choice (as was the case with 'thrilling'). According to TT1 her face is '*droevig en mooi*' (TT1, p. 16) (EN 'sad and beautiful'); in TT2 it is '*triest en lieflijk*' (TT2, p. 24) (EN 'sad and lovely'). The 1948 translation draws the attention to Daisy's physical appearance, something the 1985 translation does not.

Neither lexical ambiguity nor semantic ambiguity play a role in the following example, which shows Daisy's reaction to Nick telling her that a dozen of her old friends and acquaintances from Chicago sent their love: "'Do they miss me?' she cried ecstatically." (GG, ch. 1, p. 15). The addition of '*Denk je*' (TT1, p. 12) (EN: 'Do you believe/suppose…') in TT1 results in Daisy expressing herself in a way that is thought of as typically female (Holmes 1998): women's language is characterized as more tentative, which, in turn, is often seen as a sign of insecurity. This may well contribute to Daisy's characterization as a weak and needy person. Yet insecurity would seem incongruous with the (pretend) elation implied by 'ecstatically'. A lack of confidence certainly is not consistent with the assertiveness Daisy displays in this chapter, evidenced by verbs like "retorted", "insisted" (GG, ch. 1, p. 16), "objected" and "insisted" (GG, ch. 1, p. 17), the way she banters

when talking to Nick or Jordan, and the way she rebels against Tom by getting under his skin on more than one occasion in this scene. Nick's unease with Daisy's cool and casual conversation at the table expressed by his remark "'You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy,' I confessed" (GG, ch. 1, p. 17) shows that Daisy is a great deal more self-assured than a superficial reading suggests.

Nevertheless, Daisy does feel vulnerable. She is thrown off balance by Tom's mistress calling mid-dinner, despite the fact that this probably happens so often that she "shook her head decisively at Tom" (GG, ch. 1, p. 20) when the phone rings a second time. It makes her act with "tense gayety" (GG, ch. 1, p. 20), and Nick can see that she is perturbed: "I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her" (GG, ch. 1, p. 21). As Fryer noted, such reactions are not the behaviour of a cold woman without feelings (Fryer 1989). Nor are they 'proof' of insecurity or weakness. Daisy's banter, her sarcasm, her exaggerated delight are all part of the façade she tries to put up to hide her feelings – to herself as much as to the outside world.

With regard to her attempts to keep up the appearance of carefree happiness Daisy finds an ally in Jordan. Both women emanate an air of indifference, but this indifference is largely feigned. The languidness and ennui exhibited by Daisy and Jordan and the banter that includes jokes like Jordan's remark about her being "absolutely in training" (GG, ch. 1, p. 16) when she turns down a cocktail that is brought in before dinner are reminiscent of characters in an Oscar Wilde play. When Jordan gets up from the couch saying "I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember" (GG, ch. 1, p. 16), one can imagine Daisy rolling her eyes in mock-exasperation when she shoots back a quick repartee: "Don't look at me, Daisy retorted"(GG, ch. 1, p. 16). Unfortunately, Dutch does not have a verb with the same range of connotations carried by 'retort' (sharp, angry, witty). In any case, neither translator seems to have caught the pretend-seriousness of Daisy's reply: TT1's 'vinnig' (p. 13) (EN: 'sharply', 'cuttingly', 'caustically') bears connotations of bickering or being catty, which is generally associated with women (Danner & Walsh 2009); TT2's transposition that makes use of the verb '*van zich afbijten*' (p. 20) (EN: 'to give as good as one gets') implies over-assertiveness and aggressiveness (the expression derives from the verb *bijten,* meaning 'to bite'). Perhaps a better option would have been to translate 'retorted' with '*schoot Daisy terug*' (EN: 'Daisy shot back') to capture the sense of Daisy making a short, clever response that does not characterize her as bitchy and callous, as TT1 in particular makes her out to be.

Daisy's vulnerability does not exempt her from judgements about her behaviour: she can indeed be unpleasant. When Daisy – out of the blue – draws attention to her bruised knuckle, her "awed expression" (GG, ch. 1, p. 17) is so completely over the top that the reader feels she is ridiculing herself to get her own back at Tom by ostensibly acting 'the helpless female'. This is the one instance in this first chapter where Daisy is shown to be calculating. But instead of reproducing Daisy's 'performance', TT1's '*angstig*' (p. 15) (EN: 'scared') turns Daisy into a frightened little girl; TT2's '*met ontzetting vervuld*' (p. 21) (EN: 'filled with awe'), like the original, portrays Daisy as bitter and cynical. Daisy may be unsympathetic, but she is not weak and helpless.

Daisy's bitterness and cynicism is once again best reflected by TT2 in the following three examples, each of which demonstrates her intelligence and vulnerability rather than the indifference and shallowness that is so often attributed to her. Firstly, this translation uses the patronizing expression "*dom gansje*" (TT2, p. 27) (EN 'silly little goose'), which, owing to the use of the diminutive form, amounts to what in English would be referred to as 'just a pretty face', exactly what Daisy is getting at by exclaiming that she hopes her daughter will grow up to be "a beautiful little fool" (GG, ch. 1, p. 22). This implicit cue demonstrates that Daisy knows very well what position women are in, and that she is not free – despite, or perhaps because of, her money and class.

Similarly, the explicit cue "*Mondain – mijn God, wat ben ik mondain*!" in TT2 (p. 27) mirrors "Sophisticated – God, I'm sophisticated" (GG, ch. 1, p. 22). TT1's more literal translation "*een mooie, kleine dwaas*" (p. 18) does not include the connotations of "*dom gansje*" (attractive, but lacking intelligence) that so aptly capture the implied meaning of Daisy's words, nor does "*Mijn God, ik ben een snob – een echte snob!*" (TT1, p. 18) (EN: 'I'm a snob – a real snob!') have the same acerbic quality as the original. Therefore, neither phrase in TT1 reflects Daisy's sardonic remarks. TT2 hits the nail on the head in both instances. Finally, the different connotations carried by the cues "*koel*" (TT1, p. 19) ('cool', 'impassive') and "*kil*" (TT2, p. 29) ('icy', 'haughty', 'hostile') respectively characterize Daisy as indifferent in TT1 and strong and defiant in TT2. Daisy is not uncaring and unfeeling, but she is very bitter. She has every reason to be, trapped as she is in her marriage and restricted by society. Daisy is a realist more than anything else.

2.4 Conclusion

Summing up the effects of the translation decisions in this scene, the conclusion is that both translations – but the older translation in particular – paint a more negative picture of Daisy, one that does not reflect Fitzgerald's subtle portrayal of Daisy. Both translations make Daisy more manipulative. Both translations give more prominence to Daisy's perceived seductiveness, but only the first translation truly emphasizes the image of that of a temptress. The first translation also makes Daisy more impassive than the original. Finally, the idea that Daisy is weak persists in the 1948 translation, but not in the 1985 translation and the 1999 revised edition.

In most respects the 1985 translation and 1999 revision could be considered to do more justice to the nuanced picture of Daisy that Fitzgerald's characterization cues present to his readers: that of a woman who may be bitter and self-centered, perhaps lacking in courage, but who certainly is not shallow and devoid of feelings. Daisy feigns indifference to protect herself and uses her charm and cynicism to be able to stay afloat in a marriage in which she is cheated on and within a male-dominated society that prevents her from being truly autonomous. In the light of this milder and more forgiving perspective, the novel's ending and the part that Daisy plays in it are even more tragic.

Of course the perceived 'fidelity' (or lack of it) of a translation depends on how closely it resembles both our own interpretation of the text and general views on what constitutes a 'faithful' translation in a given context. But notwithstanding the fact that contemporary translations might well appear to be more faithful than previous ones that address different readers and meet different expectations, this case study does show that the translation decisions made for characterization cues – even a few seemingly minor ones – may impact the way in which female characters are portrayed, and how preconceived ideas about gender may be reinforced as a result of too simplistic a reading of the original. Though the aim of this chapter was not to determine to what extent the translator's decisions were ideologically motivated or a result of the cultural context, the findings hopefully show that such decisions nevertheless do have ideological implications.

The 1948 translation, which does not preserve the ambiguities in the language of *The Great Gatsby* in the fragments studied, makes Daisy come across as more unequivocally manipulative and callous than her original maker intended. She is

cast as the stereotype she was made out to be by many academics well up to the nineteen eighties and still is by critics in mainstream media. On the whole, the 1985 translation deals more skillfully with the subtleties and ambiguities in the source text that allow readers to make up their own minds about Daisy. This means that in 1985, 'rich plus female' no longer automatically equals 'shallow, careless and weak.' Whether or not this implies that a more recent translation necessarily means a greater sensitivity regarding issues of (gender) stereotyping is a question that may be answered only after a series of case studies into retranslations – both of *The Great Gatsby* in other languages and of other literary classics in Dutch.

CHAPTER 3

Characterizing Daisy Buchanan in retranslations of *The Great Gatsby*: Translator behaviour and reader reception

This chapter explores the characterization of Daisy Buchanan in the two Dutch translations of the great American Classic *The Great Gatsby*, published first in 1948 (translated by Lili Cornils) and then in 1985 (translated by Susan Janssen). After an introduction to research on retranslation and reader reception, the chapter first briefly summarizes a number of important differences in Daisy's characterization between the Dutch translations and the English source text, and between the first translation and the retranslation, arguing that such differences may affect readers' views on Daisy's personality. It then discusses the results of a reader response survey in which real readers were presented with fragments from the two translations and were asked to assess Daisy's personality traits. The results show interesting differences in reader responses between the 1948 and 1985 translations, though the differences in scoring were only statistically significant for characteristics *confident* and *helpless*. Nevertheless, the emerging patterns confirm that translator decisions may indeed affect the way readers receive and perceive female characters and their gender roles.

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3.1. Introduction

When the twenty-first century was heralded as "The Age of Retranslation" (Collombat, 2004), the interest in retranslation as an object of research was kindled as well. A decade onwards, there were more academic publications on the topic of retranslation than ever before (Van Poucke, 2017). The Netherlands, however, seems to be 'the odd one out' in both respects: while Dutch retranslations of literary classics – regardless of their status – are few and far between, research on retranslation from a Dutch perspective is almost entirely non-existent, although a small number of Flemish scholars have made valuable contributions to the debate on the topic (Van Poucke 2017, 2019; Boulogne 2019). Notwithstanding the justified appeal by several translation scholars to start conducting research beyond individual case studies (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019) and to move away from the more traditional approach of comparing different translations of literary texts on a micro-textual level (Van Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019), this research gap is one of

the reasons why this chapter pursues the avenue of a case study before embarking on a journey travelling one of the "new 'highways' of investigation" that Van Poucke and Sanz Gallego (2019, p. 3) encourage translation scholars to discover. Eventually, a collection of case studies into Dutch retranslations would open up the possibility of "plac[ing] individual case studies within the bigger picture" (Koskinen and Paloposki 2019: 1).

Another motivation for conducting a follow-up to our case study of Dutch retranslations of *The Great Gatsby* (Zeven & Dorst, 2020) is the relative scarcity of research that has been conducted into the effects of retranslations. Despite recent publications focusing on the reception of retranslations (Cadera & Walsh, 2017), the following observation made by Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015) still rings true – not just when it comes to translations into Dutch:

> Even if the literature deals extensively with causes, motivations, influences and sometimes also purposes (both real and alleged), it is only seldom that the consequences or effects of retranslations are even mentioned. (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015, p. 15)

There has been a general call for more reception research in Translation Studies (Cadera & Walsh, 2017; Di Giovanni & Gambier 2018). As some scholars have noted, the scant reception studies that have been conducted so far have been primarily in audiovisual translation (Brems & Ramos Pinto, 2013). This chapter, like our 2020 paper on the impact of translators' choices of the (re)translations of *The Great Gatsby* on the characterization of the novel's female characters, aims to address both of these research gaps. But while we previously investigated the **potential** effects of translation choices on the way female characters are portrayed, our focus in the present chapter is on the **actual** perception of actual readers.

It is here that the importance of defining the term *reader* comes in. The discussion of the notion of the reader by academics over the course of the twentieth century has sprouted a host of labels and definitions, depending not only on the subdiscipline of the scholar coining the label, but also on the perspective taken, the type of reading researched, and the scenario in which a text is being read (Chan, 2016; Assis Rosa, 2006). Both Chan and Assis Rosa provide insightful overviews of the different names and definitions used by literary and translation scholars.

Assis Rosa distinguishes three different types of reader. There is the actual or real reader "who is the receiver of the literary text and is defined by Seymour Chatman as 'the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book'" (1978, p. 150); this reader may or may not be the same as the ideal reader, who is "able to understand the meaning and significances of any literary text" (Assis Rosa, 2006, p. 101). Both the real and ideal reader should be distinguished from the implied reader, who is the one explicitly or implicitly addressed in the text, i.e. "a hypothetical personage who shares with the author not just background knowledge, but also a set of presuppositions, sympathies and standards of what is pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, right and wrong" (Leech & Short, 1989, p. 208).

Assis Rosa criticizes the prominence given to the ideal reader over the actual and implied reader since one cannot truly identify translation norms of acceptability and adequacy if these are neglected. Other translation scholars, too, have recently advocated giving central stage to the real or actual reader. Hickey (2003), for example, highlights the importance of taking into account when evaluating (re) translations those he refers to as "lay readers" (Hickey, 2003, p. 62). By lay readers he means that is "all non-experts, including the end-readers of literary works who sit down to have 'a good read'" (2003, p. 66). Hickey compares the average reader of a translation to a driver of a car who is not necessarily knowledgeable or interested in the tools used to produce their car or a patient who does not have the means to properly evaluate the work a dentist does on their teeth. They only assess the end product, that is, the target text itself. These lay readers, he states, "are interested in the product to the extent to which it affects them as readers, stimulating some kind of reaction or experience in them as readers" (2003, p. 63). They do not read the translation against the original, nor do they usually compare different translations of the same literary work. While research into the reception of retranslations by professional, ideal or informed readers such as literary critics (Bladh, 2019) or translators (Miletich, 2015) is obviously equally valuable, the fact that the most important readers of a novel are its lay readers is the reason why the present chapter will focus on the real reader and present the findings of a reader response survey.

3.2. Retranslating Daisy Buchanan: A micro-textual analysis

Zeven and Dorst (2020) explored "how ideas about gender are captured in literary works, and how such ideas are reinforced, revised or rejected in (re)translation" (661). Focusing on Daisy Buchanan, the paper showed how both the 1948 translation by Cornils and the 1985 retranslation by Janssen include translation decisions that (un)consciously present Daisy in a more negative way than the source text does. We postulated that this may affect Daisy's characterization in the novel and the way her character is received by readers of the translations. The micro-textual analysis showed that both translations (hereafter: TT1948 and TT1985), but especially TT1948, paint a picture of Daisy as more manipulative than the English source text (hereafter: ST), and as a temptress rather than coquettish and beguiling. While in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* the language used to describe Daisy's personality and behaviour is characterized by a systematic ambiguity, this ambiguity has disappeared in both translations as a result of wordings that potentially lead to a more negative view of Daisy by readers of the translations.

This may be illustrated by the following example of the way in which both translations deal with an observation made by the story's narrator. The narrator remarks how Daisy often gives the person she is talking to the feeling that they are special: "That was a way she had" (1925, p. 14). In the ST it is up to the reader to decide how to interpret this comment: is Daisy sincere or fake? Both translators, however, opt to translate "a way" with the diminutive form of the noun *manier* [manner]: *maniertje* [little manner] (1948, p. 17) and *maniertjes* [little manners] (1985, p. 11). The diminutive has the pejorative connotations of 'mannerisms' or 'affectations', thus implying that Daisy is insincere and manipulative. TT1984 uses the plural form and adds "*een van haar*" [one of her], making Daisy even more lacking in sincerity. The impression is given that this is a woman who simply wants to wrap men around her little finger. Another example relates to Daisy's perceived helplessness. In one case, when she suddenly draws attention to her bruised knuckle with an "awed expression" (1925, p. 17), her reaction is so completely over the top that the reader feels she is ridiculing herself to get her own back at Tom by ostensibly acting the helpless female. This is one instance where Daisy can indeed be considered calculating. Yet instead of reproducing Daisy's

theatrical performance, TT1948 translates "awed" with "*angstig*" [scared] (1948, p. 15), turning Daisy into a frightened little girl. Conversely, TT1985 has "*met ontzetting vervuld"* [filled with awe] (1985, p. 21), which, like the ST, portrays her as bitter and cynical rather than weak or helpless.

The current study now aims to determine whether such differences in reader reception can indeed be established when readers are presented with short fragments from the novel featuring Daisy in either the 1948 translation or the 1985 retranslation. Like the previous micro-textual case study, the current reader reception study wishes to raise awareness for the ideological implications of translation decisions at the micro-textual level, and highlight the influence that translators may – either consciously or unwittingly – have on gender stereotyping and the way gender bias and stereotyping are perpetuated, even reinforced, through translation and retranslation.

3.3 Reader reception of Daisy Buchanan: A reader response survey

As stated previously, the goal of the current study was to examine whether the readers of the 1948 Dutch translation of *The Great Gatsby* by Cornils have a different perception of Daisy Buchanan's personality traits from readers of the 1985 retranslation by Janssen, and whether these differences in reader responses can be attributed to different lexical choices made by the translators. The study elicited responses from participants using a web-based survey. Participants first provided their spontaneous responses to seven very short fragments of 1-2 sentences, and then scored the female character in the fragments on 12 different character traits. The aim of the study was to expose whether (un)conscious lexical shifts in retranslation may affect gender perceptions and stereotypes in translation and in the reading of fiction in general. To the best of our knowledge, such issues of gender and gender bias in the reception of (re)translations have not been studied through the elicitation of responses from real readers as they read fragments from a novel.

3.3.1 Methodology

3.3.1.1. Materials and method

For the current study, an online reader response survey was created in Google Forms. It was distributed through the personal networks of the two researchers

and their students in the Master in Translation at Leiden University. Students were asked specifically to approach people over the age of 30 and without a degree in languages, linguistics or literature. They were encouraged to include people from various geographic locations, cultural backgrounds and educational levels. This study did not focus on any particular type of reader and we did not select participants on the basis of any specific criteria. We did aim to avoid people with a degree in languages, including our own colleagues in Linguistics and Literature and our own students in Translation, with the intention to recruit participants who would respond naturally to the fragments as they read them without immediately overanalysing the language used. The survey was addressed to a general readership and required no specific background knowledge or reading experience. Sufficient knowledge of Dutch to read the fragments was assumed if participants decided to complete the survey.

Zeven and Dorst (2020) argued that Daisy comes across as more manipulative in the two Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*, in particular in TT1948. The image of a woman who sets out to seduce men is emphasized in these translations, again especially so in the 1948 translation. Daisy is also made out to be less sincere, more shallow, and more indifferent (to the point of being cold and callous), as well as more helpless in both translations than in the ST. Based on these findings, seven short fragments from *The Great Gatsby* featuring Daisy Buchanan were selected in which we believed the lexical choices made by Cornils (1948) and/or Janssen (1985) influenced how Daisy is perceived by readers. In the current study, *Version Lili* presented readers with fragments from TT1948, while *Version Susan* presented readers with the same fragments from TT1985. Participants saw only one translation. In total, 103 participants completed the survey. Of these, 57 participants (55.3%) read the fragments from TT1948 (*Lili*) and 46 participants (44.4%) the fragments from TT1985 (*Susan*).

The participants were first asked to answer three general questions on their gender, age and reading behaviour. Then they were told they would be shown seven very short fragments from a famous novel (they were not told which novel) and instructed to provide a maximum of five words (e.g. *gemeen* [mean] or *slim* [smart]) that summarized their spontaneous first impressions of the female character in the fragments. The participants read each fragment in turn and were enabled to type their responses in a short answer text box. After the last fragment, the participants were told they would be shown the same seven fragments again

and were asked to indicate which personality traits they found best described the female character by scoring twelve characteristics (e.g. *zelfingenomen* [conceited and self-absorbed] or *zelfverzekerd* [confident]) from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale, with 1 meaning *does not describe the character at all* and 5 meaning *describes the character very well*.

3.3.1.2. Participants

A total of 103 participants completed the survey. Tables 1 – 3 provide more information on their gender, age category and reading behaviour. Table 1 shows that 69 (67%) of the participants were female, and 34 (33%) were male; no participants identified as *other* or indicated that they did not wish to specify.

