Being a translator without being an interpreter is close to impossible. The following entities are only examples of the factors affecting the decisions that a translator makes: the author of the original work, the respective audience for which this author wrote in mind, and the audience that receives the translation upon publication. No translator is completely impartial—otherwise, all translations would be the same. When it comes to ancient literature, the progression by which translations are differently received throughout time can be understood through the prism of "Classical reception," a phenomenon that also crafts the archetype of the accepted or ideal translator.[1] Perceived legitimacy has its own allure within the Classics since authority as a classicist or translator is often less affected by the content of a person's contributions, but rather, their identity and background. Classical reception, in conjunction with perceived legitimacy, allows us to interrogate the ways in which a person's gender or race affects their reputation as a translator. The media and institutions of higher education promote literature of the Greco-Roman or "Western" Classics, which are then overwhelmingly analyzed and translated by authors of the same backgrounds. These texts become canonized, and in turn, so do their authors, but only a few translators are met with the same respect and reverence.

Classical reception is a double-edged sword, as the reaction which a piece of literature elicits pertains to both the original and translated work. Because the Classics look far back into antiquity, the authors of well-known works, such as Homer of the *Odyssey* or Vergil of the *Aeneid*, have passed away though their works have not. Although some may see "the death of the author" as a relinquishing of control over their work, the translator very much has the integrity of the original author's work in their mind, whether by choice or because of the pressures relating to

[1] Martindale, C. (1993) *Redeeming the text: Latin poetry and the hermeneutics of reception.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

reception.[2] "Faithfulness" to the text then becomes a tough pill to swallow, since what if the lessons taught in the original piece would not be well received or even inappropriate for the present day and age?[3] The decisions that a translator must make concerns the reception of their translation in addition to the threshold acceptance of the original work. Trevor Ross asserts that the "stewardship of an established authority or institution" drives the loftiness of the canon forward.[4] An elite class of literature and authors grandfather in translators who then assume a spot in the hierarchy of the many people who have interacted with ancient text. The translator always has to straddle faithfulness to the text in the larger context of faithfulness to the canon, as they are entering a conversation about texts that have stood the test of time.

In this essay, I will focus on how classicists grapple with the racism and sexism present within ancient epic and the history of translating epic. The experiences of translators influence either implicitly or explicitly the way in which they choose to render a story. Using comparative analysis and recourse to translation theory, I will discuss how a growing group of marginalized translators and translators in Classics emphasize the political valences of their craft in order to stand in solidarity against marginalization. They have shown that, while no translation is perfect, certain translation choices can perpetuate outdated dynamics. Ultimately, by exploring these dynamics, I intend to show that adopting this mindset allows translators to more effectively grapple with the multiple levels of marginalization that may be present both within the texts and in their own careers.

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[2] Barthes, R. (1967) *The birth of 'the death of the author' - JSTOR*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24238249 (Accessed: 14 August 2023).
[3] Irigaray, L. (2002) "On Faithfulness in Translating," in *Luce Irigaray presents international, intercultural, intergenerational dialogues around her work*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 32–41.
[4] Ross, T. (1996) "Dissolution and the making of the English literary canon," *JSTOR*, *Renaissance and Reformation*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43445609 (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

Arshia Sattar, translator of the Ramayana from Sanskrit to English, has spoken on the traditional and almost ritualistic aspect of translating the Classics in a recent interview.[5] Sattar states that one is "rarely" the first translator, but is extremely definitive with the phrase "[one] will certainly not be the last."[6] The so-called "first" translator from a certain background—the first female translator of a specific work, the first translator of color of a specific work—is often met with the response of making a person or their accomplishment out to merely be a symbol. The reduction of the"first" translator into a symbol ushers in societal acceptance to undermine previous scholarship and interaction with the original work, often from the demographic that the "first" person is alleged to represent. When they are recognized, women and people of color in the field of translation are often labeled as the first person of their respective minority to have completed such a commendable task. The industry of translation then falls into a trap of representation: that a certain individual person speaks for all who share their background, undervaluing and discouraging subsequent contributions with the fear that they do not have the stamp of validation that is "being first." If translation is not a transaction or a competition, shouldn't being the "first" translator in whatever respect be irrelevant? Yet, if there were no more "first" translators, the industry of translation would cater to a smaller audience due to the more conservative elements of its history in the Classics especially. Translation would not live up to the global and diverse medium on which the industry prides itself.