Table 1. Sex/gender of the participants

Female	69	67.0%
Male	34	33.0%
Total	103	100%

Table 2 shows that most of the participants were aged between 31 and 60 (83.5% in total). Only 2 participants (1.9%) were 30 or younger, and 15 participants (14.6%) were older than 60.

Table 2. Age of the participants (by age group)

26-30	2	1.9%
31-35	10	9.7%
36-40	13	12.6%
41-45	11	10.7%
46-50	16	15.5%
51-55	18	17.5%
56-60	18	17.5%
61-65	5	4.9%
66-70	8	7.8%
71-75	0	0%
76-80	2	1.9%
Total	103	100%

Table 3 shows that in terms of reading behaviour, the largest group - 43 participants or 41.7% – reads 3 to 10 novels per year. The other 3 reading categories demonstrate

a balanced distribution: 20 participants (19.4%) never read novels, 19 (18.4%) read 1 to 3 novels per year, and 21 (20.4%) read more than 10 novels per year.

Table 3. Reading behaviour (in novels read per year)

None	20	19.4%
1-3 novels	19	18.4%
3-10 novels	43	41.7%
> 10 novels	21	20.4%
Total	103	100%

Overall, the tables show that the participants in our survey represent a relatively heterogeneous group in terms of gender, age groups and reading behaviours, though the sample is not perfectly balanced.

3.3.2 Results

The survey yielded a considerable amount of data, given that the participants were first asked to provide spontaneous responses to seven fragments, and were then asked to score the female character on twelve characteristics. In the analyses below, we will therefore zoom in on those results that are most interesting given our current focus on retranslation and reader reception, and on those results directly connected to our claims in the micro-textual analysis about possible reader responses. The current survey can be used to determine whether there is any empirical support for these claims. As our 2020 paper argued that the 1985 retranslation is less negative in its portrayal of Daisy than the 1948 translation, we can now use the survey results to examine whether Daisy is described more negatively by respondents who saw the fragments from TT1948 (*Version Lili*) than those who saw TT1985 (*Version Susan*).

3.3.2.1. Scoring Daisy Buchanan's character traits

Our expectation based on the micro-textual analysis in Zeven and Dorst (2020) was that the scores for *Version Lili* (1948) would be more negative than those for *Version Susan* (1985). We were particularly interested in responses to passages in which we felt that the translations presented Daisy as more manipulative, seductive, shallow, insincere and weak than Fitzgerald's ST.

An independent samples T-test was carried out in SPSS27 to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the scorings given for the twelve characteristics in *Version Lili* versus *Version Susan*. The T-tests showed that only for *zelfverzekerd* [confident] and *hulpeloos* [helpless] there was a significant difference between the two versions (equal variance not assumed): *zelfverzekerd* (t (91.02) = 2.21, p = .03) and *hulpeloos* (t (96.7) = 2.69, p = .008). Participants who read the 1985 retranslation, *Susan*, found Daisy more confident (M = 2.98, SD = 1.09) than those who read the 1948 translation, *Lili* (M = 2.53, SD = .97). Participants who read the 1985 retranslation also found Daisy less helpless (M = 2.52, SD = 1.09) than those who read the 1948 translation (M = 3.11, SD = 1.1).

The sections below will provide further discussion of these statistically significant differences, as well as other interesting observations that can be made based on the participants' scoring as well as spontaneous responses. The discussions have been grouped around what we feel are Daisy's most relevant personality traits, as based on the real readers' responses.

3.3.2.1.1 Confident, Helpless or Conceited?

Tables 4 - 6 show the scores for *zelfverzekerd* [confident], *hulpeloos* [helpless] and *zelfingenomen* [conceited and self-absorbed] in *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985). These traits demonstrate a clear difference in the scoring between the two versions, though only confident and helpless were statistically significant.

Table 4. Scores for personality trait *zelfverzekerd* [confident]

"The character is confident"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	4	3	7
		% within Version	7.0%	6.5%	6.8%
	2	Count	32	16	48
		% within Version	56.1%	34.8%	46.6%
	3	Count	10	8	18
		% within Version	17.5%	17.4%	17.5%
	4	Count	9	17	26
		% within Version	15.8%	37.0%	25.2%
	5	Count	2	2	4
		% within Version	3.5%	4.3%	3.9%
Total		Count	57	46	103

After reading TT1948, 56.1% of the participants selected a score of 2 for confidence, 63.1% in total when scores 1 and 2 are combined. By contrast, 34.8% of the participants who read TT1985 selected score 2, and 41.3% in total when combining scores 1 and 2. For TT1948, score 2 is clearly considered the most suitable score, and scores 3 and 4 were given much less often and roughly the same number of times – 17.5% and 15.8%. This distribution is markedly different for TT1985, where scores 2 and 4 are the most frequent scores, with roughly the same percentage (34.8% and 37.0%), and score 3 being selected much less often (17.4%). Interestingly, this suggests that while readers of TT1948 are united in labelling Daisy as insecure, the readers of TT1985 are almost equally divided where Daisy's confidence is concerned. While a perceived lack of confidence is in itself not necessarily positive or negative, it may contribute to the idea of Daisy being either more vulnerable or weak – the former seeing Daisy as a victim of her circumstances, the latter primarily being a character flaw.

Table 5. Scores for personality trait *hulpeloos* [helpless]

"The character is helpless"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	4	6	10
		% within Version	7.0%	13.0%	9.7%
	2	Count	15	21	36
		% within Version	26.3%	45.7%	35.0%
	3	Count	13	12	25
		% within Version	22.8%	26.1%	24.3%
	4	Count	21	3	24
		% within Version	36.8%	6.5%	23.3%
	5	Count	4	4	8
		% within Version	7.0%	8.7%	7.8%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The characteristic *hulpeloos* [helpless] can be considered a possible antonym for *zelfverzekerd* [confident], so it is interesting to examine whether it shows the same unexpected distribution. Table 5 shows that this is not the case for TT1985. While readers were divided into considering Daisy confident (score 4, 37.0%) and not confident (score 2, 34.8%), they are clearly not divided in their opinion on whether she is helpless: 45.7% selected the score 2 (not helpless) while only 6.5% selected the score 4 (helpless). Here, a clear contrast with TT1948 can be seen again: while

only 6.5% of the readers of TT1985 consider Daisy helpless, 36.8% of the readers of TT1948 consider her to be so. While most of the scores for TT1985 are either 2 (45.7%) or 3 (26.1%), the scores for TT1948 are more evenly distributed between 2 (26.3%), 3 (22.8%) and 4 (36.8%), suggesting that these readers are more divided in their opinion on Daisy's perceived helplessness than the readers of the retranslation. This difference may be attributed to the fact that the word *hulpeloos* [helpless] has various connotations, ranging from powerlessness to weakness. Again, it depends on the associations of the reader whether the scores may be interpreted as either the one or the other, or as a combination of these sentiments. The spontaneous responses may help shed some light on whether the readers look upon Daisy as someone who might be pitied, judged or both.

Another closely related character trait is *zelfingenomen/arrogant* [conceited and self-absorbed/arrogant]. While confidence is normally a positive trait, too much confidence can make someone conceited, turning it into a negative trait. Table 6 shows that while readers of the retranslation were divided on whether Daisy is confident or not, they clearly find her to be conceited: 54.3% selected the score 4 and only 17.4% selected the score 2. Together, scores 4 and 5 account for almost 70% of the participants. Conversely, while 56.1% of the readers of TT1948 found Daisy lacking in confidence (score 2), 49.1% find her to be conceited. A relatively large group of readers remains neutral (24.6%) after reading TT1948, while this is a much smaller group for TT1985 (10.9%).

Table 6. Scores for character trait *zelfingenomen/arrogant* [conceited and self-absorbed/arrogant]

"The character is conceited and self-absorbed (arrogant)"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	4	2	6
		% within Version	7.0%	4.3%	5.8%
	2	Count	8	8	16
		% within Version	14.0%	17.4%	15.5%
	3	Count	14	5	19
		% within Version	24.6%	10.9%	18.4%
	4	Count	28	25	53
		% within Version	49.1%	54.3%	51.5%
	5	Count	3	6	9
		% within Version	5.3%	13.0%	8.7%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The rather paradoxical scores may actually also be taken as evidence that Daisy is perceived as an ambiguous character who evokes contradictory interpretations and emotions in readers. Taking these contradictory scorings into consideration, the spontaneous responses to the individual fragments may provide additional context for where these divided opinions stem from. We expected that fragments 2 and 4 would potentially divide respondents' perceptions of Daisy in terms of all three traits, with fragment 2 focusing on (lack of) confidence, and fragment 4 on helplessness. Fragment 2 included "'Do they miss me?' she cried ecstatically." (1925: 15). The difference between the two translations potentially contributing to different reader perceptions were the addition of "*Denk je*" [Do you think…] (1948: 12), expressing a tentativeness that may create the impression that Daisy is insecure. Alternatively, Daisy's reaction – taken the (pretend) elation implied by "ecstatically"– may be seen as that of someone who is narcissistic and self-absorbed. Fragment 4 included the phrase "awed expression" (1925: 17), discussed above. Would readers of TT1948 indeed see Daisy as helpless and powerless, or as cynical and manipulative?

For fragment 2, fourteen readers of the retranslation label Daisy as *onzeker* insecure], compared to thirty-one readers of TT1948. A close synonym, *zoekend naar bevestiging* [looking for confirmation] is used only once by both groups. One respondent to TT1948 mentions *behoeftig* [needy], another uses *afhankelijk* [dependent]. These responses clearly reflect the different patterns that emerged for the scores. The other responses (given by both readers who labelled Daisy as insecure as those who did not) can even more clearly be seen as support for our claim that translation choices can affect characterization and reader perception. Twenty-six readers of the retranslation provide positive descriptions including spontaneous, warm, enthusiastic, happy and gregarious – a stark contrast with the twenty-five readers of TT1948 who see Daisy as arrogant, attention-seeking narcissistic, displaying false modesty, over-the-top and pathetic. To compare: only one of the readers of the retranslation who explicitly uses a negative description of Daisy has her down as *ijdel* [vain].

As for helplessness, the word itself is used only once (TT1948), while synonyms *machteloos* [powerless] and *onmachtig* [powerless] appear once in TT1948 and twice in TT1985. One reason may be that the helplessness conveyed by the text is that of a woman who is dependent and frightened (and therefore *weak*) rather than a woman whose wings have been clipped or who is vulnerable.

The spontaneous responses bear out these different connotations, which were also reflected in the translations, primarily as a result of *angstig* [frightened] for Daisy's "awed expression" in fragment 4. The responses to other fragments also contribute to this portrayal of Daisy as someone who is frightened rather than cynical. With 21 readers of TT1948 mentioning *angstig* [frightened] or *bang* [afraid] against only 5 readers of TT1985, the spontaneous responses support the findings from the scores. Similarly, only 10 respondents in TT1948 label Daisy as *zelfverzekerd* [confident] or *zelfbewust* [self-assured], versus 17 in TT1985. For TT1948 *onzeker* [insecure] was used considerably more often to describe Daisy (67 instances and 41 respondents) than for TT1985 (33 instances and 25 respondents). Thus, it can safely be concluded that readers of the first translation do indeed see Daisy as more insecure than readers of the retranslation.

3.3.2.1.2 Silly, Cynical or Shallow?

As discussed in Zeven and Dorst (2020), reviews of *The Great Gatsby* often refer to Daisy as being silly, callous and shallow. Tables 7 - 9 show the scores for characteristics *dom* [silly/unintelligent], *oppervlakkig* [shallow] and *cynisch* [cynical] in *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985). Though the differences between the two translations are not statistically significant for these traits, and the differences are less marked than for confident, helpless and conceited, some interesting differences emerge.

Table 7. Scores for character trait *dom* [silly]

"The character is silly"			Version		Total
			Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
	1	Count	8	11	19
		% within Version	14.0%	23.9%	18.4%
	2	Count	19	8	27
		% within Version	33.3%	17.4%	26.2%
	3	Count	19	20	39
		% within Version	33.3%	43.5%	37.9%
	4	Count	10	6	16
		% within Version	17.5%	13.0%	15.5%
	5	Count	1	1	2
		% within Version	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

After reading TT1948, 19.3% of the participants consider Daisy to be silly/unintelligent (scores 4 and 5), 47.3% does not consider her so (scores 1 and 2) and 33.3% remains neutral. After reading TT1985, considerably more readers remain neutral (43.5%) and fewer either do (15.2% vs 19.3%) or do not (41.3% vs 47.3%) consider her silly/unintelligent. This suggests a slightly more positive view of Daisy's intelligence in the retranslation, though the relatively large neutral group suggests readers may be unsure about her intelligence, an effect that the ambiguity of the original English ST can also be said to create – Daisy may very well be playing dumb a large part of the time.

Table 8. Scores for character trait *cynisch* [cynical]

"The character is cynical"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	4	6	10
		% within Version	7.0%	13.0%	9.7%
	2	Count	12	8	20
		% within Version	21.1%	17.4%	19.4%
	3	Count	18	8	26
		% within Version	31.6%	17.4%	25.2%
	4	Count	19	19	38
		% within Version	33.3%	41.3%	36.9%
	5	Count	4	5	9
		% within Version	7.0%	10.9%	8.7%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When it comes to Daisy's cynicism, mixed feelings are more clearly noticeable for TT1948 than TT1985. In TT1948, 21.1% selected score 2 (not cynical), 31.6% remained neutral and 33.3% selected score 4 (cynical). After reading TT1985, readers were more clearly convinced of Daisy's cynicism: 41.3% selected score 4, while 17.4% remained neutral and 17.4% selected score 2. Interestingly, this may be taken as a sign that the retranslation was more successful in showing that Daisy is cynical rather than silly or shallow, and therefore more in line with how her behaviour is likely to be interpreted in the source text. This is supported by the findings for *oppervlakkig* [shallow], where 12.3% of the readers of TT1948 selected score 5 versus only 2.2% of the readers of TT1985. Conversely, 17.5% selected score 2 (not shallow) after reading TT1948 versus 30.4% for TT1985.

In order to elicit answers that might help to determine whether or not Daisy is perceived to be shallow, fragment 5 included a reference to the "bantering inconsequence" (1925: 24) of a conversation between Daisy and Jordan. Fragment 4 (discussed above) and fragment 7, which includes Daisy's comment on what she hopes her daughter to become "a beautiful little fool" (1925: 22) were selected to find out if readers would mention Daisy's cynicism.

Table 9. Scores for character trait *oppervlakkig* [shallow]

"The character is shallow"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	2	2	4
		% within Version	3.5%	4.3%	3.9%
	2	Count	10	14	24
		% within Version	17.5%	30.4%	23.3%
	3	Count	20	13	33
		% within Version	35.1%	28.3%	32.0%
	4	Count	18	16	34
		% within Version	31.6%	34.8%	33.0%
	5	Count	7	1	8
		% within Version	12.3%	2.2%	7.8%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Even though *callous* was not included as a separate personality trait in the scoring, we did expect respondents to use this description in their spontaneous responses, in particular after reading fragment 5. The cold indifference that Daisy seems to exude may well contribute to readers' perceptions of Daisy being *shallow*. Yet although answers like *afstandelijk* [detached], *koud* [cold], *koel* [cool], *kil* [cold/impassive], *onverschillig* [indifferent] and *lusteloos* [listless/apathetic] abound in both groups, explicit references to shallowness such as *oppervlakkig* [shallow], *vlak* [shallow] and *zonder diepgang* [without depth/shallow] and *leeg* [empty], *inhoudsloos* [without substance] and *onbeduidend* [inconsequential] were made by only a few respondents, namely six for each translation.

The spontaneous answers regarding Daisy's cynicism are much more unambiguous. They clearly support the findings from the scores regarding the mixed feelings respondents of TT1948 seem to have when it comes to Daisy's cynicism. Although almost the same percentage of readers of both translations

refer to Daisy as cynical and/or bitter, as well as disillusioned and/or disappointed, the remaining labels given by readers of TT1948 were at times contradictory (e.g. strong/confident v. weak/insecure), and more frequent references were made to Daisy being powerless by this group than by the respondents to the retranslation. The clearest difference between the two groups is that readers of TT1948 described Daisy in more negative terms, such as weak, submissive, crazy, irrational, panicky, insecure, nasty and catty, whereas most (though not all) of the remaining the answers of readers of the retranslations suggest that Daisy feels like she is put behind, sad, unhappy, fatalistic, tragic, loving and caring.

3.3.2.1.3 Manipulative and Insincere?

Tables 10 and 11 show the scores for character trait *manipulatief* [manipulative] and *oprecht* [sincere] for *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985).

Table 10. Scores for character trait *manipulatief* [manipulative]

"The character is manipulative"			**Version**		**Total**
			Lili TT1948	**Susan TT1985**	
	1	Count	2	1	3
		% within Version	3.5%	2.2%	2.9%
	2	Count	6	2	8
		% within Version	10.5%	4.3%	7.8%
	3	Count	7	2	9
		% within Version	12.3%	4.3%	8.7%
	4	Count	22	31	53
		% within Version	38.6%	67.4%	51.5%
	5	Count	20	10	30
		% within Version	35.1%	21.7%	29.1%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Contrary to our expectations, the scores for manipulative are much higher for the retranslation: a considerable 67.4% of the respondents selected score 4 for this trait in TT1985, compared to 38.6% in TT1948. However, TT1948 has more 5 scores: 35.1% versus 21.7%. Taken together, a staggering 89.1% find Daisy manipulative after reading TT1985 and 73.7% after reading TT1948.

Table 11. Scores for character trait *oprecht* [sincere]

"The character is sincere"			Version		Total
			Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
	1	Count	6	7	13
		% within Version	10.5%	15.2%	12.6%
	2	Count	30	22	52
		% within Version	52.6%	47.8%	50.5%
	3	Count	14	10	24
		% within Version	24.6%	21.7%	23.3%
	4	Count	6	6	12
		% within Version	10.5%	13.0%	11.7%
	5	Count	1	1	2
		% within Version	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

For *oprecht* [sincere] it is first of all striking that there are no noticeable differences between the two versions. Readers of both TT1948 and TT1985 are united in their opinion that Daisy is insincere: in total, 63.1% (10.5% + 52.6%) of the readers of TT1948 and 63.0% (15.2% + 47.8%) of the readers of TT1985 did not find her sincere. Another 24.6% (TT1948) and 21.7% (TT1985) remained neutral. Only 12.3% (TT1948) and 15.2% (TT1985) considered here sincere to some degree.

It is important to note that the word *manipulatief* [manipulative] is never used in these fragments, so the question remains which fragments, and which lexical choices in these fragments, trigger the readers' interpretation of Daisy's behaviour as manipulative. As discussed above, the Dutch diminutive *maniertje* [mannerism] may very well be one such trigger word. The spontaneous responses show that for fragments 1 and 6 participants used either the word *manipulatief* [manipulative] itself or words related to this character trait. The number of times that manipulative is explicitly mentioned by readers of TT1948 is 22, by nineteen respondents (two using the word for both fragments 1 and 6, and one using the word 4 times: for fragments 1, 3, 4, and 6). For TT1985, the total is 16, by fourteen respondents (two using the word for both fragments 1 and 6). For both groups, two-thirds of the instances in which manipulative is mentioned explicitly are triggered by fragment 1: fifteen of the nineteen respondents to TT1948 and ten of the fourteen respondents to TT1985.

Based on these spontaneous responses, one would have expected the scores for *manipulatief* [manipulative] to have been higher for the 1948 translation, not the 1985 retranslation. The reason behind the finding that the scores showed a higher percentage of the respondents to TT1985 regarding Daisy as manipulative can be sought in other words that may contribute to this picture. The words that may contribute to readers' perception of Daisy being manipulative depend on the context: in fragment 1 they reflect the readers' reactions to the (dis)ingenuous game Daisy seems to play, as well as to her perceived lack of sincerity; in fragment 6 the answers contributing to the picture of a manipulative woman are divided between reactions suggesting that Daisy tries to wrap men around her little finger and respondents labelling her as insincere.

Some of the descriptions used in reaction to fragment 1 that are likely to be a result of the interpretations made by both translators in their use of the diminutive *maniertje* [mannerism] have more negative connotations, such as *listig* [cunning] and *geslepen* [cunning], *berekenend* [calculating], *sluw* [cunning or sly], *slinks* [sly], and *geslepen* [shrewd] or *doortrapt* [shrewd]. Others portray Daisy in a more positive light, such *slim* [smart or clever] and *gewiekst* [clever], *geraffineerd* [clever and cunning] or *uitgekookt* [cunning], which all denote ingenuity with connotations of a certain sneaky admiration. Contrary to what might be expected on the basis of the scores, however, respondents to TT1985 refer to Daisy's playing with the narrator's emotions only slightly more frequently than the respondents to TT1948 (eleven for TT1985 versus ten for TT1948), and the descriptions with more negative and more positive connotations are evenly distributed in both groups of readers.