The act of making someone a "first" permeates into the media's reception of translations. The earlier quote from Arshia Sattar is from an interview that solicited the contributions of three notable female translators of different classical traditions. *Words Without Borders*, the

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[5] Price, A. (2018) "Women Translating the Classics," *Words Without Borders*. Available at: https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2018-08/women-translating-the-classics-emily-wilson-sholeh-wolpe-arshia-sattar/ (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[6] Ibid.

publication that conducted this interview, strives to represent and give voice to those that are traditionally marginalized or silenced in literary fields.[7] The interviewer, Alta Price, curated responses from Emily Wilson, translator of Homer's *Odyssey*, and Sholeh Wolpé, translator of Sufi poet Attar's *The Conference of The Birds*, in addition to Arshia Sattar. *Words Without Borders* works to dismantle the influence of tokenism in translation by discussing a wide variety of works and allowing many different women to share their experiences, to work against the notion of a "female translator." Price has therefore called for a Women in Translation movement, which is driven by the fact that there should be a standard in which society should see women: the same way as everyone else.[8]

Tokenism, "the practice of doing something only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are treated fairly," deeply relates to the representation, and often lack thereof, of women and people of color in respected echelons of the Classics. In an interview conducted at Vanderbilt University on tokenism in the corporate world, a member of the panel made the statement, "Intent is important," encapsulating the difference between an organization that circulates tokenism versus one that advocates sincerely for equal representation.[9] Applying logic to the premise of the interview at *Words Without Borders*, three women were chosen, besides the fact that they represent different languages, because they each grapple with the way in which society views them, in addition to and often more so than their translations. In turn, minoritized translators are more likely to fear how they will be received than how their

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[7] *Words Without Borders*. (2003) Available at: https://wordswithoutborders.org/about/mission/ (Accessed: 23 August 2023).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Sherrer, K. (2018) "What is tokenism, and why does it matter in the workplace?" *Vanderbilt Business School*. Available at: https://business.vanderbilt.edu/news/2018/02/26/tokenism-in-the-workplace/#:~:text=lined%20up%20well."-,Tokenism%3A%20"the%20practice%20of%20doing%20something%20(such%20as%20hiring,Merriam%20Webster (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

translation will be received. Samia Mehrez ("Translating Gender")[10] and Sherry Simon ("Gender in Translation")[11] are among the many female scholars who have theorized gender in translation as well.

Who is allowed to make mistakes and deviate from a distilled model of translation? How does one straddle faithfulness to an ancient text and response to or from a modern audience? Where is the balance that a translator must actualize between the pull of the original author and their own, if any, creative license? Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay "The Translator's Task" has long been the canonical text against which answers to these questions are measured.[12] For instance, "The Translator's Task" has served as a theoretical blueprint for how a translator should approach balancing both the source and target languages of one's translation. The difficulty of translation that Benjamin picks up on is balancing both of the languages that are involved in the process.[13] Simply put, leaning towards one language may result in being less faithful to the other. A translation is often thought of as a way of communicating or illuminating a conversation to someone in a second medium if they do not understand or cannot access the first. Benjamin argues that an appeal to the audience is not appropriate for the translator to keep in mind, as it may cloud the integrity of their translation.[14] The translator's role is to act as an intermediary between the writer and another reader. Translation in this picture becomes a process by which the translator can bridge a gap. Benjamin clarifies that the nuances of language make it impossible

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[10] Mehrez, S. (2007) "Translating gender," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/97559176/Translating_Gender (Accessed: 20 August 2023).
[11] Simon, S. (1996) "Taking Gendered Positions in Translation Theory," in *Gender in Translation*. Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis.
[12] Benjamin, W., and Randall, S. (2012) "The Translator's Task," in The Translation Studies Reader, L. Venuti (ed.). Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 69–75.
[13] Ibid., 75.
[14] Ibid., 76.

for a translation to line up perfectly with its original.[15] Although a translation may demonstrate a basic resemblance with the source text, the translator often takes creative license.

Benjamin exposes an inherent lack of accuracy that a translation presents even when deeply working to emulate the original. After all, the widely known English versions of "A Translator's Task" are indeed translations, such as the one I am citing by scholar Steven Randall. Randall renders Benjamin's words on the relationship between a source text and its translation as the following: "Translation is a form. In order to grasp it, we must go back to the original."[16] Randall's word choice is ironic, since through being grandfathered-in by the name of Walter Benjamin, Randall speaks with such authority on the topic of translation, but fails to acknowledge in this sentence that his scholarship on "A Translator's Task" *is* translation.

According to Benjamin, the difficulty to be objective lies in the fact that a translator cannot merely parrot the source text but is tasked with choosing words that make it come alive in another language or medium. He writes, "It is clear that a translation, no matter how good, cannot have any significance for the original."[17] However, this position is paradoxical, given that the translator must pinpoint the first writer's intention in order to stay true to what both work to connote. Benjamin believes translation to exist in the "afterlife (Überleben) of the source text," meaning that there is a separation only in time between the source text and its imminent translations.[18] It is interesting that Benjamin acknowledges the existence of "untranslatability."[19] Benjamin's standpoint on translation conflates translation with art.[20] Art fits into the metaphor of

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[15] Ibid., 77.
[16] Ibid., 76.
[17] Ibid., 76.
[18] Ibid., 71.
[19] See also Apter, E.S. (2006) "Nothing is Translatable," in *The Translation Zone: A new comparative literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 85–94.
[20] Nabugodi, M. (2014) *Pure language 2.0: Walter Benjamin's theory of language and Translation Technology*, *Feedback*. Available at: https://openhumanitiespress.org/feedback/literature/pure-language-2-0-walter-benjamins-theory-of-language-and-translation-technology/ (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

untranslatability, as the original artist is often thought to hold the authority and license over their piece, granting them the ability to make and justify their artistic choices. Benjamin, and Randall—through translating "A Translator's Task"—demonstrate that the translator is also an artist who cultivates their own form of art inspired by an original work.

Benjamin's original work, titled in German, Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers, demonstrates that translators and their translations are compared with scrutiny to the source texts from which they take inspiration. The literature of the Classics that has been "accepted" into the canon is overwhelmingly written by European male writers. The phrase, "be faithful to the text," then turns into a burden rather than a rule of thumb, especially for female and translators of color, who are underrepresented. This "faithfulness" that Benjamin and many other translation theorists call upon is almost always attributed to Robert Fagles. His translations, namely of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey*, are viewed as classroom standards, although he does not preserve every aspect of what makes these ancient texts "epic": for example, the meter in which each work was written. Of course, maintaining meter is a stylistic choice, but one with which he is not met with scrutiny for forgoing. On the other hand, Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, translator of a new version of the *Aeneid* published in 2021, held herself to maintaining the dactylic hexameter through keeping every English line of her translation to six feet.[21] Her faithfulness to the text takes another dimension by bringing the meter back to life, in spoken English.