Both groups of respondents use a range of descriptions that may not be synonyms but which nevertheless point to their regarding Daisy as insincere, such as *nep* [fake], *overdreven* [exaggerated], *onwaarachtig* [disingenuous], *toneelspeelster* [actress], *gemaakt* [pretend] and *onecht* [artificial]. For fragment 1 there are ten respondents in both groups who use such descriptions. For fragment 6, there is a distinct difference between the number of respondents viewing Daisy as insincere on the basis of the answers given by respondents: ten respondents to TT1948 mention behaviour or qualities that might contribute to her being seen as *gespeelde onschuld* [playing innocent], *onecht* [artificial], *nepvamp* [fake femme fatale], *overdreven* [exaggerated], while only four respondents to TT1985 mention similar qualities. Adding up all of these spontaneous responses, the readers of

TT1948 were initially more negative in their view of Daisy in terms of her perceived manipulative behaviour and lack of sincerity than their scores may reveal.

3.3.2.1.4 Seductive?

Table 12. Scores for character trait *verleidster* [temptress]

"The character is a temptress"			Version		Total
			Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
	1	Count	4	1	5
		% within Version	7.0%	2.2%	4.9%
	2	Count	6	5	11
		% within Version	10.5%	10.9%	10.7%
	3	Count	12	13	25
		% within Version	21.1%	28.3%	24.3%
	4	Count	30	21	51
		% within Version	52.6%	45.7%	49.5%
	5	Count	5	6	11
		% within Version	8.8%	13.0%	10.7%
Total		Count	57	46	103
		% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results in table 12 are rather complex: while the highest score (5) is selected more often for TT1985 (13.0% versus 8.8%), score 4 is selected more often for TT1948 (52.6% versus 45.7%). Combining scores 1 and 2, and scores 4 and 5, we then see that for TT1948 17.5% of the participants did not find Daisy a temptress while 61.4% did. For TT1985, 13.1% did not consider her a temptress while 58.7% did. This shows that again, contrary to expectations, the retranslation is received as more negative in its portrayal of Daisy than the 1948 translation, though the differences are small and not statistically significant. Compared to manipulative, Daisy is not perceived as overly seductive. Especially in contemporary readings, this may be considered a sign of Daisy being in control and powerful.

One important issue to consider here though is whether being seductive is actually considered a negative trait by readers: is Daisy seen as flirtatious, playful and spontaneous or as cunning, manipulative and a temptress that uses her charm get her way? Looking at the spontaneous responses to the seven fragments, we see that the notion of a temptress is actually referred to more than twice as much by readers of the first translation: eleven respondents of TT1948 mention the

word *verleidster* [temptress] or *verleidelijk* [seductive] and *verleidend* [seducing] a total of 12 times, against only five respondents of TT1985. Words that might contribute to the image of a woman who is seductive or a temptress, such as *flirterig* [flirtatious], *koket* [coquettish] and *uitdagend* [seductive], are mentioned by both groups of readers. In both groups, too, some answers, such as *opdringerig* [pushy] are clearly negative, while some are positive, e.g. *liefdevol* [loving] or *spontaan* [spontaneous]. There is, however, also a large number responses where it is difficult to gauge to what extent the readers see Daisy's behaviour in a negative light or not, such as *flirterig* [flirtatious], which may imply either playfulness or manipulation, depending on the beholder. Some respondents refer to Daisy's flirtatiousness in combination with positive qualities or behaviour, such as a sense of humour or playfulness, whereas others mention it in combination with references to Daisy being calculating or insincere.

Given the scope of this chapter, it is impossible to zoom on these complex issues in further detail. The only conclusions regarding Daisy's image as a temptress that may be drawn after comparing the spontaneous responses to the scores are that based on the number of times words describing her as a temptress or seductive were explicitly mentioned in the spontaneous responses, the prediction that readers of the first translation would be more likely to see Daisy as a temptress than readers of the retranslation was perfectly plausible, and that the outcome of the scoring for this personality trait is indeed surprising.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to find empirical support for our claims that translator decisions may affect characterization in novels by using a reader response survey. Based on our micro-textual analysis of the two existing Dutch translations of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, we argued that readers of the two Dutch translations are presented with a more negative portrayal of Daisy Buchanan than the English source text, and that readers of the translations may as a result have a more negative opinion about her personality. We argued that both Dutch translations present Daisy as more manipulative, seductive and weak than the English source text, the 1948 translation even more so than the 1985 retranslation. We therefore expected to find that Dutch readers in our reader response survey would demonstrate such negative interpretations of Daisy's personality in their

spontaneous responses as well as in their scoring of a number of personality traits. With regard to the issue of retranslation, we expected the 1948 translation to result in an even more negative reception than the 1985 retranslation.

The results show that readers do indeed spontaneously refer to many negative personality traits, such as shallow, manipulative, weak, insincere, pushy, etc. In addition, for the personality traits *zelfverzekerd* [confident] and *hulpeloos* [helpless] the statistical analysis did indeed confirm that the 1948 translation results in statistically different – more negative – opinions than the 1985 retranslation. Specifically, readers of the 1948 translation found Daisy significantly more helpless and less confident. Though the results for the other personality traits were not statistically significant, some interesting patterns emerged from an analysis of the scores. Based on a combination of the scores and spontaneous responses, we see that the readers of the 1948 translation see Daisy as more helpless, insecure and frightened. With regard to Daisy's cynicism, the responses support the findings from the scores that the respondents of the 1948 translation have mixed feelings, using contradictory labels at times, and referring frequently to Daisy's helplessness, while the respondents to the 1985 retranslation are united in considering Daisy cynical rather than helpless, and also sometimes describe Daisy as being put behind, fatalistic and tragic. Contrary to our expectations, readers of the 1985 retranslation actually found Daisy more manipulative than readers of the 1948 translation when considering the scores. Yet the spontaneous responses showed they were initially more negative. Both groups frequently referred to this characteristic, and variations on it. Though readers of the 1948 translation made more frequent reference to Daisy being a temptress, both groups do not score her as very seductive, and the responses also indicate that this is not necessarily considered a negative trait.

The current study shows both the value and the limitations of using a reader response survey. Working with real readers and spontaneous responses, a lot of data is generated, which is often 'messy' and complex to interpret. Nevertheless, we feel that both the spontaneous responses and the scores yield interesting insights into how the readers are interpreting Daisy's personality, even in response to very short fragments. After reading only seven extremely short fragments, readers already have their opinions ready, and these are clearly rather negative. The results of the responses and scores both support our claims that translator decisions may affect characterisation and result in different opinions from the source text or a previous

translation. We therefore encourage all translators to take note of such effects and reflect more consciously on how existing gender stereotypes may influence our translator decisions, and whether such interpretations are warranted based on the language of the source text. We also feel that retranslations in particular may prove to be a valuable tool in exposing how language perpetuates, confirms or rejects gender stereotypes and how characters are described in terms of their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, social status or education. Obviously, more research is needed on retranslations in general, and on retranslations and their effect on reader responses in particular. But the results of our brief reader response survey clearly show that the cliché is inevitably true: language matters.

3.5 Appendix

Gatsby questionnaires

Fragments presented to participants group A

Version 'Lily'

Fragment 1
Weer lachte ze alsof ze iets heel geestigs gezegd had, en hield mijn hand een ogenblik vast, waarbij ze mij in het gezicht keek als wilde ze mij verzekeren dat er niemand op deze wereld bestond, die ze zo graag zien wou als mij. Dit was een van haar maniertjes.

Fragment 2
Ik vertelde haar, dat ik op weg naar het oosten in Chicago een dag was overgebleven, en dat een dozijn mensen haar lieten groeten.
"Denk je dat ze mij missen?" riep ze extatisch uit.

Fragment 3
… ze gaapte en kwam met enkele vlugge bewegingen stond ze op. "Ik ben stijf," klaagde ze, "ik heb te lang op deze divan gelegen."
"Het is niet mijn schuld," antwoordde Daisy vinnig, "ik heb de hele middag geprobeerd je naar New York te krijgen."

Fragment 4
Voordat ik antwoorden kon, keek ze met angstige uitdrukking naar haar pink. "Kijk!" Klaagde ze, "ik heb hem bezeerd." We keken allen, – de knokkel was zwart en blauw.

Fragment 5
Soms praatten miss Baker en zij gelijktijdig, bescheiden en met schertsende inconsequentie, niet bepaald babbelziek, maar koel zoals haar witte japonnen en haar onpersoonlijke ogen, ontdaan van alle verlangen.

Fragment 6
Alsof zijn afwezigheid iets in Daisy opwekte, leunde zij voorover en zei met haar bedwelmende stem: “Ik ben blij je hier bij ons te hebben, Nick. Je herinnert me aan een – aan een roos, een echte roos. Vind je ook niet?” En vragend keek ze naar miss Baker: “Een echte roos?”

Fragment 7
Ik bemerkte dat onstuimige gevoelens zich van haar meester gemaakt hadden, daarom vroeg ik haar iets over haar dochtertje, in de mening dat het haar kalmeren zou.
…
“En ik hoop dat ze een dwaas zal zijn, - dat is het beste wat een meisje in deze wereld zijn kan, een mooie, kleine dwaas.”

Fragments presented to participants group B

Version ‘Susan’

Fragment 1
Ze lachte weer alsof ze iets heel geestigs had gezegd, en hield mijn hand even vast, waarbij ze mij in de ogen keek, me verzekerend dat er niemand anders ter wereld was die ze zo graag wilde zien. Dat was zo een maniertje van haar.

Fragment 2
Ik vertelde haar dat ik onderweg naar de oostkust mijn reis een dag in Chicago onderbroken had, en dat een dozijn mensen haar liet groeten.
`Missen ze me?’ riep ze opgetogen uit.

Fragment 3
‘Daar moet je mij niet op aankijken,’ beet Daisy van zich af, ‘ik heb je al de hele middag naar New York proberen te krijgen.’

Fragment 4
Voordat ik iets terug kon zeggen, vestigden haar ogen zich met ontzetting vervuld op haar pink. ‘Kijk eens!’ klaagde ze, ‘ik heb hem bezeerd.’ We keken allemaal – de knokkel was bont en blauw.

Fragment 5
Soms praatten juffrouw Baker en zij tegelijk, onopdringerig en met schertsende onbeduidendheid die nooit echt gebabbel werd, die zo koel was als hun witte japonnen en hun onpersoonlijke ogen waarin elk verlangen afwezig was.

Fragment 6
Alsof zijn afwezigheid iets binnenin haar opwekte, leunde Daisy weer voorover, haar stem gloeiend en zangerig. 'Ik vind het fijn je aan mijn tafel te hebben, Nick. Je doet me denken aan een – aan een roos, een absolute roos. Vind je ook niet?' Steun vragend wendde ze zich tot juffrouw Baker: 'Een absolute roos?'

Fragment 7
Ik zag dat ze erg van streek was, dus stelde ik haar een paar, mijns inziens, kalmerende vragen over haar dochtertje.
…
"En ik hoop dat ze een dom gansje zal zijn – dat is het beste wat een meisje kan zijn in deze wereld, een mooi, dom gansje."

Characteristic listed for the participants of both groups to score on a 1 to 5 on a Likert scale

Het vrouwelijke personage is…

assertief
hulpeloos
cynisch
onoprecht
kwetsbaar
dom
egoïstisch
onzeker
bitchy
manipulatief
vol van zichzelf
oppervlakkig
verleidend

CHAPTER 4

It's not all black and white: Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time*

This chapter posits that some of the decisions made by the Dutch translators of *The Fire Next Time* negatively impact the way Black people are portrayed, while some of their translation choices mitigate or erase the accountability of white people for what has been and is being done to Black communities. It seeks to uncover this potential impact by conducting a case study of the two Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time*. The chapter discusses the relative lack of self-awareness regarding racism in Dutch society up until fairly recently and the debate triggered by the 2018 translation, which highlights the issue of white innocence, before presenting a number of examples from the 1963 and 2018 translations, comparing them to Baldwin's original.

This chapter is based on: Zeven, K. (2025). It's Not All Black and White: Dutch Translations of *The Fire Next Time*. *James Baldwin Review*, Volume 11. Manchester University Press and The University of Manchester Library. https://doi.org/10.7227/JBR.11.9

4.1 Introduction

In 2018, a literary translation was awarded the dubious honor of being the cause of a small media storm in the Netherlands. The apple of discord – originally between the publisher and the translator – was the initial use, in Harm Damsma's new Dutch translation of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, of what has been dubbed "*het n-woord*" (EN "the N-word") in the Netherlands. Admittedly, the ensuing debate was limited to literary and translation circles, but at least, and at long last, the issue of racism was given attention in the Dutch national press, leading current affairs magazines and translation circles (Gasthuis, 2018; Beks, 2019; Bootsma, 2019; Naaijkens, 2018). This fact alone might be seen as a step forward from a case of racial insensitivity that had happened only three years previously and had initially been completely ignored by the Dutch media. Here, too, the bone of contention had been the use of the N-word. But while the contested publication – a review of three American books, published in the respectable Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* – eventually caused a veritable Twitter hurricane on both sides of the Atlantic, the issue would likely not have been discussed in the Dutch press at all if a *Washington Post* columnist (Karen Attiah) had not voiced her dismay about the headline of the book review, one of the pictures accompanying it, and the newspaper editor's response to her criticism. The headline – a quote from Paul

Beatty's novel *The Sellout*, one of the books in the review – ran "*Nigger are you crazy?*," while the piece was illustrated by a blackface cartoon.[15] Attiah suggested that while the newspaper editors may have felt they were doing the right thing by devoting a review of three books about race relations in the United States "using the English n-word and blackface in a major newspaper is beyond comprehension at the least, and rage-inducing at worst." (Attiah, 2015). She argued that "by using the fully violent n-word in English, instead of Dutch, the editors felt they were escaping sanction, protecting Dutch readers from the realities of racism and discrimination in their own country while shaking their heads at the plight of blacks in the United States." (Attiah, 2015)

It was telling that the coverage in the Dutch mainstream media primarily commented on the fact that "*Americans* had taken offense" to the use of the N-word in the book review, echoing the reply sent to Attiah by the editor of the book supplement, which contains the remark that "[c]onsidering the fuss in your country it would have been better if we had put the headline between quotation marks." (Schut, 2015; Attiah 2015). Both the coverage in the Dutch media and the reply of the editor only further confirmed one of the points made by the *Washington Post* columnist in the first place, namely that – even though the racial history of the United States and the Netherlands are completely different – the latter has its fair share of racism and yet is largely oblivious to it. As a correspondent for *Vox* succinctly put it: "while *NRC Handelsblad*'s review may have been designed to discuss racism in America, it really ended up highlighting the same in the Netherlands." (Beauchamps, 2015)

Indeed, white-on-black racism was – and sometimes still is – thought of as an American phenomenon by white people in the Netherlands, a sentiment illustrated by Dutch reactions in both national and international media to observations made by those broaching the subject in the Netherlands. For instance, when asked about the racist aspects of the Dutch holiday "*Sinterklaas*" – which features people in blackface – a Dutch national defending the tradition answered a journalist from *USA Today*: "It's not blackface like you used to see in America, which is indeed

[15] Valk, G. (2015, July 31). Hoe vernietig je de zwarte identiteit? *NRC Handelsblad*. https://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2015/07/31/#302; The headline has since been removed from the article and has been replaced by "Nee, het wordt niet beter voor zwarte Amerikanen" ("No, things aren't getting better for African Americans" in the English translation) https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/08/03/nee-het-wordt-niet-beter-voor-zwarte-amerikanen-1520363-a185716 Both the original and the revised article are available in the newspaper's online archive.

racist" (Darroch, 2014). That such a conviction is by no means considered an extremist view may be evidenced by the fact that up until fairly recently, the Netherlands' former centre-right prime minister saw nothing wrong with using blackface as part of the Dutch holiday until he changed his view in 2020.

One of the contributing factors to this lack of self-awareness may be the fact that whereas the direct Dutch translation of the "fully violent n-word" referred to by Attiah ("*nikker*") is considered to be blatantly racist by the majority of the Dutch population, many white people in the Netherlands still use the direct translation of "Negro" ("*neger*") without realizing or acknowledging that it is offensive to Black fellow speakers of Dutch. Having said that, the latter term is gradually being replaced by the term "*het n-woord*" by an increasing number of people. The lack of sensitivity regarding the use of offensive terms is one of the many aspects related to the denial or disavowal of racism and white-on-black prejudice in the Netherlands observed by Dutch researchers such as Dienke Hondius (2009), Gloria Wekker (2016), and Teun van Dijk (1987). Whereas English terms used to refer to Black Americans had evolved from "colored people" in the 1920s and "Negroes" in the 1950s, to "blacks" or "Blacks" from the 1960s onwards, a term subsequently replaced by "African Americans" – with the two latter terms both used nowadays – the Dutch N-word was widely used in the Netherlands well into the twenty-first century. Up to then it was the only available word considered socially acceptable – despite its etymology and the negative meanings attached to the roots and forms of the word.[16] Only recently has it come to be regarded as "problematic" in broader circles, even if there is, as Dienke Hondius notes, still no real alternative for it in popular use.

The fact that, as the 2015 non-debate revealed, racial inequality and stereotyping were considered non-issues by the majority of white Dutch citizens perfectly illustrates the actual blind spot addressed by the very author whose work triggered the 2018 debate about the translation of words that may be offensive and hurtful: James Baldwin. In "My Dungeon Shook," the first essay in *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin confronts his white readers with their ignorance. The racial

[16] The term "*kleurling*" ("coloured person") was used primarily in the context of South Africa under Apartheid for persons of mixed race. As a more general reference for persons of dual heritage (in the Netherlands mainly people from Indonesia) it was already considered as offensive (or old-fashioned at best) in the twentieth century: https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_taa006190501_01/_taa006190501_01_0084.php (Prick van Wely, 1905); Dutch historian and journalist Ewoud Sanders discusses the history of the Dutch N-word in *Het N-woord: De geschiedenis van een beladen begrip*. (Sanders, 2023)

nightmare, in which both Black and white people are imprisoned, can only be ended if white people let go of their innocence. As Baldwin explains to his nephew James, the addressee of the essay: "if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it." (Baldwin, 1963). These lines, which contain *The Fire Next Time*'s central message, are quoted verbatim – in Dutch – by Gloria Wekker in the foreword to the 2018 retranslation by Harm Damsma.

Wekker, a Surinamese-Dutch anthropologist and prominent public intellectual, wrote her foreword to Damsma's translation – which pointedly does *not* discuss the translator's initial use of the Dutch "*n-woord*" – in the form of a letter to her niece Carmen. It mirrors the earnest counsel Baldwin gave his nephew James in "My Dungeon Shook," explaining that it is *white* people who should be changing, *not* Black people. With this foreword, things come round full circle: Wekker sees a young Black generation that is much more self-confident than hers and expresses hope that young Black people in the Netherlands, and especially young Black women, will be able to steer clear of bitterness in a society that is sometimes hostile to them, and may instead flourish. She expresses her hope that her niece will choose to read *The Fire Next Time* for her high school finals, and emphasizes the importance of not internalizing the idea that she would be worth less than others: "Don't believe everything white people say or think about you, that is Baldwin's main message to his nephew, and that message goes for you as well" (Wekker, 2018, p. 25).