Yet, Fagles is the one whom society deems synonymous to translation.. The *Los Angeles Times* opens a 1991 article, commemorating Fagles' translation of the *Iliad*, with the words, "Robert Fagles' translation of the Iliad opens with rage–the word he's certain is perfect, the

[21] Demanski, L. (2021) "A New *Aeneid* translation channels Vergil's 'pure Latin,'" *University of Chicago News*. Available at: https://news.uchicago.edu/story/new-aeneid-translation-channels-vergils-pure-latin (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

English equivalent he believes Homer would have chosen to launch his epic poem."[22] The title of this article, "Practicing the Art of Losing Nothing in Translation," also implies that Fagles is an artist who transcends barriers between languages. The *Los Angeles Times* supports a 20th century translator, Robert Fagles, as being on par with Homer. Even the identity of Homer is often debated, as part of the so-called Homeric question.[23] The possibility that the name may stand in for multiple people further plays into the reverence of Fagles and his "Homeric swagger," a phrase posthumously attributed to him by the *New York Times*.[24] Thus, although new translations of Homer like Bartsch-Zimmer's are fairly recent, there is no evidence that schools are moving away from the translations of Fagles or those of the male translators after him

Perhaps sexism emanates from the canon itself, since the notion of "Homer" as more than one author rarely elicits the conversation that the group may include female Hellenists. Furthermore, three especially canonized texts, the *Iliad, Aeneid*, and *Odyssey*, all begin with a similar structure in translation: a discussion of a man and a muse. Of course, female characters and their presence in each story deeply impact the course that the narrative takes. For instance, Dido in the Aeneid is a powerful Queen who prolongs Aeneas' stay in Carthage before he reaches the Western Land, *Hesperia*. In the Classical world, power is finite. Why does Dido and Aeneas' relationship usher in both Dido's downfall and not, immediately, that of Aeneas? Because Aeneas is the one who makes the decisions, and has control, when they are together.

Classicist John L. Moles cannot prove that Dido is morally culpable for having sex with Aeneas since he subjects Dido to more scrutiny and blame than he does Aeneas, and since he

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[22] Sandomir, R. (1991) "Practicing the Art of Losing Nothing in Translation," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 January. Available at: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-01-06-vw-10476-story.html (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[23] West, M. (2011) "The Homeric Question Today," *JSTOR*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23208780 (Accessed: 21 August 2023).
[24] McGrath, C. (2008) "Robert Fagles, Translator of the Classics, Dies at 74," *New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/29/books/29fagles.html (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

fails to acknowledge the ambiguity concerning whether they are married. The example encapsulates how something ambiguous within the ancient text itself is treated using a double standard. Sexism does exist in the text itself in terms of blame and the translator, Moles, perpetuates the point of view of antiquity. According to Moles, Dido commits a misdemeanor by having sex with Aeneas because she knowingly does so out of wedlock.[25]

Moles clarifies that Dido is not at fault for falling in love with Aeneas; however, he places blame on her for how she responds to that love. Moles construes the passage which follows the cave scene to be Vergil's demonstration of a moral shift in Dido's mentality, most probably dictated by love.[26] The line of which Dido is the subject, *coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam* (Vergil, *Aen*. 4.172) describes, to Moles, her fatal flaw. Moles interprets the word culpa as representing Dido's hamartia.[27] Moles explains that Dido hides the state of Aeneas' and her relationship by calling it a marriage. Moles believes that the implications of the verb *vocat*, the act of attributing a name, extend to Dido's intention to justify her sex with Aeneas by saying that they are married. Moles construes the verb that follows, *praetexit*, to mean that Dido consciously hides truth even though she herself knows, at some level, that they are not married. By isolating line 172, following the censored cave scene, Moles sees "shamelessness" in Dido, a trope of Greco-Roman tragedy often attributed to the woman in an "emotional entanglement."[28] Moles aligns himself with Vergil's word choice of *nomine*, here being a name that Dido imposes on her relationship with Aeneas, to say that even Vergil saw Dido and Aeneas as unmarried, and that Dido uses the label of marriage to justify sex.