In *The Fire This Time*, a collection of texts by contemporary Black writers inspired by Baldwin, Jesmyn Ward shares her feeling that Baldwin is speaking to her and other Black people: "It was as if I sat on my porch steps with a wise father, a kind, present uncle who said this to me. Told me I was worthy of love. Told me I was worth something in the world. Told me I was a human being." (Ward, 2017). At the same time, there is Baldwin's message to white people to take off the blinkers and acknowledge their responsibility. That white Americans, too, were the intended readers of *The Fire Next Time* has been contended by Ben Fried and, furthermore, may be illustrated by the following quotes – the first from James Silberman, Baldwin's publisher at Dial Press, the second from an article in *Time Magazine*, both mentioned by William Weatherby, a British-American author and journalist and Civil Rights activist, in his Baldwin biography: "It was a very sophisticated black man's warning to the white world" and "*Time* reported that

the essay showed Baldwin to be 'the most bitterly eloquent voice of the American Negro,' adding, 'yet it also shows him as one who speaks less for the Negro than to the white.'" (Fried, 2022; Weatherby, 1989, p. 236 and p. 233)

That *The Fire Next Time* was also aimed at white readers is not surprising. After all, it was them, not Black Americans, who needed to be told about what it means to be the victim of social inequality, police brutality, being treated as inferior, or about whites' obliviousness and willful ignorance to the injustices being done to their fellow human beings. Baldwin's goal was to expose the ostrich mentality of whites when it came to racial inequality and injustice. The concept of "innocence," so fundamental to the message of *The Fire Next Time*, is one that Wekker had previously examined with regard to the denial of racism in contemporary Dutch society. In her own words, she was "both shocked and pleased at the similarities between Baldwin's work and my book *White Innocence*" (Wekker, 2018, p. 26). This chapter will explore whether the Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time* show signs of "white innocence" – beyond Damsma's initial insistence on using of the Dutch "*n-woord*" in his 2018 translation, which has been so heatedly debated. However, even though the main focus of this chapter will be on translation choices other than racial labels, it is nevertheless important to first examine the disagreement between the publisher and translator of the retranslation in order to be able to better place the translation choices of both the first translation and the retranslation into their historical and social context.

4.2 Baldwin's Dutch readers and translators and the issue of 'white innocence'

While James Baldwin had already sky-rocketed into fame as a novelist in 1953 after the publication of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, it took more than a decade for him to become a renowned writer in the Netherlands. Up until the 1960s, it was not uncommon for American writers to gain popularity in the Netherlands considerably later than in their home country, and Baldwin was no exception. This decade saw a huge increase in the number of translations and a catch-up effort to translate the works of writers who had not yet been published in Dutch (Naaijkens, 2021). When Baldwin was finally hailed as a brilliant novelist, essayist, social critic and playwright in the Netherlands, the Dutch literary scene scrambled to make up on lost ground: no fewer than four of Baldwin's works were translated into

Dutch in 1963 and 1964 alone, and subsequently most of his novels, plays, and essay collections were published in translation in the 1960s and 1970s. It is not surprising that 1963 is the year that Baldwin became famous in the Netherlands almost overnight, after having been relatively unknown to the Dutch public before. It is not often that a political essay gets labelled "a classic" immediately after its publication, but Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* was an instant hit, sealing his reputation as one of America's foremost writers and gaining him international recognition (Weatherby, 2015). While Baldwin had already published three novels and numerous essays, *The Fire Next Time* established him as what one of his biographers called "literary royalty" (Campbell, 2021). Although *The Fire Next Time* and *Another Country* cemented Baldwin's place in the canon in the sixties, his fame in the US had waned considerably by the 1980s and 90s. The same was true for the Netherlands. To quote Campbell in his foreword to the 2021 edition of *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*:

> When I arrived in New York on my first field trip in the early part of 1988, a writer friend who lived in the city looked down on the Greenwich Village street from the window of the apartment where I was staying and indicated some young black people passing by. "Martin Luther King they might have heard of," he said. "But James Baldwin?" (p. xviii)

In the twenty-first century, especially in the second decade, however, Baldwin was back in spotlight once more – both in the US and in Europe (Verdickt, 2022). Raoul Peck's film *I Am Not Your Negro* and the Black Lives Matter movement contributed to a renewed interest in his writing.[17] Over the past few years, as a Dutch novelist and journalist noted, there has been somewhat of a "Baldwin revival" in the Netherlands (Heerma van Voss, 2018, p. 131). Within just two years' time, three of Baldwin's works were retranslated, including *The Fire Next Time*, which had been published in Dutch in the same year it had come out in the United States. This first translation of *The Fire Next Time* was made by Oscar Timmers, a Dutch writer, translator, and editor for a literary publishing company in 1963. One year later, Timmers also translated Baldwin's 1962 novel *Another Country*.

[17] Without a doubt, Peck's use of "Negro" constitutes an adjustment to contemporary cultural norms. The decision of the Dutch publishing company to use 'black' instead of 'Negro' in the 2018 translation of *The Fire Next Time* can be seen in a similar light.

Timmers was a professional editor and an acclaimed writer, under the pseudonym J. Ritzerfeld, and although he is mentioned as one of the driving forces behind the publication of many literary translations at the prominent publishing house *De Bezige Bij*, very little information can be found about his actual translation work, largely owing to the fact that until the nineteen fifties translation had not been regarded as a professional métier in the Netherlands (Naaijkens, 2017; Verrijt, 2017).

The 2018 retranslation was made by Harm Damsma, who translated two works by Baldwin in a single year; in addition to the retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*, a retranslation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* was published. While Damsma is a respected literary translator with a solid track record – including well-received translations of novels by other African American authors, such as Colson Whitehead and Jesmyn Ward – his Baldwin translations became a source of discord between himself and the Dutch publisher, *Uitgeverij De Geus*, and the Black editor employed by the publishing company.[18] Whereas neither the translation of the N-word in Whitehead's novels, nor the use of the Dutch "*n-woord*" in the retranslation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* made waves in the media, Damsma's retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* caused a great deal of controversy. He had translated the word "Negro" in the original with the Dutch N-word in both Baldwin translations, a decision that was overruled by the publisher.

The disagreement between the publisher and the translator was discussed at great length in Dutch broadsheets, blogs, and essays (e.g. de Rek, 2018, Bakker, 2019; Beks, 2019). Critics and readers were either outraged by the translator's initial use of the Dutch N-word or, alternatively, by the publisher's decision to replace it with a non-offensive alternative (van der Werf, 2018). A complicating factor in the debate is that the Dutch "*n-woord*," a direct translation of "Negro," denotes a different offensive term than its English counterpart, the "N-word," which would be "*nikker*" in Dutch. While the latter is, in fact, the "fully violent n-word," the direct translation of "Negro" has become regarded by a younger generation as almost equally objectionable. The publishing company, which evidently had a new generation of readers in mind – a generation which, as translation scholars point out (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019), may have new "translational

[18] As Verdickt observes: "On the imprint page of the new Dutch translation of *The Fire Next Time*, De Geus mentions that it has used inclusivity as a point of departure for its translation strategies" (Verdickt 2022, p. 212).

needs" – added a statement to the credits page explaining their choice to use "*zwart(e mensen)*" (EN "Black (person/people)") instead of the Dutch N-word for the translation of "Negro" in the original, and to adopt "*wit*" (EN "white") instead of "*blank*" ("fair" or "Caucasian") for the translation of "white.". The rationale given was that they wished "to do justice to the author in the language used in contemporary Dutch society, taking the principle of inclusiveness as a point of departure" (Baldwin, 2018, credits page, my translation).[19] In an afterword to the translation, the translator states that he does understand the reasons why the publisher wished to replace a word that a new generation of readers will most likely take exception to. He acknowledges that soon after the publication of *The Fire Next Time* the English word itself came to be seen as offensive and therefore unacceptable – and, as he puts it "perhaps even vexing, given the extent to which the use of this word is now considered to be taboo." (Damsma in Baldwin, 2018). Nevertheless, in his afterword Damsma is adamant that the direct Dutch translation he had opted for would have been the better choice. He argues that at the time when Baldwin wrote *The Fire Next Time* the word "Negro" was still widely regarded as politically correct, and that, moreover, Black Americans themselves – not just Baldwin – used the same word. He adds that the Dutch N-word, likewise, was commonly used and accepted speech, and seen as neutral and inoffensive at the time. He claims that its frequent occurrence in *The Fire Next Time* means that Baldwin's use of the word is "stylistically marked," and that it is historically relevant "because it heralds the change in language that was about to take place" (Damsma in Baldwin, 2018, p. 163).

The argument of wishing to preserve a term used by the author himself can be considered a valid one. However, the grounds set forth by Damsma in his rebuttal, namely the fact that Black Americans used it in 1963, and that its use in *The Fire Next Time* is historically relevant *for that reason*, especially given its frequent occurrence, do not hold water. It is important to note that Baldwin does not use the terms "black" and "Negro" randomly or interchangeably: he uses the latter expressly to describe Black Americans, a conscious choice that is most clearly illustrated by the following line from 'Down at the Cross': "The American Negro is a unique creation; he has no counterpart anywhere, and no predecessors" (Baldwin, 1963, p. 73). In other words, Baldwin's use of the word "Negro" may

[19] The word "*blank*" does not reflect the fact that race is a social construct.

indeed be seen as a rhetorical device, but not for the reasons that Damsma puts forward to justify his translation choice, that is, the frequency with which the word occurs. Baldwin reserves the use of the word for those instances – admittedly many – in which he is referring to Black Americans, in particular when describing them and the situations they are required to navigate in US society – in other words, when addressing what was known as "the Negro problem."

This distinction between "black" and "Negro" is one of the many subtle ways in which Baldwin conveys his central message: the race problem is not about what Black Americans are or what they want, it is about white Americans not wishing to acknowledge what is wrong with society and their role in it. As Baldwin puts it an interview recorded in the documentary *Take this Hammer*: "You're the nigger baby, it isn't me." (Baldwin in Moore, 1963) One of his recent biographers, Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (2020), explains: "The problem was white people. For Baldwin, there was no such thing as 'the Negro problem.'" (p. 105). Glaude echoes Baldwin's legendary assertion that white people have invented "the n*****", meaning that white people, in order not to have to face their fears and be held accountable for their country's brutal history, feel the need to perpetuate the lie of Black inferiority. It is a mechanism that Baldwin explains over and again, not just in *Take this Hammer*, but also in *The Price of the Ticket*, and, most importantly for the purpose of this study, in *The Fire Next Time*: "For Baldwin, the problem rested at the feet of white America. All they had to do was look down." (Glaude, 2020, p, 106)

So how to do justice to Baldwin's message in another language? How to convey the essence of *The Fire Next Time* to Dutch readers – readers who may not necessarily be familiar with American history and racial issues in the United States then and now? In her foreword to the Dutch 2018 translation, Wekker (2018, p. 16) asserts that the vastly different social circumstances and historical context have meant that the Netherlands had never been forced to truly give any thought to issues of slavery, allowing for a myth of racial equality to persist. While the Dutch were involved in the slave trade, the brutal reality of Dutch plantations in the Caribbean was thousands of miles away, and it was not until the 1970s that Black Dutch citizens from the former colonies moved to the Netherlands. It is only recently that the Dutch are slowly starting to acknowledge the past and its negative impact on Black people in their own country. This is a conclusion drawn by other scholars comparing the different historical contexts in Europe, too (Ball, Steffens & Niedlich, 2022; Essed & Hoving, 2014).

Given the fact that a translator, like anyone else, does not live in a vacuum, it is not inconceivable that both Dutch translators may have been influenced by prevailing ideas regarding racial inequality in the Netherlands, in 1963 and 2018, respectively. As Esther Allen (2013), an American writer, translator, and academic observes:

> Translators, like authors, are the product of social structures and circumstances; translators, like authors, play a role in bolstering or challenging those structures and continually altering the linguistic and narrative tools brought to bear on them, as well as the attitudes and norms that produce them. (p. 101)

This will undoubtedly go for Damsma's conviction that he was "doing the right thing" by translating "Negro" with "*neger*," and may well apply to other translation choices made by him, too. The same will be true for Timmers' translation, made over half a century ago, when there was little to no public debate on racial inequality in the Netherlands. The rest of this chapter will take a close look at the linguistic choices in the two Dutch translations that might attest to the "innocence" displayed by those taken to task by Baldwin: the majority of white people. There might be much more to "white innocence" in translation than the entire debate in the Netherlands about racial labels. At the same time, avoiding making translation mistakes – despite one's best intentions – may be harder than might appear at first sight. It's not all black and white.

The phenomenon of "innocence" described by James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* and branded "the lie" by Glaude would today be labelled as a form of "implicit racial bias," referring to prejudiced perceptions and behavior that may not be outright racist in the conventional sense of the word, but which nevertheless involve racial prejudice – with individuals likely not aware of their bias (Maryfield, 2018). Trepagnier (2016), who refers to such a lack of awareness as "silent racism," contends that "there are two primary manifestations" of this form of racism: "*stereotypical images*" and "*paternalistic assumptions*" (p. 24). There is a great deal of research on language issues related to racial bias, both conscious and implicit, and both in terms of its causes and effects, such as covert racism, linguistic othering, and racial stereotyping (Alim, 2016; Pandey, 2004). When it

comes to research into linguistic choices and racial stereotyping in *translated* texts, however, studies are few and far between. Those that do highlight racial prejudice in translations tend to focus on translating as a political act, translating racially prejudiced texts from the past, the translation of racial slurs and racial epithets, approaches regarding the translation of the N-word used by Black writers, translation strategies used to convey AAVE, or racial stereotyping as a result of translation strategies used to translate AAVE (e.g. Fleck, 2016; Opperman, 2017; Hanes, 2018; Kujawska-Lis, 2008; Schyns, 2019; Berthele, 2000; Wu & Chang, 2008; Wekker & Wekker 1991). Little to no research, however, has been conducted into the potential effects of translation choices regarding more general lexical items and grammatical structures on racial stereotyping and implicit racial bias, certainly not where Dutch literary translations are concerned.[20] The chapter aims to fill this gap by comparing the linguistic differences between Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* and its two Dutch translations in order to look into the ways translation decisions may unconsciously contribute to racial stereotypes and to a perpetuation of "white innocence."

For the purposes of this chapter, "innocence" will be taken to mean white people's belief that they are non-racist, to the extent that they may well be complicit in social injustice. It comprises a collective denial by white people of racism combined with a disavowal of their own accountability, often labelled "white ignorance" by US and Dutch academics.[21] The phrase "that they… do not know it and do not *want* to know it" (Baldwin, 1963, p. 14, italics mine) suggests that the "innocence" that Baldwin accuses white Americans of encompasses both their lack of awareness and the denial of their own racism. Barbara Applebaum (2015), whose research focuses on ethics and education and who aims to contribute to combatting "color-blindness" and social injustice in the classroom, outlines the twofold meaning of the concept of "white innocence" in an illuminating manner:

> White moral innocence depends on a need not to know about one's complicity so that one's perception of oneself as an upstanding moral

[20] Corine Tachtiris' *Translation and Race* addresses many valuable issues (Tachritis, 2024). It does, however, not include an in-depth study of the effect of translation choices regarding general lexical and grammatical features on racial stereotyping and perpetuation of white innocence.

[21] The active denial is sometimes also referred to as "white ignorance." See e.g. Mills, 2017 and Essed & Hoving, 2014, p. 10.

> agent is not disturbed. The double meaning of the term innocence is instructive. The term is often employed to describe one as naïve, unaware, or uninitiated, but it is also used to define someone as not guilty of a crime or offense, not responsible or morally blameworthy. (p. 451)

Applebaum's explanation, with its reference to righteousness, virtuousness, and blamelessness, echoes Baldwin's contention that "[i]t is the innocence which constitutes the crime," (Baldwin, p. 14) encompassing both meanings of the word as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary: "freedom from sin, guilt, or moral wrong in general; the state of being untainted with, or unacquainted with, evil; moral purity" and "freedom from specific guilt; the fact of not being guilty of that with which one is charged; guiltlessness". The first OED definition comprises notions that conjure up the world of the pulpit (sin, untainted, evil), whereas the second meaning belongs to the courtroom (guilty, charged). In what follows, I will in particular examine the latter side of that same coin, because while Baldwin's language may be reminiscent of the black church tradition he grew up in, it is the indictment he presents that is most prominent in *The Fire Next Time*.

4.3 Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time*

The analysis will compare a selection of lines from the original (hereafter "TFNT") and the 1963 and 2018 Dutch translations, hereafter "TT1" and "TT2" for "target text 1" and "target text 2" respectively. Gloss translations will be provided for all Dutch words and phrases. In order to uncover how Baldwin's account of racial inequality and his call for white accountability are conveyed in the respective translations, the following two criteria for selection have been applied: first of all, the analysis includes references made by Baldwin to the lives and social circumstances of Black Americans in general and his own person and family in particular, and the conduct, views, and interactions of white and Black Americans. Secondly, the analysis includes explicit and implicit mentions of "innocence." The examples discussed cover a number of decisions made by the translators that may either negatively impact the way Black people are portrayed or that may mitigate or erase the accountability of white people for what has been and is being done to Black communities, thus sustaining racial stereotypes and allowing white innocence in the Netherlands to continue.

Both Timmers' 1963 translation and Damsma's 2018 retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* are entitled *Niet door water maar door vuur* (EN: "Not through water but through fire"), retaining the reference to the biblical metaphor of fire as apocalyptic judgement. But what about the accusation brought by Baldwin? Levelling an allegation against white Americans, while alluding to the Christian concept of mercy, Baldwin states:

> And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. (Baldwin, 1963, p. 14)

The 1963 translation is more "literal" than the 2018 translation in many respects. First of all, it retains the rhetorical device of repetition (in particular the anaphoric use of "and") that Baldwin employs to really drive home his message to a greater degree than the second translation. In other respects, too, TT1 also makes more use of "direct" translation than TT2, which is most evident in the different translations used for "crime" and "accuse."[22] In Dutch, there are two ways to translate the word "crime," one of which is the general, lay word "*misdaad*" (TT1, p. 10) (EN "crime"), the other being a proper legal term: "*misdrijf*" (TT2, p. 39) (EN "misdemeanor" or "serious offence").[23] The 1963 translator chooses the first option, the 2018 translator the second one. In addition, TT2 translates "accuse" as "*verantwoordelijk hou*" (TT2, p. 39) (EN "hold responsible"), as opposed to the direct translation "*beschuldig*" (TT1, p. 10) (EN "accuse") in TT1. In "My Dungeon Shook" Baldwin never once minces his words; he unambiguously blames white Americans for not wanting to acknowledge that they have destroyed so many Black lives. Softening of Baldwin's words in any way means doing a disservice to the reader. However eloquent Baldwin expresses his anger, he is outraged, and he does not pussyfoot around; understating his unreserved accusation diminishes

[22] The term "direct translation" is used in Translation Studies as a translation strategy that covers literal translation and words and phrases borrowed from other languages.

[23] Please note that this is only the case for Dutch as used in The Netherlands (as used by both translators); in Belgium, both "*misdrijf*" and "*misdaad*" are legal terms, the former being the blanket term for criminal offences, while the latter denotes a serious criminal offence (cf. AE "felony"): https://www.vlaanderen.be/team-taaladvies/taaladviezen/misdaad-misdrijf (accessed March 27, 2024).

the impact of his fury. And while Baldwin may be an accomplished human rights advocate, the language he uses is straightforward and intentionally does not contain legal jargon. The legal language in TT2 creates a distance, sanitizing the crime as it were, making it sound less ugly.

All aspects of Baldwin's language – lexis, syntax, schemes – are simple, direct and forceful, so that there can be no mistake about what he means. Baldwin's position that "[i]t is the innocence which constitutes the crime" (TFNT, p. 14) is abundantly clear, given that the word "constitutes" means "to comprise," "to be (equivalent to)": white innocence *is* the crime. TT1, which reads "*Het is de onschuld die de misdaad bepaalt*" (TT1, p. 11) (EN "It is the innocence that defines/determines the crime"), appears to miss this point completely, even if the difference between the translation and the original seems just a minor one. TT2, diverting from the original a great deal more with a structural change to "*Het is de onwetendheid die het zo misdadig maakt*" (TT2, p. 40) (EN "It is the ignorance that makes it so criminal"), actually comes closer to Baldwin's message, despite the loss of rhetorical force. Baldwin impresses on his nephew the importance of not believing what white people say about Black people, since "[y]ou can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a *nigger*." (ibid., p. 13). The difference in the way the N-word and the label "white" have been translated should not come as a surprise. TT1 uses the "fully violent" N-word (TT1, p. 9) (EN N-word) and "*blanke*" (EN "fair-skinned person," "Caucasian"), TT2 copies the English N-word presumably to avoid what has long been the most extreme Dutch racial slur.[24] For "white," TT2 uses the contemporary Dutch reference "*witten*" ("whites"). The more salient difference concerns the complete phrase beginning "what the white world" TT1, again, adopts the approach of a direct translation (TT1, p. 9), but TT2 makes a structural change to "*wat men in de wereld van de witten een 'nigger' noemt*" (TT2, p. 38) (EN "what people in the world of the whites call a 'nigger'"). Using the impersonal pronoun "*men*" (EN "one") disguises the agent, thus creating distance and, as a result, a lack of responsibility, rather than unambiguously acknowledging that "the white world" in its entirety is to be held accountable for the destruction of Black people.