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[25] Moles, J. (1984) "Aristotle and Dido's 'hamartia,'" *Jstor*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/642369 (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[26] Ibid., 51.
[27] Ibid., 48.
[28] Ibid., 51-52.

Moles does not attribute equal blame to Aeneas and Dido for the misconduct in the cave (even if we grant his assumption that they are not married). He incorrectly places the entire burden of the culpa on Dido by citing the "illicit nature of her love-making with Aeneas."[29] Although Aeneas and Dido have sex with each other in the cave, Moles refers to Aeneas as a sort of accomplice in Dido's illicit activities. Moles makes the assumption that Dido initiated, and roped Aeneas into, sex even in his English sentence structure; the word "her" in the phrase is the English equivalent to a Latin subjective genitive, in conjunction with "love-making." Aeneas corresponds to a Latin ablative of accompaniment, contextualizing the fact that Dido is the focus of Moles' blame, since she governs the "love-making" out of which Aeneas stems as almost an afterthought.

Because Vergil leaves out the scene in which his audience understands that Dido and Aeneas have sex, Moles can only speculate about who is more at fault. Moles defaults to the (sexist) point of view that women are deemed "shameless" for having sex (outside of marriage), rather than questioning why women are conventionally blamed (and men are not).[30] Why should women harbor the shame within a relationship, and be regarded as shameless if they act outside of that norm, while the actions of their male counterparts are judged with less scrutiny? Moles describes Dido as "over emotional," undermining her conversation with Anna, consideration of Sychaeus, and careful deliberation over whether to engage in the relationship in the first place.[31] By calling her "over" an acceptable threshold of emotional expression, Moles imposes a standard on Dido to which he does not hold Aeneas. Of course, this is an article considering Dido's fatal flaw, yet Moles makes no effort to determine that of Aeneas; just as Dido is the focus of Moles' article, she is the target of his blame.

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[29] Ibid., 52.
[30] Ibid., 52.
[31] Ibid., 50.

Moles dismisses evidence which suggests that Aeneas and Dido are married by imposing his own criteria of what constitutes a "proper" marriage. The first issue with his argument is the word "proper" in and of itself, since Moles bases his definition of marriage on "Roman law and social practice."[32] Moles uses Aristotle's analysis of Greek tragedy to understand Vergil's storyline and attribute a fatal flaw to Dido, but he makes the mistake of applying Roman standards to two people in Carthage, who have sex many years before Rome is established. Of course, under the assumption that the *Aeneid* is propaganda for the first Roman emperor, Augustus, the text may then be accepted as intentionally anachronistic.[33] There remains a disconnect between Moles' argument and the chronology of the epic, since, although both Rome and Carthage may overlap in terms of societal norms, Moles invalidates Aeneas and Dido's marriage with standards that do not yet preside over their kingdoms or daily lives.

Moles also makes the point that a married couple must live together and that Aeneas and Dido are "not yet cohabiting."[34] However, once Dido enters her bedroom for the last time before committing suicide, she picks up Aeneas' sword and stares at the bed in which they slept together. The fact that Aeneas left his belongings in Dido's room demonstrates that he stayed with her for an extended period of time, suggesting that they are at least "more married" than Moles credits them. Moles equates Dido and Aeneas' relationship to a one-night-stand by remarking that "they have only made love once."[35] However, Dido's tears upon seeing the empty bed and Aeneas' possessions, without his presence, imply that they slept and spent time with each other beyond Moles' assertion. Moles would actually strengthen his argument by asserting

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[32] Ibid., 52.
[33] Lavocat, F. (2020) "Dido meets Aeneas: Anachronism, alternative history, counterfactual thinking and the idea of fiction," *JLT Articles*. Available at: http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/articles/article/view/1111/2549 (Accessed: 22 August 2023).
[34] Moles, J. (1984) "Aristotle and Dido's 'hamartia,'" *Jstor*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/642369 (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[35] Ibid., 52.

that Dido and Aeneas may have had sex more than once because under his framework, Dido would be even more culpable for repeating illicit affairs. Instead, he speculates on the events in the cave, which Vergil himself does not narrate, thus, Moles stretches Vergil's intention for the meaning behind his text. The way in which Moles crafts this argument, to demean Dido and suggest that she exclusively exhibits a fatal flaw, demonstrates how he reduces her to a "trope" or a "token" scorned female character.