There are instances, on the other hand, where Baldwin's choice of words is more open to interpretation. When he first addresses his nephew, Baldwin describes

[24] It is worth noting that Baldwin only uses "nigger" once in 'My Dungeon Shook', and merely twice in 'Down at the Cross'.

how he is reminded of his father and brother: "Like him, you are tough, dark, vulnerable, moody – with a very definite tendency to sound truculent because you want no one to think you are soft." (TFNT, p. 13). Of his nephew's characteristics, the following differences between the two translations in comparison with the original stand out: TT1 uses "*taai*" (TT, p. 9) (EN "tough," "tenacious") for "tough," making for a fairly positive description, TT2 uses "*onverzettelijk*" (TT2, p. 38) (EN either "firm," "steadfast" or "unbending," "indomitable"), which may thus be read as either more positive, or, alternatively – given the latter interpretation's connotations of stubbornness and uncompromising attitude – more negative. The phrase "with a tendency to sound truculent" remarkably enough loses the verb "sound" in both translations. The difficulty with the word "truculent" is that has multiple meanings, which inevitably results in room for individual interpretation by a translator. TT1's "*met een heel duidelijke neiging tot agressiviteit*" (TT1, p. 9) (EN "with a very clear tendency towards aggression") paints a very negative picture that is by no means present in the original. The translation might be a reflection of a common prejudice towards Black males, presenting the pejorative stereotype of "the threatening black male". TT2's "*sterk geneigd je strijdvaardig op te stellen*" (TT2, p. 38) (EN "strongly inclined to stand up for yourself") includes slight connotations of belligerence, whereas "truculent" in this context, given the combination with "moody," suggests that Baldwin describes his nephew as sounding surly and fiercely self-assertive rather than belligerent.

Having said that, being pugnacious does not necessarily imply aggression or threat. It is here that the consequences of not including the verb become evident: young James only *sounds* truculent. In fact, given the rhetorical device of antithesis employed by Baldwin by contrasting "truculent" and "soft," his nephew is most likely quite gentle and sensitive, and it is exactly because he is vulnerable, he does not want to show this to the outside world. The misinterpretations in both translations, which translate "soft" with "*week*" (TT1, p. 9) (EN "weak") and "*een slapjanus*" (TT2, p. 38) (EN "a wimp"), underline the reverse of the impression of an aggressive young man in the first translation, and of a stubborn, somewhat belligerent one in the second rather than a teenager who is soft-hearted but nevertheless wants to come across as someone who can stand up for himself. While neither translation seems a just portrayal of Baldwin's nephew, the first one may well – however unconsciously – sustain the prejudice that "young and black" equals "dangerous."

The following example appears to be diametrically opposed to the image of an aggressive and dangerous black man. In the scene where his younger self is lying on the church floor, Baldwin explains that Black people in America are forced to fend for themselves. Wedged in between this explanation and his despair that God must surely be white, he states that "Black people, mainly, look down or look up but do not look at each other, not at you, and white people, mainly, look away." (TFNT, pp. 33-34). Given the context and the many religious allusions (for example, the threshing floor as a symbol of judgement and the separation of good and evil), these movements in all directions – down, up, at each other, away – are at the same time allusions to heaven and hell. They suggest the stark choice between wretched circumstances, destruction, and despondency on the one hand and seeking refuge in religion on the other, as well as the road to hell (that is, crime) versus the aspiration to better oneself (that is, going to church and climbing the social ladder). Nowhere is there a reference to the deference suggested in the 2018 translation by adding the word "*nederig*" (TT2, p. 68) (EN "humbly," "submissively"). It is difficult to decide whether this translation choice contributes to the stereotype of a docile and meek Black person whose conduct is self-abasing, or whether it mainly reflects badly on white people's sense of superiority causing such behavior.[25]

Another stereotype perpetuated in the 2018 translation is that of the strong black woman, in particular the hard-working black domestic. In "My Dungeon Shook," Baldwin tells young James about his own mother, who embodies Black women of her generation who worked in white households yet were invisible to their white employers: "Your countrymen don't know that she exists, either, though she has been working for them all their lives." (TFNT, p. 15). TT2 adds a word that is not present in the original ("*krom*" [EN " bent," "stooped"]) turns "has been working for them" into "*heeft zich… voor hen krom gewerkt*" (TT2, p. 41) (EN "has worked her fingers to the bone for them"). It adds unsolicited pity, reminiscent of "white savior" behavior.[26] As a result, the translation comes across as patronizing rather than compassionate, however well-intentioned. Baldwin introduces us to a quintessential example of what is actually being done to strong black women: "an indestructible aunt rewarded for years of hard labor by a slow,

[25] David Olusoga (2016) comments on this picture of meekness and passivity.

[26] This phenomenon is discussed in academia and other publications, such as Steele (2006) and Nzume (2017).

agonizing death in a terrible small room" (TFNT, p. 26). Having both translated "hard labor" as "*noeste arbeid*" (TT1, p. 24, TT2, p. 57) (EN "unremitting labor," "industry"), it is obvious that neither translator has picked up on the forced nature of the work, which to more observant readers brings to mind slavery times. And there are other references to slavery that both translators have overlooked, such as "standing on the auction block" (TFNT, p. 32), which TT1 translates as "*op de hoek van een straat*" (EN "at the corner of a street") and TT2 as "*in de aanbieding*" (EN "on special offer"). Although the Dutch reader will get the gist of what Baldwin is saying, with the unpleasant idea of being treated like a commodity, the edge has been taken off the brutal reality of slavery.

There seems to be a pattern to this "softening" of the picture that Baldwin paints to his readers when it comes to both translations, in particular the retranslation. A few of the many examples of this mechanism include the way in which the translators have dealt with Baldwin's references to the constant violence, humiliation, and dehumanization Black people constantly have had to endure. The 1963 and 2018 translation of "they, the blacks, simply don't wish to be beaten over the head by the whites" (TFNT, p. 27) both lack the direct reference to violence (a realistic notion, considering, for instance, police brutality against Black people). The respective translations read as follows: "*zij, de negers, wensen alleen maar niet de grond ingekeken te worden door de blanken*" (TT1, p. 27) (EN "they, the negroes, simply don't wish to be looked into the ground by looks of the whites") and "*zij, die zwarte mensen, willen alleen maar dat ze… niet voortdurend de kop van Jut hoeven te zijn*" (TT2, p. 58) (EN "They, those black people, simply don't wish to permanently be a fairground try-your-strength-machine"). First of all, TT2's change of "the" into "*die*" (EN "those") seems to imply that the statement concerns a limited number of Black people only. More importantly, however, is the way in which both translations have translated the phrase "being beaten over the head." While the first translation lacks an allusion to violence altogether, the retranslation replaces the violent image of being "beaten" with the figure of speech "*kop van Jut*." This idiomatic expression carries the metaphorical sense of "forever getting the blame," but does not convey the image of brutality against Black people. TT2 also leaves out the agents, those responsible for the violence committed: "the whites."

As for euphemizing, the translation decisions regarding the two phrases with which Baldwin underlines his determination never to be dehumanized may serve

as another example. TT1's literal rendering of "before I would let any white man spit on me, before I would accept my 'place' in this republic" retains the picture of being spat at – an image so intensely degrading that Baldwin later, in *No Name in the Street*, describes Dorothy Counts being spat at as the a decisive moment in his life (Scott, 2009, p. 143). TT2 makes the image much less powerful by a gross generalization, opting for the translation "*vernederen*" (TT2, p. 60) (EN: "humiliate") instead of "spit on." Being spat on is so dehumanizing that translating it as "humiliate" is a type of sanitizing. Having said that, the retranslation does retain the sense of being treated as less than human at other places in the text, for example by opting for "*beest*" (TT2, p. 133) (EN animal," "beast," "creature") instead of simply "*dier*" (TT1, p. 89) (EN "animal") and even repeating the word instead of replacing it by "one," in order to underscore the heinous way in which whites treat Black people in the phrase "sold like an animal and treated like one" (TFNT, p. 74). The second translator's good intentions are also evident in what seems to be an eagerness to portray Black Americans in a favorable light multiple times. When Baldwin makes a mock-harsh comment about "the benighted black" (TFNT, p. 41), for instance, Damsma, unlike Timmers, who translates "benighted" as "*achterlijk*" (TT1, p. 44) (EN "backward"), opts for "*achtergesteld*" (TT2, p. 80) (EN "discriminated against," "slighted"). Although this translation does not convey Baldwin's biting tone, this translation choice at least achieves the desired result the translator seems to have had in mind, unlike the example discussed above regarding the "invisible" domestic, which could be regarded as a botched attempt to show one's good intentions, or, alternatively, an example of negative stereotyping.

4.4 Conclusion

The aim of scrutinizing the Dutch translations in this chapter was to address the potential impact of translation choices on the perpetuation of Black racial stereotypes, whether intentional or not, and to highlight white innocence on the part of the translators. The preceding examples serve as illustrations that it is imperative that white people cast off their innocence and acquire a real understanding of what systemic racism means in practice. Baldwin tells the white reader how differently they would think about racism if they were to put themselves not merely in a Black person's shoes, but to imagine what it must be like to *be*

Black, which means that no matter what you do, you are still seen as inferior. It is a missed opportunity, therefore, that the 2018 translation "normalizes" Baldwin's appeal to "put yourself in the skin of a man" (TFNT, p. 51) by skipping the word "skin," thus failing to truly imagine what it is like to be Black. It seems to be the case for both translations that, despite their many merits, they still betray the innocence that Baldwin refers to, and that they contain a number of cases in which Black stereotypes are perpetuated. Given that empathy alone might not be enough to gain a true understanding of what another person experiences, the translations underscore the importance of a communal effort to end racism.

A year after the publication of his translation of *The Fire Next Time*, Damsma appears to have taken this message on board: in a panel discussion at the translation event *Vertaalslag 2019* on changing norms in language use, Damsma said that, in hindsight, he probably would not have accepted the commission of translating *The Fire Next Time* and that he would certainly take up the offer of having the support of a Black reader if he was asked to translate the work of a Black author in the future.[27] This exchange, however, throws up the thorny questions of "who translates what" and "who translates how": skin color alone does not – or at least ought not to – determine one's ability to get Baldwin's message across in translation.[28] More importantly though, countering racism ought not to be the responsibility of Black people alone. As a matter of fact, it is time that white people, very much including myself, step up to the plate. White people should not feel exonerated from engaging in the task to end racism. It is time to "cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it" (TFNT, p. 17), to challenge one's own unconscious biases and become an active anti-racist. In other words, it is time to shed our innocence. In the final lines of "Down at the Cross," Baldwin appeals to "the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks" urging them to "insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others… to end the racial nightmare."[29] It is an appeal that everyone, including translators, should take to heart.

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[27] During a panel discussion at "Vertaalslag 2019: Vertalen anno nu," Sayonara Stutgard (writer, editor, translator, and founder of publishing house *Chaos*) addressed the issue of sensitivity / Black readers.

[28] Bringing up the issue of "the role of whiteness in a variety of translation norms in the West," Tachtiris asks the question: "Who is most 'qualified' to translate a particular text?." Introduction to Corine Tachtiris, *Translation and Race* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2024), p. 7.

[29] Ibid., p. 89.

CHAPTER 5

The devil is in the detail: doing justice to James Baldwin's message

There will never be justice in the world unless white people fully acknowledge their racism and shed their white innocence. James Baldwin's message in *The Fire Next Time* is abundantly clear, but whether this message is equally clear in the 2018 Dutch retranslation is not self-evident. The strategy of 'risk management' adopted by the translator to make the text accessible and understandable to contemporary Dutch readers may actually have an adverse effect on the readers' understanding of Baldwin's essay, to the extent that it goes against its key message. The present chapter aims to illustrate this by conducting a close-reading of the pivotal part of *The Fire Next Time* and its 2018 Dutch retranslation, showing that when translating Baldwin's rhetorical masterpiece tiny – and seemingly insignificant – differences between the source text and a translation critically affect the fundamental message of systemic racism conveyed in the original. The aim of this chapter is thus to highlight the insidious nature of implicit bias and to demonstrate that a risk-avoiding translation strategy sometimes has an undesirable effect – one that is at odds with the translator's intentions, and one that actually displays the white innocence for which Baldwin takes his readers to task.

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5.1 *The Fire Next Time* – Baldwin's rhetorical devices and discursive tools

'The white man sure is a devil. He proves that by his own actions.' In what is possibly the most famous twentieth century essay on racism – James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* – the word 'devil' is repeated no fewer than 15 times. But while the reader might expect Baldwin to turn to the image of the devil when speaking about 'the evil within' (TFNT, p. 23), that is, his *own* sins – after all, he was steeped in the "fire and brimstone" tradition of his father's Baptist church and the essay starts with his church experiences – all allusions to the devil are made *about others*, *by others*. The frequent use of the word 'devil' (without exception a reference to white people) occurs in what is the central part of his 1963 autobiographical essay 'Down at the Cross' ('Letter from a Region in my Mind'), which forms the second half of The Fire Next Time: an account of his meeting with Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam at the time.[30]

[30] Baldwin's second personal essay included in *The Fire Next Time* (hereafter 'TFNT') will be referred to as 'Down at the Cross'.

The essay was originally intended for *Commentary*, a Jewish opinion magazine on religion, politics, and social and cultural issues, and one of the first to publish Baldwin's writings.[31] The editor, Norman Podhoretz, had commissioned him to write an article about Black Muslims. Baldwin's sentiments regarding The Nation of Islam and its members' views form the fulcrum on which the convictions expressed in 'Down at the Cross' pivots, both in the literal and figurative sense of the word.[32] His encounter with Elijah Muhammad, which took place in 1961, proved to be a significant one for Baldwin. It caused him to further reflect on the issues of redemption and salvation, prompting the question of where he stood – not necessarily on religion (after all, he had already turned his back on the church) or his own personal flaws, but also (and even more so) on the potential consequences of believing that white people are quite literally inhuman and therefore cannot be saved (McLarney, 2019, pp. 55-56). Whereas Elijah Muhammad's unambiguous message is that whites are devils, that they are beyond redemption and that the destruction of white Americans is near, Baldwin is unable to dismiss whites as purely evil.[33] Neither does he want to give in to hate (McLarney, 2019, pp. 61-62). At the end of his audience with Elijah Muhammad, after quipping 'I was, in fact, going to have a drink with several white devils on the other side of town' (TFNT, p. 69), he explains why he does not agree with the doctrine of the Nation of Islam regarding the manner in which true freedom, justice and empowerment for Black Americans might be attained. Although Baldwin is all too familiar with the crimes of whites against Blacks, and although he does not 'turn the other cheek', he nevertheless feels that there is a possibility – no matter how slight – to 'end the racial nightmare' (TFNT, p. 89). The only chance to do so is when 'the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks… insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others' (TFNT p. 89).

This study, of course, is not the first one to make the observation that the need to do exactly that is just as urgent today – if not more so – than in 1963, in Europe as much as in the US. The contribution the present study aspires to make is to show that when translating *The Fire Next Time* even minute and seemingly

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[31] It was only because he had spent an advance given to him by *The New Yorker* that he submitted the essay to the latter (Weatherby 1989, pp. 233-234).

[32] This chapter, like Baldwin, will use the name 'Black Muslim movement' and 'Nation of Islam' to refer to the African American nationalist religious organization led by Elijah Muhammad at the time.

[33] McLarney (2019) comments extensively on Baldwin's "extensive engagement with Black Muslim thought" and his rejection of it because of its "racial essentialism, racial segregation, and racial supremacy" (McLarney, 2019, pp. 61).

insignificant differences between the source text and a translation may critically affect the fundamental message conveyed in the original.

The trope of the 'white devil', employed not by Baldwin (at least not in a direct manner), but by the members of the Nation of Islam, combined with the fact that it is reiterated so many times by Baldwin as the author of 'Down at the Cross', is one of the many rhetorical devices that Baldwin uses to encourage his white readers to take off their blinkers, and cease to be 'ignorant': 'This mirror held up to white racism was one of the Black Muslims' most powerful discursive tools, a tool Baldwin bends toward his own purposes' (McLarney, p. 62). The strength of Baldwin's message thus lies not just in the denunciation of racism itself (in all its guises), but also in the persuasive techniques he draws on in his appeal to 'the relatively conscious', as Baldwin outs it at the end of his essay (TFNT, p. 89). In his reception study of 'Down at the Cross', Fried (2022) argues how 'Baldwin builds in prose a structure of mutual reflection that challenges his white readers to surmount their innocence' and that 'the process of reading… becomes its own political effect, explicitly named by the author as the *effort* of the "relatively conscious" to "insist on, or create, the consciousness of others".' (p. 70, italics mine). In other words, reading 'Down at the Cross' is – or at least should be – making a real endeavour to understand systemic racism and the insidious nature of covert racism, and to become aware of one's own implicit bias.

Whereas Fried focuses on white readers, Houck (2017) points out how Baldwin encourages Black readers to become aware of the construct of race, and how it prevents them from breaking free of the erroneous assumption that they are inferior:

> In asking his readers to see precisely the constructed-ness of blackness, and therefore whiteness, Baldwin's rhetorical strategy comes into better focus: a meta-rhetoric that seeks to persuade blacks, and whites, that they can choose to see differently, that in fact blackness and whiteness are rhetorical creations, not biological facts. (p. 114)

It is therefore all the more important that translators of his work – who are both readers and mediators for others – are aware that Baldwin's use of rhetorical skills[34] in *The Fire Next Time* is not a mere display of eloquence or lyricism. And it is vital

[34] Although primarily concerned with Baldwin's oratorical skills, the importance of studying Baldwin's rhetorical agility in *The Fire Next Time* has been stressed by Houck (2017) in 'Who's the nigger now?'.

that they are conscious of the fact that even the tiniest difference between the source text and the translation may determine whether or not Baldwin's message is truly conveyed: when it comes to the voice of the translator, the devil is in the detail.

The importance of making a genuine effort to become fully aware of our own preconceptions and blind spots (not just implicit biases, but also the fact that race is a construct) applies to all readers addressed by Baldwin in his 'Letter' – both white and black, and both actual readers and translators, including contemporary ones (such as myself). It is the reason why this paper will present a close-reading of a number of instances in which *The Fire Next Time* raises such preconceptions, comparing the source text examples to the Dutch 2018 translation, occasionally (where relevant) contrasting this text with the first Dutch translation, which was published in 1963.

The main focus of this study is the central part of 'Down at the Cross', in which Baldwin describes how Elijah Muhammad and his followers refer to white people as 'devils', and in which he compares his own views with those of the Black Muslim movement. The aim of the analysis is to show the impact of translation choices on the extent to which Baldwin's message has been successfully conveyed – or not, as the case may be – given the fact that this paper's main finding is that white innocence may be perpetuated as a result of a (mis)reading of the original, combined with a translation strategy that has the exact opposite effect of the one intended by the translator.

5.2 Trying to convey Baldwin's message – then and now

The Fire Next Time has been translated into Dutch twice. The first Dutch translation, made by Oscar Timmers in 1963, had been a so-called 'hot' translation, i.e. the translation had come out in the Netherlands almost immediately after the original had been published in the US. The retranslation by Harm Damsma appeared in 2018, a little more than half a century after the US publication, in addition to two other Baldwin retranslations: *If Beale Street Could Talk* (also by Damsma) and *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (by Ghoos and van der Sterre), which came out in 2018 and 2019 respectively.[35] Bearing in mind that the Dutch publishing industry caters to a small market, the commissioning of these retranslations can be seen as attesting the canonical status of Baldwin's work in The Netherlands.[36]

[35] All three retranslations were commissioned by publishing house *De Geus* in the Netherlands.

[36] In July 2024, two more Dutch retranslations (of *Giovanni's Room* and *Notes of a Native Son*, respectively) were published by *De Geus*, both translated by Eefje Bosch and Manik Sarkar.

It goes without saying that the time interval between the publication of the two Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time* is relevant, irrespective of the extent to which one believes that translations are subject to 'ageing'. Many scholars have argued that target culture changes – whether linguistic, idiomatic, translational or cultural – have an impact on retranslations (Desmidt, 2009; Alvstad and Rosa, 2015; Van Poucke, 2017; Haug, 2019). According to Desmidt (2009)

> retranslations result from the wish to meet the requirements of the receiving culture, requirements that are obviously not (no longer or not entirely) met by the existing translation(s). As cultures continuously change, every generation may take a different view on what is a good, i.e., functional, translation and may ask for the creation of a new translation.' (Desmidt, 2009, p. 670)

Even when one takes the view that the phenomenon of 'changing cultural and linguistic norms of the source and target societies [is] inaccurately dubbed as aging' and that '… the passage of time may not necessarily "age" translations' (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar 2019, p. 2), the fact remains that the societal norms of the target culture inevitably change over time, bringing about a change in readers, translators and publishers, a transformation of audiences and producers 'creating new segments of readers and new translational needs' (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019, p. 2). Chances are, therefore, that when a retranslation is published, both the publisher and the translator will have a new generation of readers in mind. This was certainly the case for the Dutch retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*, as may be illustrated by the mission statement of the Dutch publisher and their message on the imprint page of *Niet Door Water Maar Door Vuur* as quoted by Verdickt: 'Dutch publisher *De Geus*… prides itself on… representing literature that "is characterized by depth and social engagement"' and 'On the imprint page of the new Dutch translation of *The Fire Next Time*, De Geus mentions that it has used inclusivity as a point of departure' (Verdickt, 2022, p. 210 and p. 212, respectively).[37] Wekker's foreword to the retranslation also attests to this idea of a new generation of readers.[38]

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[37] The statement on the imprint page also includes a reference to the dispute between the publisher and the translator regarding the translation of the word 'white' and the word 'Negro' respectively, which Zeven discussed alongside the broader question of 'white innocence' in the Netherlands (Zeven 2025, forthcoming).

[38] Wekker, a Surinamese-Dutch scholar and public intellectual, writes her foreword to her niece, mirroring 'My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation', Baldwin's first essay in *The Fire Next Time*, which is presented as a letter to his young nephew.

Despite the fact that cultural and temporal factors undoubtedly influence the translators' choices and publishers' objectives, the present paper will be concerned not so much with possible motives for retranslation or ideological considerations of the publishing company, nor does it aim to hypothesize on the potential influence of the translators' sociocultural backgrounds or the personal views that may have played a part in their opting for particular translation strategies. The focus of this chapter will instead be on the potential *effect* of these translation choices. Nevertheless, there is one aspect of the person of the translators that may well play a role in the translation choices made and which needs to be mentioned in the case of *The Fire Next Time*: the colour of their skin. Both Dutch translations were made by a white translator, both display instances of 'white innocence'[39] (also known as 'implicit racial bias'), as this paper posits – despite the fact that in his afterword, Damsma (the 2018 translator) explicitly underlines the importance of doing justice to Baldwin's message (TT2, p. 165).

The fact that both Dutch translators failed to step up to Baldwin's challenge to shed their own 'innocence' is a suggestion that has already been put forward in 'It's not all black and white: Dutch translations of *The Fire Next Time*' (Zeven, forthcoming), which included a close reading of 'My Dungeon Shook'. In order to provide additional proof for this claim, the following section will seek to lay bare the instances in the translations of 'Down at the Cross' that may actually result in microaggressions, the 'subtle linguistic cues' that 'may have several serious effects on targets' (Beukeboom and Burgers, 2019, p. 27). The definition of microaggressions as 'the everyday racism expressed by well-intentioned, dominant-group members who experience themselves as good, moral, and decent human beings, who would never consciously discriminate against people of color' (Sue and Spanierman, 2020, p. 4) corresponds with Baldwin's description of his white fellow Americans: 'innocent and well-meaning' (TFNT, p. 14).

[39] The notion of white innocence has been discussed by a great many scholars from different fields on implicit racial bias, e.g. Applebaum (2015) and Wekker (2016), to name but two of the many articles and books on the subject. Wekker (2016, p. 18) quotes Essed & Hoving (2014), who describe 'the anxious Dutch claim of innocence' as the 'disavowal and denial of racism' and 'rejecting the possibility to know' (p. 24). Essed, a Dutch sociologist, coined the term 'everyday racism' (Essed, 1990).

5.3 Risk management in translation

In addition to further highlighting the effects of implicit racial bias on the part of the Dutch translator, this study intends to explore to what extent underlying translation approaches and strategies may have played a role in producing a translation that contains the type of microaggressions (or 'everyday racism') referred to above. To this purpose, the analysis will zoom in on the translation choices that may be seen as an attempt on the part of the translator to minimize "communicative risk", a tendency discussed by numerous translation scholars (Pym, 2015; De Metsenaere & Vandepitte, 2017; Matsushita, 2020, Gile 2021) and defined by Anthony Pym as 'the risk of the translation's not fulfilling the desired communicative function, no matter how that specific aim might be established' (Pym 2020, p. 448). The notion of "communicative risk" is only one of the three types of risk involved in translation as introduced by Pym. The present case study will solely focus on the type of risk defined as "communicative risk". The reason for this is the fact that the Dutch retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* has a clear communicative aim and function, which is (as argued above) to produce a translation for contemporary readers that does justice to Baldwin's message.

The topic of "risk" has received considerable attention in translation studies over the last few decades. Annjo Greenall and Inger Hesjevoll Schmidt-Melbye point out that 'The literature on risk is divided between a translator-oriented perspective, and work that looks at risk from a business/industry and/or multi-agent perspective.' (Greenall & Hesjevoll Schmidt-Melbye 2025). Recent research into "risk" in translation has explored the behaviour and attitudes of various translatorial agents (not just those of the translator) from different angles, and regarding different text types and genres, including studies into risk probability, risk impact, a possible correlation between risk and effort invested by the translator, investigations into decision-making processes, to name but a few. The present paper expressly focuses on the perspective of the translator.

Daniel Gile discusses the relation between translators' decision-making strategies and their expectations of "gain" and "loss" both in terms of the translation itself and of the receivers of the translation:

> Gain can take the form of increased clarity, more readable and convincing texts, a lower probability of misrepresenting the author's ideas etc. Loss may

> involve loss of information, lessened credibility because of inappropriate terminology, lower cultural acceptability because the target text says something or says it in a way which is not acceptable to target-text readers, etc. (Gile, 1995/2009)

While risk may have positive and negative consequences[40], for the purposes of this case study the term "risk" will follow Gile in that risk will be 'taken to refer to potential adverse outcomes only' and "risk management" as 'part of the decision making that addresses them' (Giles, 2021). According to Kayo Matsushita the idea that risk in translation is mostly negative is a view largely shared by Pym (Matsushita 2020, p. 66), who defines "risk" as 'the possibility of not fulfilling the translation's purpose' (Pym 2005). Opinions differ on the manner in which risk-management strategies are best categorized. While Akbari distinguishes between risk avoidance (avoiding or eliminating the risk) risk reduction/mitigation (reducing or mitigating the risk) risk transfer (outsourcing or transferring the risk) risk retention (accepting the risk and budgeting for it) (Akbari, 2009, as quoted in Matsushita, 2020), Pym 'adopted (a) and (c) above, and added risk-taking' (Matsushita, 2020). Pym and Matsushita (2018) also 'defined risk mitigation differently from Akbari', namely as 'a disposition in which the translator incurs one kind of risk in order to reduce another (Matsushita 2020, p. 129).

The complexity of labelling risk management strategies is commented on by Pym. As an example he poses the question whether lexical explicitation can truly be seen as "risk avoidance". Given the aspect of risk-taking involved, he suggests it should be 'analyzed in terms of trade-offs' (Pym, 2025, p. 21). The present case study will not attempt to categorize different translation solutions, nor will it attempt to consistently distinguish between different types of risk management strategies. It merely wishes to establish a correlation between the risk management strategies employed in the 2018 retranslation of 'Down at the Cross' and the adverse effects that these strategies ironically turn out to have.

Pym defines "risk" as 'the possibility of not fulfilling the translation's purpose' (Pym 2005). One of the famous examples he gives is the scenario of a

[40] Maggie Hui, for instance, defines risk in translation as 'the probability of a desired or an undesired outcome as a consequence of a (translational) action' (Hui 2012)

translator who writes the wrong name on a birth certificate – a mistake Pym calls no less than 'disastrous' (Pym 2005). Such a translation mistake qualifies as "high-stake", meaning that the consequences of the translation choice may be damaging. Although it might be stating the obvious that translators aspire to reduce risks that would 'stop the text from working as a successful translation' (Pym, 2015, p. 71), it may perhaps come as a surprise that this strategy might actually have the *opposite* effect. This paper argues that the translation choices made by the 2018 translator of *The Fire Next Time*, often aimed at increasing clarity (which would be a 'gain' in Gile's definition) and making things easier for the receiver (Pym 2025, p. 19), may well have an adverse effect on readers' understanding the notions of race as a construct, structural racism and white innocence.

As translators aim for "optimal relevance" (meeting the assumed needs of the target text readers) and attempt to avoid or reduce communicative risks, they employ explicitation, implicitation, addition, omission and substitution as 'applications'[41] of their general translation strategy (De Metsenaere & Vandepitte, 2017). Based on the premise that 'if knowledge crosses borders – of culture, language, and, *significantly, time* – and is thus being transferred into new contexts, parameters change and mediation becomes necessary' (Haug, 2019, italics mine) the 2018 translator may have felt that the temporal distance between the publication of the original and that of the retranslation warranted a greater degree of "risk avoidance".

Damsma's attempt to make *The Fire Next Time* accessible and relevant to contemporary Dutch-language readers, while doing justice to Baldwin's original in some places, backfired in others, as the following close reading aims to illustrate. Since this study aims to address the role of translation in potentially contributing to the perpetuation of white innocence, covert racism and structural racism[42], the following criterion for the selection of words, phrases and sentences was applied: the analysis includes explicit and implicit references made by Baldwin to structural racism (including implicit bias) that have been translated into Dutch in a manner

[41] While De Metsenaere and Vandepitte (2017) use the term "applications" as different ways to pursue the 'general translation strategy involving minimizing risk and maximizing relevance for the target audience, they prefer to use the term 'solution' to refer to the 'observable outcome of the decision-making processes, visible in the target text'.

[42] This study will use the term "structural racism" interchangeably with the more commonly used terms "systemic racism" and "institutional racism". Eddo-Lodge (2017) prefers this term because the racism referred to 'is much broader than our traditional institutions' (p. 64).

that – at least partly – underlines the importance of Baldwin's message of the need for white people to shed their white innocence. Since paper hypothesizes that the 2018 translation will make more use of risk avoidance solutions than the 1963 translation, the main focus of the analysis will be on this retranslation (TT2) by Harm Damsma. Where relevant, comparisons[43] will be made to the first translation (TT1) by Oscar Timmers.

5.4 Risk management strategies in the Dutch retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*

The first difference between Damsma's 2018 retranslation and Timmers' 1963 translation that stands out is Timmers' frequent retention of Baldwin's lexical choices through more direct translation, where Damsma's translation choices may be labelled as "risk management". The risk avoidance pursued by Damsma sometimes involves perceived lexical 'ageing', while other instances in which this strategy may have played a role involve an assumed cultural or temporal gap (or both), as the following comparisons may illustrate.

Take, for instance, the translation of 'servile' in the sentence 'Even the most doltish and servile Negro could scarcely fail to be impressed by the disparity between his situation and that of the people for whom he worked' (TFNT, p. 28): the 1963 translators uses '*serviel*' (TT1, p. 26) (EN 'servile'), the 2018 translator uses '*slaafs*' (TT2, 59) (EN: 'slavish / servile'). The latter clearly caters to contemporary readers, many of whom would have to look up '*serviel*', a word that is much less frequently used nowadays. On the one hand, choosing a word that will be known to all readers will indeed reduce the risk of readers not being able to understand the sentence. On the other hand, although both 'servile' and 'slavish' are depreciative terms, the latter sharing an etymology with the Latin word for 'slave', '*slaafs*' is the more negative of the two: while '*serviel*' denotes an attitude that is abjectly polite, with someone being too eager to obey, '*slaafs*' is even more derogatory, as it suggests conducting oneself 'like a slave', a difference commented on by Tachtiris (2024).[44] While this

[43] On two occasions a comparison is made to the 2019 German translation by Miriam Mandelkow (published two years after the Dutch retranslation), with respect to which Verdickt (2022) notes that: 'Dtv Verlag and Miriam Mandelkow lead the vanguard of new European translations that aim to correct the linguistic and cultural errors of the past. (p. 213).

[44] This translation choice could be labelled 'risk-mitigation' rather than 'risk avoidance', where the translator 'incurs one kind of risk in order to reduce another' (Pym and Matsushita, 2018).

may be a conscious decision on Damsma's part, used to underline the degrading attitude towards African Americans, the translation does not capture the caricature of the meekly obedient and simple-minded Black person. Baldwin uses 'servile' instead of 'slavish' on purpose, and exchanging the one word for the other results in a translation that may be easier to understand for a contemporary reader, but does not convey the precise meaning of the original.

There are instances, too, where Damsma's risk management strategy pays off: Dutch readers, while probably familiar with the notion of 'segregation', may not necessarily be familiar with the word '*segregatie*' (EN: 'segregation'). This would argue in favour of Damsma's choice to translate 'segregated buses' (TFNT, p. 52) with '*bus met de gescheiden zitplaatsen voor wit en zwart*' (TT2, p. 98) (EN: 'bus with separate places for white and black') instead of using a direct translation '*gesegregeerde bussen*' (TT1, p 58), despite the fact that the explanatory translation loses the connotations of systemic racism implicit in 'segregated'. Likewise, Damsma's explicitation '*de strijd tegen de blanken*' (TT2, p. 55)[45] (EN 'the fight against the whites') as a translation of 'fighting the man' (TFNT, p. 25) will likely make more sense to a Dutch reader than the literal translation '*bevechten van de man*' (TT1, p. 22) that Timmers opted for. After all, Dutch readers were – and are – probably not familiar with this American idiomatic expression that refers to opposing those in authority (obviously whites, in this context). The same is no doubt true for Damsma's addition of '*gingen vechten*' (TT2, 76) (EN: 'went to fight') to the sentence 'I remembered the Italian priests and bishops blessing Italian boys who were on their way to Ethiopia.' (TFNT, 38), in which Baldwin hints at the fact that church leaders blessed those who would soon be killing Black people. Even though contemporary readers may not necessarily know that these Italian-American boys were sent to fight for the fascist cause, the additional words do clarify to them that they are sent off to war, something that readers in 1963 were probably still more keenly aware of. In these examples, the risk avoiding translation solutions used by Damsma can be regarded as successful, in that they achieve the goal of helping the reader to understand the original.

Nevertheless, risk avoidance carries its own risks. The effort to meet target

[45] This is the only instance in which the 2018 translation uses 'blank' ('fair' or 'Caucasian') rather than 'wit' ('white') for the translation of 'white'. The term 'blank' is regarded as outdated and carrying colonialist overtones; the reason for not adopting the more neutral word 'white' in this context might be that it concerns the translation of an idiomatic expression primarily used during the Civil Rights era.

text readers' needs may actually have adverse effect when a translator might misread the original, possibly as a result of their own blind spots. The potentially negative impact of translation choices made in the 2018 Dutch translation will be illustrated below, with most examples selected from the pivotal scene in 'Down at the Cross', in which Baldwin meets Elijah Muhammad, the then leader of the Nation of Islam.

5.5 White innocence and Black stereotypes in translation

Baldwin's description of his meeting with Elijah Muhammad and his views regarding the Nation of Islam forms the hinge between the first part of 'Down at the Cross', which is devoted to his criticism of American society and the Christian church, and the third part, the culmination of the essay, which contains Baldwin asking for 'the impossible' (TFNT, p. 88). This pivotal scene contains another crux itself: Baldwin's revelation (as much to himself as to his readers) that, despite his own dire experiences, he does not share all of the Black Muslim's views regarding whites, even if he does not outright reject them either: 'In the eeriest way possible, I suddenly had a glimpse of what white people must go through at a dinner table when they are trying to prove that Negroes are not *subhuman*' (TFNT, p. 65 – italics mine). This sentence does more than communicating that Baldwin might not share the Nation of Islam's sense of Black superiority, however. It gives white readers food for thought in a clever turning of tables: 'Baldwin makes use of a "funhouse mirror" that reflects back to the viewer his own prejudice' (McLarney, 2019, p. 53). The image of Baldwin feeling the urge to defend his white friends (availing himself of a vocabulary and sentiment previously associated with white 'liberals' standing up for their Black friends) foregrounds the word 'subhuman' – a word that already demonstrates the immensity of white Americans' fear and hatred towards their Black fellow citizens. It is another example of Baldwin 'bending' the device of holding up a mirror to whites 'toward his own purposes' (McLarney, 2019) and of 'reframing of the traditional formulation of "the Negro problem"' (Glaude, 2020).

Another of the many aspects of Baldwin's rhetorical brilliance that comes to the fore here is his careful restraint when it comes to using overtly racist references. The word 'subhuman' occurs only twice in 'Down at the Cross'. The scene above, where Baldwin describes sitting at the table with Elijah Muhammad at the

headquarters of the Nation of Islam movement, is the second instance. Timmers translates the phrase 'that Negroes are not subhuman' with a transposition '*dat negers geen minderwaardige wezens zijn*' (TT1, 77) (EN: 'that Negroes are not inferior creatures'), while Damsma uses a modulation '*dat zwarten ook mensen zijn*' (TT, 120) (EN: 'that blacks are humans, too'). The first time Baldwin uses the word 'subhuman' in 'Down at the Cross' is when he asks the white reader to imagine – *really* imagine – what it is like to be Black. In this instance, where 'subhuman'[46] is the description of Black GIs fighting alongside their white fellow soldiers in World War II by these same men (TFNT, p. 51), the 1963 translation again opts for a transposition, albeit a different one: '*minder dan een mens*' (TT1, p. 58) (EN: 'less than a man / human'), while the 2018 translation once more employs a modulation, although a different one as well: '*niet meer… dan een dier*' (TT2, p. 97) (EN: 'not more… than an animal'). Both translations echo the two suggestions presented in the authoritative *Van Dale* English to Dutch dictionary for the entry 'subhuman' (when used as an *adjective*): '*minder dan menselijk*' (EN: 'less than human') and '*dierlijk*' ('animal-like'). Neither translation, however, does full justice to Baldwin's dissection of the blatant racism displayed by his fellow countrymen and women. Both translations miss out on the connotations of 'subhuman' of '*untermensch*' (mentioned as the translation of the *noun* 'subhuman' in the same dictionary), a term used by the Nazis as part of their racial policies – connotations undoubtedly intended by Baldwin to reverberate in his readers' minds. After all, it is precisely when describing how Black Americans fight alongside their white fellow soldiers to defeat the Nazis that the author alludes to Black Americans being degraded by these same "comrades-in-arms": 'a man… who knows that the white G.I. has informed the Europeans that he is subhuman' (TFNT, p. 51). Additionally, Baldwin will likely have specifically used a reference to Black Americans by white people as "subhuman" given that – contrary to popular belief – the term "*Untermensch*" was not originally coined by the Nazis, but by the American historian and white supremacist Stoddard, who first used the word 'under-man' for non-whites in 1922 in a book that was translated into German and that inspired the Nazis.[47] If the

[46] Apart from the obvious difference in terms of context, there is a difference in that one of the sentences includes a negative marker ('not'), whereas the other does not.

[47] A famous debate on racial equality had taken place in 1929 between Black historian and co-founder of the NAACP W.E.B. Du Bois and Stoddard, who believed that interracial relationships would lead to the destruction of Western civilization.

characterization in the Dutch translations seems to convey a negative attitude of whites toward Black Americans, the notion inferred by Baldwin's sentence is even more heinous and shocking. It alludes to the kind of dehumanization reminiscent of that of the Jewish population during the Nazi regime, which triggered great fear in Baldwin 'the fate of the Jews, and the world's indifference to it, frightened me very much… I was, of course, authoritatively assured that what had happened to the Jews in Germany could not happen to the Negroes in America, but I thought, bleakly, that the German Jews had probably believed similar counsellors' (TFNT, pp. 50-51). The retranslation's attempt at making the description sound more dramatic and attaining "optimal relevance" by substituting a reference to human with a reference to an animal results in a translation that is actually less effective and therefore does the exact opposite of meeting the needs of the target text reader. In order to meet those needs the translation ought to help the reader understand just how appalling the attitude of whites actually is through the use of the reference to *untermenschen*.[48]

It will surely be no coincidence that the word 'subhuman' is used in the very same sentence that contains one of the merely two instances that Baldwin uses the word 'nigger'.[49] The fact that Baldwin uses these words so sparingly underlines that there is more to racism than using racial slurs (or violence, for that matter). The message he wishes to get across is to white liberals – the 'relatively conscious', in whom he tries to instill that covert racism and their own ignorance also contributes to systemic racism – the message that African Americans are being treated by white American in the same way that Jewish people were treated by the Nazis, effectively destroying them without them having done anything to deserve this: 'And when he realizes that the treatment accorded him has nothing to do with anything he has done, that the attempt of white people to destroy him – for that is what it is – is utterly gratuitous, it is not hard for him to think of white people as devils.' (TFNT, p. 62)

The reference to being treated as '*untermenschen*' is not the only comparison Baldwin makes between African Americans and Jewish people. When he addresses the moral bankruptcy of the Christian faith by referring to the millions murdered, not because of anything they have done, but simply because of who they are:

[48] The German translation (Baldwin, 2020) uses the word '*Untermensch*' in both instances (p. 69 and p. 85, respectively).

[49] The only other time this slur is used in 'Down at the Cross' is when a police officer mutters it when Baldwin, thirteen years old crosses the street to go to the library (TFNT, p. 26).

'For the crime of their ancestry, millions of people in the middle of the twentieth century, and in the heart of Europe – God's citadel – were sent to a death so calculated, so hideous,… (TFNT, p. 50). Baldwin begins the sentence by hinting at the fact that the only 'crime'[50] that Jewish people have 'committed' is that they are Jewish, and it is not hard to draw the parallel with white-on-black racism. Whereas Timmers uses a direct translation '*Voor de misdaad van hun afstamming*' (TT1, p. 56), Damsma attempts to explain the reference to 'ancestry' by replacing it with 'ancestors' and modulating the phrase into '*Vanwege datgene wat hun voorvaderen ooit hadden misdaan*' (TT2, p. 94) (EN: 'On account of what their ancestors had once done wrong'). While Damsma probably sought to reduce the risk of Dutch readers failing to understand the more condensed and indirect allusion to anti-Semitism in the source text, the result of this strategy is that the original message is completely lost. For rather than pointing out systemic racism, this translation suggests that the ancestors of the Jewish people in Nazi Germany were somehow to blame for what happened.

There are several other instances in which the 2018 translation does not – or at least not entirely – succeed in relaying Baldwin's references to systemic racism. Before the account of his audience with Elijah Muhammad, for example, Baldwin already hints at the fact that Black people do not have the option to escape from the reality of the world they live in. He also speaks of the bleak fate they will face if they attempt to do so, or even if they simply give white people the impression that they think they are not inferior: 'a fear that the child, in challenging the white world's assumptions, was putting himself in the path of destruction' (TFNT, p. 30). The translation '*een angst dat het kind zijn eigen graf zou graven door de klakkeloze aannames van de wereld van de witten aan te vechten*' (TT2, p. 64) (EN: 'a fear that the child would be digging its own grave by challenging the unquestioning / groundless assumptions of the world of the whites') fails to render Baldwin's point that there is no such thing as "a world of white people" (which would suggest that there is another world, one in which Black people have a say as well). Presumably, by not adopting a direct translation ('white world'), the translator aimed to avoid the risk of employing a combination that is also used as a turn of phrase for

[50] The 'crime' of being Black is echoed nowadays in the phrase 'Driving While Black', which refers to the completely unwarranted criminalization of African Americans. Obviously, this example by no means equates 'Driving While Black' or other examples of white-on-black racism with the horrors of the Holocaust. It is merely used to illustrate the use of 'the crime' of a person's origin or skin colour to justify or excuse racism.

'snowy landscape'. By doing so, however, the translation misses the point that Black people live in 'the white world', that is, a world dominated by white people. Baldwin expressly mentions the inequality of society as well: 'This world is white and they are black' (TFNT, p. 29). Another example of risk management concerns the substitution of 'putting himself in the path of destruction' with the expression 'digging one's own grave'. Whereas the original infers that the mere fact of not conforming to the image that white people have of a Black person already presents a danger, the agency expressed in 'digging one's own grave' implies that a Black child who "has the audacity" to defy white supremacy is partly responsible for its own fate. The original, instead, draws attention to the notion of destruction, in this case the fact that white people, when their white superiority is challenged (in whatever manner), will destroy Black people – a notion that is a leitmotif in *The Fire Next Time*. Both translation choices in this sentence are instances of missing the point of systemic racism and the power structures underlying it.

As Baldwin is slowly building up to his meeting with Elijah Muhammad, he explains how he observes the beginnings of a shift in power on the streets of Harlem (where members of the Nation of Islam frequently speak to the neighbourhood's Black citizens) and why he has come to view these Black Muslims in a different light. One of the contributing factors to him being 'forced… to reassess the speakers and their message' is 'the behaviour of the police' (TFNT, p. 47). It is not police brutality that he refers to; it is the fear that he notices in the policemen who seem to realize that they are no longer in control. The other factor is directly related to this, namely 'the behaviour of the crowd'. It begins to dawn on him that while white people still do not regard Black people as human beings, there may well come a time when the roles will be reversed, not merely in terms of the way in which a Black person might regard a white person (as outlined above), but in an actual overturning of power. Observing the powerless policemen watching the crowds in Harlem listening to the Black Muslim speakers on their soapboxes, Baldwin contemplates 'I might have pitied them if I had not found myself in their hands so often and discovered, through ugly experience, what they were like when they held the power and what they were like when you held the power.' (TFNT, p. 47). The translation of 'ugly experience' with '*een paar gruwelijke ervaringen*' (TT2, p. 90) (EN: 'a few gruesome experiences'), by using addition and substitution, emphasizes the horrific treatment of African Americans by the police. This is quite probably another genuine attempt by the

translator to emphasize the cruelty of racism (like the example of the translation of 'subhuman' discussed earlier)[51], but the translation once more misses the mark. For one thing, there is the possibility of white readers remaining stuck in the 'but I am not a racist' groove, believing that only outright racist language and the kind of violence experienced by Black Americans in Baldwin's time are instances of 'real racism' (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, Sims, 2024). Apart from lulling the reader into a false consciousness of thinking that 'real' racism is something that 'used to happen in the United States', the addition of '*een paar*' (EN: 'a few, a couple'), moreover, fails to show the systematic nature of racism. The good intentions of the translator employing a risk management strategy, therefore, actually result in a downplaying of structural racism.

Acknowledging the pervasiveness of racism is all the more important because structural racism and the myth of meritocracy go hand in hand.[52] This fallacy is one of the largest obstacles in the way of equality today (Sandel, 2020). The 2018 translation glosses over this fallacy, too. Baldwin addresses white progressives in describing how (following a TV interview) he tries to explain that comparing the successful social climbing of the Irish with the lack thereof by Black Americans does not hold water. He points out that their respective circumstances are vastly different: 'Negroes were brought here in chains long before the Irish ever thought of leaving Ireland. He then adds 'what manner of consolation is it to be told that emigrants arriving here – voluntarily – long after you did have risen far above you?' (TFNT, pp. 55-56). The translation turns his rhetorical question into a statement '*en het biedt weinig troost*' (TT2, p. 104) (EN: 'and it offers little consolation'), making it less powerful. But what is much more harmful (and probably a mistranslation rather than a risk management strategy) is that the second part of the sentence has been translated with '*als je bedenkt dat de emigranten die hier lang na jou – en geheel uit vrije wil! – naartoe zijn gekomen het inmiddels veel beter hebben dan jij*' (TT2, p. 104) (EN: 'when you think about the fact the emigrants who came here long after you – and completely of their own volition – by now are much better off than you'). The complete lack of empathy from whites (daring to even compare the Irish poor to formerly enslaved Black Americans) stays more or less intact, but by changing 'to be told' into 'when you think about'

[51] The translator's counterproductive tendency to stress the cruelty of racism is also discussed in *It's not all black and white: Dutch translations of The Fire Next Time*' (Zeven, forthcoming).

[52] See, e.g. Crenshaw et al (1996), Delgado (2017), Eddo-Lodge (2017) – to name but a few.

the blatantly unfair allegation that "surely their present condition must be their own fault for not being industrious enough" that is implied is eliminated entirely. As such, the white privilege enjoyed by even those that are financially and socially disadvantaged historically is being ignored, as is the fact that the starting position between Irish and Black Americans is completely different. That Baldwin comments on the absence of a level playing field is an understatement to say the least, but his observation is not reflected in the translation.

5.6 Conclusion

The above analysis presents a small sample of all the instances in which the risk management strategies adopted in the 2018 translation have had a detrimental effect. A single example of a translation falling short of doing justice to the author's message might seem trivial. A series of similar examples, however, illustrates a lack of awareness of the ubiquitous and structural nature of racism. Many of the mistranslations in the 2018 Dutch retranslation seem to be the result of risk management strategies. Rather than helping the contemporary Dutch reader to access the true meaning of what Baldwin tells his English-speaking readers about white innocence, implicit racial bias, the fallacy of meritocracy and systemic racism, these strategies actually obscure Baldwin's message for his Dutch readers. The afterword by the translator and the publisher's note testify to the fact that such a result is completely at odds with both the translator's intention and with the aim the Dutch publishing company had in mind. It is clear that the translation of seminal and socially relevant texts like *The Fire Next Time*, whose power lies in the intricacy of their rhetoric, warrant a publishing process that allows more time for a translator to make all their decisions based on careful consideration. After all, the devil is in the detail.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to address covert sexism and racism in the (re)translations of literary classics as a result of unconscious biases on the part of the translators, which in turn may result in the perpetuation of gender and racial prejudices in the readers of their translations.

The central claim put forward is that translation decisions may have a serious impact on the way in which female characters in fiction and Black people in non-fiction are portrayed, and consequently on the way readers will perceive them. The aim of the studies was to uncover the influence that translators have in terms of maintaining, countering or reinforcing negative female and racial stereotypes, even if the differences between the translation and the original are seemingly minor.

To this purpose, close readings were conducted on the American 20th century classics *The Great Gatsby* and *The Fire Next Time* and their Dutch translations and retranslations, comparing the linguistic cues pertaining to female and racial stereotypes, respectively. Following an outline of the context in which the respective (re)translations were made, the close readings focused on the translator's textually manifested "voice" in the translation itself (as opposed to, for example, prefaces, footnotes, or translator's notes). In other words, the close readings focused on the translator's individual and unique translation choices, whether made consciously or unconsciously – choices that usually remain unnoticed unless the translation is compared to the original or another translation of the same text. A reader reception study was conducted on *The Great Gatsby*, using a reader response survey in which non-professional readers were presented with fragments from the Dutch first translation and retranslation and were asked to assess the personality traits of the novel's main female character.

The analysis in the close reading study 'A beautiful little fool? Retranslating Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*', which used Culpeper's model for characterization (Zeven & Dorst, 2020), showed that both Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*, but the older translation in particular, paint a more negative picture of Daisy Buchanan than Scott Fitzgerald's subtle portrayal of this female main character in the original: Daisy is rendered as more callous and indifferent, more manipulative and more helpless and weaker in the 1948 translation than in the 1985 translation. The analysis of the linguistic cues thus support the claim that translator decisions can contribute to the perpetuation of negative female stereotypes.

To measure the impact of the differences found in the close reading study, a reception study entitled 'Characterizing Daisy Buchanan in retranslations of *The Great Gatsby*: Translator behaviour and reader reception' (Zeven & Dorst, 2022) was conducted, using an online reader response survey to gauge the way in which readers judge the female protagonist's character and behaviour. The statistical analysis made of the answers given in the survey confirmed the expectations that, for the larger part, the 1948 translation results in readers taking a more negative view of the female protagonist than the 1985 retranslation. It should be noted that only one of the findings of the reader response study was statistically significant: readers of the 1948 translation saw Daisy as more helpless, a description that reflects the negative stereotype of the "childlike" woman, an image of a girlish rather than a mature person, 'reflecting social constructions of women as weak, passive and helpless' (Cermele et al, 2001). Given the fact that readers of the 1985 retranslation described Daisy as cynical rather than helpless, the finding supports the claims that translation choices affect characterization, that they cause women to be portrayed in a more negative manner and that these choices have an effect on how real readers perceive these female characters.

Aiming to expand on the findings regarding female stereotyping presented in the studies of *The Great Gatsby*, two close readings of James Baldwin's seminal essays 'My Dungeon Shook' and 'Down at the Cross' contained in *The Fire Next Time* were conducted in order to investigate the possibility that translation choices made by the translators of the Dutch translations would show signs of unconscious bias resulting in white-on-black stereotyping.

The first study 'It's Not All Black and White: Dutch Translations of *The Fire Next Time*' is a close-reading of 'My Dungeon Shook' and its 1963 and 2018 Dutch translations (Zeven, forthcoming 2025). This paper provided support for the claim that some of the choices made by the Dutch translators negatively impact the way Black people are portrayed and that others mitigate or erase the accountability of white people for what has been and is being done to Black communities – thus reflecting a lack of awareness on the part of the translators. One of the findings was that a more recent translation does not necessarily make for a more sensitive approach to racial stereotypes.

The second study 'The devil is in the detail: doing justice to James Baldwin's message' (Zeven, under review) comprises a close reading of 'Down at the Cross' and its Dutch 2018 retranslation. This second close reading study aimed to provide

additional evidence to support the claims made in the first one. Both studies posited that the translation choices reflect misreadings of the original essay as the – ironic – result of the translator's own unconscious bias and his lack of awareness regarding the systemic nature of racism and the disavowal of racism by well-meaning white people. The second study, however, approached these assertions from a particular perspective, putting forward an additional claim: it argued that the risk management strategies employed by the 2018 translator had the opposite effect from what he intended – which was to produce a new translation that would resonate with contemporary readers. In other words, the translator's attempt to increase clarity for the contemporary readers and to provide a text that would convince 21st century readers of the relevance of Baldwin's essays today turned out to be counterproductive. The study posited that, in turn, such a translation may lead to a perpetuation of white innocence and structural racism. This final claim at the same time exposes one of the shortcomings of this thesis in that a reader response survey has yet to be conducted on the retranslation of *The Fire Next Time*. At present, such a survey is being set up following a small-scale pilot survey.

To conclude, this thesis has shown how preconceived ideas about women and Black people are reflected in translations. It has shown that unconscious bias in translators affects their translation decisions, and that these choices – however small the textual details they affect – can lead to translations that perpetuate and occasionally even enhance negative female and racial stereotypes. Support has been found for the claim that instances of negative female stereotypes in translation have an effect on readers. The thesis hypothesizes that negative racial stereotypes and white innocence displayed in translation may likewise have an effect on readers; a reception study still has to be conducted. The conclusion that the risk management strategies adopted to produce a retranslation of *The Fire Next Time* that would be understandable and relevant to contemporary readers may have the opposite effect is still tentative. However, evidence was found for the suggestion that a more recent translation does not necessarily mean a greater sensitivity regarding issues of stereotyping.

Needless to say, the research in this thesis has its fair share of limitations. First of all, qualitative research, which constitutes the larger part of this thesis, does not easily allow for generalizations. It also goes without saying that the very small number of case studies into no more than two original texts and two translations each (and in the case of the novel focusing on a single female character), covering merely one language pair, means that the conclusions of the thesis are in no way

representative for translation practices in general terms. A selection of other texts, other genres and other authors might have led to different findings and conclusions.

The chosen framework of retranslation, too, presents limitations. Of course, one of these is that what may be true for retranslations does not necessarily apply to one-off translations, which constitutes the majority of translations. Another potential obstacle when it comes to retranslation research in particular concerns the validity of the findings of reader reception studies whose participants are contemporary readers giving their opinion on non-contemporary translations. This is more likely to be the case for retranslations into Dutch, given the fact that the interval between the first Dutch translation and a later Dutch translation is usually at least half a century. It is thus more likely that some readers participating in the reader response study may not be familiar with the certain words and idioms occurring in less recent texts. A lack of knowledge of words and idioms used in a first – older – translation may affect readers' perceptions of that text, influence their answers, and consequently cause difficulties in interpreting the responses regarding characterization and stereotypes. Frequently, research on retranslations in other languages than Dutch has the benefit of being able to compare more than one *contemporary* retranslation of a classic, making for one less variable that might influence responses and thus impact findings.

There are more limitations to using reader response surveys as a methodology in general. There is the recurring question to what degree the participants are representative of the type of reader who would be reading the (re)translation. Moreover, a total of 103 participants can hardly be labelled a large-scale survey, albeit that such a number of participants is not considered too small for a reception study in the field of Translation Studies. It is abundantly clear that reader response surveys (especially those that involve scoring) are inherently limited. Even though the survey produced for this thesis included an additional part where participants were invited to share spontaneous responses to support or dismiss observations made on the basis of the scoring, surveys like these do not allow for in-depth discussions. As stated above, spontaneous responses, while contributing to insights into readers' perceptions, tend to yield 'messy' data that are at times hard to interpret. All in all, the methodology employed in the reception study presents a number of important limitations.

As a methodological approach close reading has frequently been criticized for purportedly ignoring the larger narrative and context. Indeed, by prioritizing the analysis of textual aspects of the originals and (re)translations, close readings leave

less room for studying these in their social, historical and political contexts. Even though this thesis devoted as much attention as possible to the "bigger picture" by discussing the status of the originals, the social context of the publication of the (re) translations, the background of the translators, and the notion of unconscious bias (in the introduction as well as in chapters 2 and 4), the scope of the chapters did not allow for a more extensive discussion of all the paratextual and contextual aspects, nor for a truly systemic approach and more rigorous study into the interplay between the "contextual voice" (including paratextual aspects) and the "textual voice" of the materials. Finally, the fact that the analyses were conducted by a single person – with her own unconscious biases – entails another limitation of this thesis.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the overall conclusion can be drawn that unconscious bias towards women and Black people in translation is an issue that deserves recognition amongst translators, editors and publishers. Given recent UN reports that quantify gender bias worldwide (2023 Gender Social Norms Index) and indexes quantifying racism (e.g. by ENAR, the European anti-racism network) there is no room for complacency when it comes to challenging covert sexism and covert racism – in translations as much as anywhere else. The perpetuation of negative female and racial stereotypes and white innocence is a matter that should be taken seriously by any agent in the translation industry. It is also an area that merits more attention in Translation Studies.

This thesis is a first attempt at highlighting unconscious bias against women, unconscious racism and white innocence in translation. It can be taken as a starting point for more research into this topic. There is a need for more reception studies into the impact of translation choices on readers' perceptions of gender and racial stereotypes. Notwithstanding the advantages of using the framework of retranslation, such studies need not necessarily involve retranslations. Future studies would ideally involve various language pairs and translation directions, and a large variety of genres and text types, rather than be limited to a single language pair, translation direction, and fiction and (literary) non-fiction. Additionally, future studies would preferably cover a wide range of research designs and data collecting methods that may offer a more complete idea of readers' perceptions – including surveys, interviews, think-aloud protocols and perhaps even experimental studies assessing cognitive processes. One addition that could strengthen the validity of the findings in any of such studies would be the inclusion of one or more questions regarding reader comprehension.

More case studies confirming the claims made in this thesis might contribute to an increased awareness in translation scholars and other academics of the potentially harmful social implications of translator decisions. If translation scholars – who often teach translation courses as well – become convinced of the fact that implicit gender and racial bias in translation is an issue that universities and other educational institutions need to address in the classroom, they may be encouraged to train students aspiring a career in translation to become aware of their own unconscious biases. The same is true, of course, for academics and students in other disciplines, in that they all read texts – including translations – in which implicit bias may occur.

Increasing awareness in teachers and students (not just those in the field of translation) of the potential impact of individual translator choices is all the more important in the light of the concerns regarding bias in machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI). The priority currently given to these recent developments means that, at present, too little attention is paid to human bias in translation. Given the fact that human input is essential in terms of attempting to curb harmful AI-generated content, awareness of the impact of translation choices on readers is a matter that ought not to be ignored. Translations of literary texts are – at least for now – still being made by human translators. Similarly, many other genres and text types are still considered to require a human translator or post-editor. As long as this is the case, another challenge lies in the question how to raise awareness in translators, editors and publishers – but in readers, too – of the fact that everyone has their own blind spots.

As for engendering awareness in readers, a participatory research approach (where appropriate, of course) could be considered for future reader reception studies: the involvement of readers in the research process could bring about the desired effect of increased insight into their own unconscious biases – thus killing two birds with one stone, so to speak.

In a way, writing this thesis has achieved this effect where my own awareness is concerned, both as an academic and as an individual reader. Carefully studying negative female and racial stereotyping in translations and retranslations of two popular classics has been an academic as well as a personal journey – one during which I was frequently reminded of a remark made by the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a US Supreme Court Judge who was widely admired for being an advocate for gender equality but who also received criticism for not always being a champion for anti-racism: 'I think unconscious bias is one of the hardest things to get at.'

APPENDICES

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Samenvatting

Is een nieuwe vertaling altijd een 'betere' vertaling? Dit proefschrift betoogt dat een zogeheten 'hervertaling' in ieder geval niet noodzakelijkerwijs een vertaling is die meer oog heeft voor het tegengaan van vooroordelen. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt wat de effecten zijn van bewuste en onbewuste vertaalkeuzes op vrouwelijke en raciale stereotyperingen in verschillende vertalingen van eenzelfde tekst. Daarnaast beoogt dit proefschrift vast te stellen of vertalingen mogelijkerwijs de perceptie van lezers beïnvloeden, waardoor stereotyperingen in stand gehouden of in de hand gewerkt worden. Daartoe zijn de eerste en latere Nederlandse vertalingen van twee Amerikaanse klassiekers onder de loep gelegd: *The Great Gatsby* van F. Scott Fitzgerald en *The Fire Next Time* van James Baldwin, twee veelgelezen en veelgeprezen twintigste-eeuwse werken uit de VS die in het Nederlands vertaald én hervertaald zijn.

Het gebeurt niet vaak dat een uitgever zó overtuigd is van het belang of het literaire kaliber van een reeds vertaalde tekst dat men besluit een vertaler de opdracht te geven tot het maken van een nieuwe vertaling. Zeker waar het een relatief kleine lezersmarkt betreft zoals het Nederlands taalgebied is het vooral de relevantie voor hedendaagse lezers en de stilistische kwaliteit die een dergelijke investering geacht wordt te rechtvaardigen. Bijna zonder uitzondering gaat het bij dergelijke 'hervertalingen' dan ook om een origineel dat als een klassieker wordt beschouwd. Dat geldt ook voor de teksten die in dit proefschrift besproken worden: *The Great Gatsby* van F. Scott Fitzgerald uit 1925 (met Nederlandse vertalingen uit 1948 en 1985) en *The Fire Next Time* van James Baldwin uit 1963 (met Nederlandse vertalingen uit 1963 en 2018).

Het fenomeen 'hervertaling' is sinds een aantal decennia een dankbaar onderwerp voor vertaalwetenschappelijk onderzoek gebleken. De aanleiding daartoe is – althans gedeeltelijk – nogal prozaïsch: hervertalingen (d.w.z. meerdere vertalingen in dezelfde taal van eenzelfde tekst) lenen zich uitstekend voor vergelijkend onderzoek, met name onderzoek naar subjectieve keuzes van vertalers, die onder de veelomvattende noemer '*voice*' worden besproken in de vertaalwetenschap. Naast het verkrijgen van nieuwe inzichten met betrekking tot tekstuele en contextuele aspecten van de vertalingen zelf, is er bij dit onderzoeksgebied sprake van wetenschappelijke kruisbestuiving: het bestuderen van meerdere vertalingen levert niet alleen een beter begrip op van de verschillende

aspecten van het verschijnsel 'hervertaling', het onderzoek naar 'hervertaling' als fenomeen genereert weer nieuwe inzichten in allerlei facetten van vertaling (zowel in de zin van 'vertaling' als een product als 'vertaling' als proces).

Tot op heden richtte het onderzoek naar hervertalingen zich veelal op de redenen voor het laten maken van nieuwe vertalingen, waarbij het begrip '*aging*' werd gemunt. Deze term verwijst naar de ogenschijnlijk paradoxale gedachte dat vertalingen verouderen terwijl een origineel hetzelfde blijft. Redenen die in de loop der tijd zijn aangedragen met betrekking tot dit terugkerende onderwerp van debat zijn onder andere het idee dat de eerdere vertaling al vanaf het begin op enigerlei wijze tekortschoot, taalgebruik dat door hedendaagse lezers als ouderwets wordt ervaren, een nieuwe interpretatie van het origineel, en veranderingen in de maatschappelijke en/of ideologische context. De afgelopen twee decennia is er binnen de vertaalwetenschap in het algemeen, maar zeker ook op het gebied van onderzoek omtrent hervertalingen, meer aandacht gekomen voor andere aspecten, zoals de verschillende spelers die een rol vervullen bij het tot stand komen van (her)vertalingen, paratextuele elementen, en receptieonderzoek.

Dit proefschrift sluit gedeeltelijk aan bij deze recente ontwikkelingen. In tegenstelling tot eerder onderzoek richt dit proefschrift zich echter niet zozeer op de mogelijke redenen voor de uitgave van hervertalingen, of op nieuwe interpretaties van oorspronkelijke teksten en veranderde verwachtingen van lezers als gevolg van veranderde culturele en maatschappelijke normen. In plaats daarvan concentreert het zich op de mogelijke effecten van individuele vertaalkeuzes – in het bijzonder met betrekking tot vrouwelijke en raciale stereotyperingen. Het onderzoekt de rol die vertalers mogelijkerwijs – en vermoedelijk onbewust – spelen bij het voortbestaan van negatieve stereotypen, en de invloed die dergelijke negatieve stereotypen mogelijkerwijs hebben op de perceptie van Nederlandstalige lezers. Bij de studies in dit proefschrift staat vooral het idee van onbewuste vertaalkeuzes c.q. de onbedoelde impact van de vertaalkeuzes centraal.

De nadruk die elk van de vier studies legt op de effecten van subjectieve vertaalkeuzes betekent niet dat er geen aandacht is besteed aan de paratextuele en contextuele elementen van zowel de originele teksten als de vertalingen die van belang zijn voor een juiste inbedding van de analyses. Tot zover mogelijk binnen het bestek van de vier studies die in dit proefschrift gebundeld zijn, komen deze dimensies aan bod: de achtergrond en status van de originele teksten en van de vertalingen, relevante informatie over de vertalers, en de maatschappelijke context waarin

de originelen en respectievelijke vertalingen werden gepubliceerd. Wat betreft de context van de publicaties spelen maatschappelijke veranderingen uiteraard een rol. Om die reden is hoofdstuk 4 gedeeltelijk gewijd aan de maatschappelijke discussie over racisme in Nederland. Daarnaast is een van de onderzoeksvragen (vraag 4) gerelateerd aan de neiging van vertalers om te kiezen voor vertaalstrategieën die erop gericht zijn de vertaling zo toegankelijk mogelijk te maken voor de lezer. Een dergelijke vertaalbenadering (die niet alleen hervertalingen betreft) wordt door sommige vertaalwetenschappers wel bestempeld als '*risk-management*'. Deze term verwijst naar de poging van vertalers (en anderen die bij de publicatie van een vertaling betrokken zijn, zoals redacteuren en uitgevers) om het risico te vermijden dan wel te verkleinen dat de vertaling de beoogde communicatieve functie niet zal vervullen, bijvoorbeeld vanwege de mogelijkheid dat lezers de tekst onvoldoende zullen begrijpen of waarderen. Voor lezers onbekende culturele begrippen of uitdrukkingen, gebruik van taboewoorden of andere aspecten die als ongewoon of ongepast beschouwd kunnen worden, dan wel het anderszins niet voldoen aan conventies van de doelcultuur en/of doeltaal zijn slechts enkele obstakels die in een tekst kunnen voorkomen. Om tegemoet te komen aan hetgeen de lezer van een vertaling verondersteld wordt nodig te hebben om een werk inhoudelijk te begrijpen of de literaire waarde ervan te appreciëren, passen vertalers strategieën toe zoals het omschrijven van historische of culturele begrippen, het expliciteren van impliciete informatie, of het weglaten of juist toevoegen van woorden of uitdrukkingen. De algemene premisse is dat hoe meer tijd tussen de publicatie van het origineel en de (her)vertaling is verstreken, des te meer van dit soort risico-vermijdende vertaalstrategieën een vertaler zal gebruiken. De hypothese is dat de Nederlandse vertaler van de meest recente vertaling van *The Fire Next Time* een zekere mate van 'risico-management' toepast.

De redenen voor de selectie van het beroemde essay-tweeluik van Baldwin en van de bekendste (en meermaals verfilmde) roman van Scott Fitzgerald zijn meerledig. Ten eerste worden deze teksten zowel in de broncultuur (de VS) als de doelcultuur (met name Nederland en Vlaanderen) als klassiekers beschouwd en frequent c.q. regelmatig gelezen. Daarnaast geldt voor beide werken dat de tijd tussen de publicatie van de eerste Nederlandse vertaling en de Nederlandse hervertaling naar alle waarschijnlijkheid sociaal-maatschappelijke verschillen met zich meebrengt die van invloed zijn op de vertalers. De belangrijkste reden voor de keuze van F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* en James Baldwin's *The Fire*

Next Time voor de vier case studies is echter dat er in deze teksten een groot aantal woorden en uitdrukkingen voorkomen die naar sekse respectievelijk kleur verwijzen, welke bovendien regelmatig betrekking hebben op negatieve vrouwelijke respectievelijk raciale stereotypen. Een saillant gegeven is dat beide vertalingen van *The Great Gatsby* zijn gemaakt door vrouwen, terwijl zowel de eerste als de tweede vertaling van *The Fire Next Time* van de hand is van witte vertalers. *The Fire Next Time* bleek bij uitstek geschikt voor het analyseren van vertaalkeuzes met onopzettelijke gevolgen met betrekking tot stereotyperingen aangezien de twee essays vooral onbewust racisme aan de kaak stellen en 'witte onschuld' hekelen. (Baldwin kapittelt immers goedbedoelende witte mensen over hun ontkenning van het bestaan van impliciet racisme en vanwege het loochenen en verwerpen van het idee dat zij een aandeel hebben aan een racistische samenleving).

De studies in dit proefschrift beogen de volgende onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden:

1. Wat zijn de mogelijke effecten van vertaalkeuzes op de wijze waarop vrouwen en zwarte mensen worden geportretteerd in fictie respectievelijk non-fictie?
2. Wat zijn de daadwerkelijke effecten van vertaalkeuzes op de perceptie van lezers met betrekking tot vrouwelijke personages in fictie en zwarte mensen in non-fictie?
3. In hoeverre spelen vertalers mogelijkerwijs een rol bij het in stand houden of in de hand werken van vrouwelijke stereotyperingen en raciale stereotyperingen in de maatschappij?
4. Wat zijn de effecten van zogeheten 'risico-mijdende' vertaalstrategieën die als doel hebben vertalingen toegankelijk en begrijpelijk te maken voor hedendaagse lezers op de impact die vertaalkeuzes kunnen hebben op lezers?

Drie van de vier studies in dit proefschrift (hoofdstuk 2, 4 en 5) hebben *close reading* als methodologie, waarbij een vergelijking wordt gemaakt tussen de originele Amerikaanse tekst, de eerste vertaling en de hervertaling. Het doel van deze exercitie is om te onderzoeken wat het effect is van vertaalkeuzes op de wijze waarop vrouwen en Zwarte Amerikanen worden geportretteerd, en daarmee de eerste onderzoeksvraag te kunnen beantwoorden, alsmede de derde onderzoeksvraag ten dele te beantwoorden.

Deze studies gaan uit van de veronderstelling dat vertaalkeuzes die stereotyperingen in de hand werken meestal het resultaat zijn van verkeerde interpretaties of van een verkeerd begrip van woorden of zinsneden. De studie in hoofdstuk 5 betoogt dat in het geval van de recente hervertaling van *The Fire Next Time* dergelijke vertaalkeuzes het gevolg zijn van 'risico-mijdende' vertaalstrategieën, welke nu juist bedoeld zijn om 'recht te doen aan de auteur in de taal van het Nederlands van nu', zoals de uitgever in het colofon vermeldt. De studie in hoofdstuk 5 neemt dergelijke vertaalstrategieën als uitgangspunt, teneinde de vierde onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden.

Uit de *close reading* studies kwam naar voren dat (onbewuste) vertaalkeuzes inderdaad van invloed zijn op de wijze waarop het vrouwelijke hoofdpersonage in *The Great Gatsby* en Zwarte Amerikanen in *The Fire Next Time* worden geportretteerd – hoe klein en ogenschijnlijk onbelangrijk de tekstuele verschillen tussen de respectievelijke originelen en hun Nederlandse vertalingen ook zijn. In beide vertalingen van *The Great Gatsby*, maar in de oudere vertaling in het bijzonder, kwam de vrouwelijke hoofdpersoon negatiever uit de verf dan in het origineel. Dit gold met name stereotyperingen van vrouwen als manipulatief en hulpeloos. Ook in beide vertalingen van *The Fire Next Time* bleek sprake te zijn van negatieve stereotyperingen, waarbij dient te worden opgemerkt dat deze negatieve raciale stereotyperingen níet voorkomen in het origineel, dat immers racisme en onbewuste bias aan de kaak stelt. Een aanvullende conclusie was dat de onbewuste vertaalkeuzes in de hervertaling een illustratie lijken te zijn van onbewuste raciale bias, hetgeen ironisch is gezien de goede intenties van de vertaler en het doel van de hervertaling. Uiteraard betekent het zeer kleine aantal case studies, die bovendien betrekking hebben op slechts twee originele teksten en hun twee (her)vertalingen en één enkel talenpaar, dat de conclusies in dit proefschrift niet noodzakelijkerwijs representatief zullen zijn voor vertalingen in het algemeen.

Naast de drie studies waarin tekstuele vergelijkingen centraal staan, betrof een van de studies (hoofdstuk 3) een lezersonderzoek. Het doel van deze receptiestudie was om te onderzoeken of de stelling dat de vertalingen van *The Great Gatsby* negatieve stereotyperingen van vrouwen in stand houden of zelfs versterken, bevestigd zou worden door 'gewone' ofwel 'niet-professionele' lezers (dat wil zeggen lezers die geen teksten lezen uit hoofde van hun beroep zoals literair critici, vertalers of vertaalwetenschappers). Het lezersonderzoek maakte gebruik van een online vragenlijst waarbij twee groepen respondenten een klein

aantal regels uit de Nederlandse vertalingen kreeg voorgelegd. De ene groep kreeg een aantal in de voorafgaande *close reading* studie geanalyseerde zinnen te lezen die afkomstig waren uit de eerste, in 1948 gepubliceerde vertaling, de andere groep las dezelfde zinnen, maar dan uit de hervertaling, daterend van 1985. De respondenten werd niet verteld dat het om een vertaling ging. Er werd hun slechts gevraagd het karakter en gedrag van het vrouwelijke hoofdpersonage uit een roman te beoordelen, door eerst met vijf steekwoorden het personage te beschrijven en vervolgens een twaalftal eigenschappen te evalueren door middel van scores op een vijfpuntsschaal. Op basis van deze data werd een statische analyse uitgevoerd.

De analyse van de antwoorden uit het lezersonderzoek bevestigde de bevindingen van de eerste *close reading*-studie. Lezers van de vertaling uit 1948 bleken inderdaad over het algemeen een negatiever beeld van het vrouwelijke personage te hebben dan lezers van de hervertaling uit 1985. Hierbij dient de kanttekening gemaakt te worden dat slechts één van de uitkomsten ook statistisch significant was. Met dit lezersonderzoek is evenwel een eerste aanzet gegeven voor het beantwoorden van de derde onderzoeksvraag. Een lezersonderzoek naar *The Fire Next Time* bevindt zich nog in de fase van een pilotstudie. Ook waar het deze studie betreft, geldt dat er nog veel meer lezersonderzoek gedaan zou moeten worden voordat algemene conclusies kunnen worden getrokken.

Dit proefschrift beoogt impliciet seksisme en racisme in (her)vertalingen van literaire klassiekers te belichten, en te laten zien dat de vertaalkeuzes die het gevolg zijn van onbewuste vooroordelen van vertalers op hun beurt kunnen leiden tot de instandhouding van vooroordelen over vrouwen en zwarte mensen onder de lezers van de (her)vertalingen. Het hoopt daarmee (toekomstige) vertalers – vaak opgeleid door vertaalwetenschappers – bewust te maken van het belang om hun eigen onbewuste vooroordelen te onderkennen en om de invloed die zij hebben op de perceptie van lezers niet te onderschatten.

Author contributions

This doctoral thesis is a thesis by publication: it includes three articles that were published in international peer-reviewed journals and one chapter that was published in an international academic book series. Each of the chapters following the introduction may be read separately, but the chapters can also be read as a series of follow-up articles.

Chapter 2
Published as: Zeven, K., & Dorst, A. G. (2020). A beautiful little fool? Retranslating Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*. *Perspectives*, *29*(*5*), 661–675. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1778047

Zeven and Dorst conceived the idea for this study together. Zeven conducted the background research for the article. Zeven and Dorst collected and analyzed the data together, and wrote and revised the article together.

Chapter 3
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Zeven and Dorst conceived the idea for this study together. Zeven and Dorst conducted the research together, and collected and analyzed the data together. Zeven and Dorst wrote and revised the chapter together.

Chapter 4
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Zeven conceived the idea for this study. Zeven conducted the research, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the first version of this manuscript. Dorst provided feedback on the manuscript. Zeven revised the manuscript to submit it in its final form.

Chapter 5

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Zeven conceived the idea for this study. Zeven conducted the research, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the first version of this manuscript. Dorst provided feedback on the manuscript. Zeven revised the manuscript to submit it in its final form.

Chapters 1 and 6

These chapters, which comprise the introduction and conclusion, respectively, have not been submitted for publication elsewhere. Zeven wrote these chapters, and Dorst provided feedback on these chapters.

About the author

Katinka Zeven was born in Haarlem in 1969. After completing her secondary education at *Stedelijk Gymnasium* in Haarlem in 1987, she obtained a first-year qualification ('*propedeuse*') in law at Leiden University in 1988. She left the law and completed a degree in English Literature and Linguistics at the same university. The Harting Scholarship programme enabled her to study English Literature at York University in 1992-1993. She obtained a teaching degree in 1995, whilst doing voluntary work for *Stichting Vluchtelingenwerk*. Between 1995 and 1999 she taught English at various secondary schools and a number of universities of applied sciences, and Dutch for the voluntary organization *Ouders op Herhaling*.

Katinka's interest in translation was sparked off by working together with a friend on a translation of a thesis. She then decided to become a sworn translator and to train as a legal translator with Chris Odijk in Amsterdam and at the *Stichting Instituut van Gerechtstolken & -Vertalers* (SIGV) in Utrecht, obtaining a certificate and diploma respectively. From 1999 onwards, Katinka combined her freelance work as a translator and editor with writing for an arts magazine and an educational publishing company. She also taught in-company language courses. After having taught a course in legal English for the Leiden Faculty of Law in 2005, she started teaching in the English department at her alma mater. In 2008, she completed the first year of the *Vertalersvakschool* for literary translation in Amsterdam. Until 2015, she was a board member on various committees for the assessment of professional translators, such as the *Rbtv* (Register of sworn interpreters and translators) and the *Stichting Nationale Examens Vertaler en Tolk* (SNEVT).

At present, Katinka is a university lecturer in the Minor Translation and the MA Translation at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL) in Leiden. Her research interests are in the fields of translation studies and stylistics. She started as a PhD at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) in 2021. Her research focuses on retranslations and the impact of translation choices on female and racial stereotypes.

Courses taken as a PhD candidate 2021 – 2025:

- Workshop 'Peer Review' (15 March 2023)
- Workshop 'Academic Integrity' (22 February 2023)
- Workshop 'How to write a DMP' (12 April 2022)

Conference papers, guest lectures and non-academic lectures 2021 – 2025:

- Reading in Translation: Approaches to the Study of the Reception of Translated Literature – University College Cork, May 2021, online conference: 'Daisy Buchanan in Retranslation: Characterization and Reader Reception' (Zeven & Dorst)
- PETRA-E Conference 2021 – Trinity College Dublin, November 2021, online conference: (Zeven & Dorst): 'Daisy Buchanan in Retranslation'
- 6th e-Expert Seminar: Feminism and Gender Awareness in MFL and Translation (University of Cordoba, online conference) – May 2022
- Workshop 1922 Festivalweek (Haags Montessori Lyceum) – August 2022: 'The Great Gatsby'
- NITS (Netherlands and Flanders Network of Interdisciplinary Translation Studies) conference – Leiden University, June 2023: 'Baldwin in (re) translation: Black stereotypes and reader reception'
- Guest lecture INT – April 2024: 'The "right" word?'
- Guest lecture University of Antwerp, April 2024: 'Het "juiste" woord? De maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid van de vertaler

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