This idea of a "token" or "the only" female extends into media reception of female translators. Emily Wilson is adamant that she is not the first woman to have translated the Odyssey, so much so that one will encounter that fact in her Twitter bio.[36] She is actually the first woman to have translated the *Odyssey* into English, however, this title of "the first," tends to minimize both the contributions of women to the Classics and the interactions between women and ancient texts. For instance, Anne le Fèvre Dacier translated the *Odyssey* into French prose in as early as 1708, but is rarely recognized as "the first female translator or classicist" by Western media, perhaps because she did not write in English.[37] Wilson's activism in raising awareness for female translators extends profoundly into the Classical texts that she translates herself, namely, humanizing the enslaved women who sleep with the suitors during the *Odyssey*. These women are executed by Telemachus at Odysseus' order (Homer, *Od*, 22.471-473). The translation of these women from Greek to English perpetuates the brutality and disdain with which they were treated. On International Women's Day in 2018, Emily Wilson exposed the choices that best-selling male English translations of the *Odyssey* make about how to render the enslaved women. The wrongdoings and shortcomings of male classicists are often ignored, perhaps

[36] Bao, J. (2019) "Emily Wilson: Not the first woman to translate the Odyssey," *34th Street Magazine*. Available at: https://www.34st.com/article/2019/10/emily-wilson-penn-classical-studies-translation-the-odyssey-macarthur-foundation-genius-grant-fellowship (Accessed: 22 August 2023).
[37] Hepburn, L. (2022) "Anne Le Fèvre Dacier: Homer's first female translator," *Peter Harrington Journal - The Journal*. Available at: https://www.peterharrington.co.uk/blog/anne-le-fevre-dacier-homers-first-female-translator/ (Accessed: 22 August 2023).

because of perceived male domination in the field. Wilson turned straight to best-selling translated works by authors such as Fagles, Lombardo, and Fitzgerald, all of whom used slurs to describe these women. Wilson embraces alternative knowledge sharing in order to correct these injustices with a wider audience.[38] By choosing Twitter as her platform, she joined a movement of scholars working to demystify Classics as a field—one that younger generations and marginalized groups can, in fact, access. This mission is in keeping with Wilson's attitude to raise awareness for issues in the Classics, such as gender inequality, in tandem with extending appreciation and involvement in Classical literature to youth. She holds herself and other translators by demonstrating that translation and identity are inextricably interwoven.

The *New Yorker* presents Wilson as risking her reputation in order to give voice to a more important movement that is women's rights in the Classics. Dan Chiasson, the contributor of this piece, points out that some of the men whom Wilson critiques cannot respond as they have since passed away. For instance, ten years prior to the publication of her Twitter thread, Robert Fagles died. Fagles, arguably but according to Chiasson, is the classicist whom Wilson most directly calls out. Returning to the scene of the hanged slave women, Wilson believes Fagles to have conflated the death of these women to a forgettable, inconsequential event; Fagles presented what Wilson calls a "childish half-rhyme" between the words "cozy... grisly" to describe the circumstances and appearances of the enslaved women.[39] The mentality of blame the victim–or, at least, disregard the victim–is exacerbated here. Wilson acknowledges the dilemma posed by the heroism and homecoming of Odysseus; certain translators take it upon themselves to regard Odysseus as the focus, protagonist, and essence of the entire *Odyssey*, however, such a

[38] Chiasson, D. (2018) "The classics scholar redefining what Twitter can do," *The New Yorker*. Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/rabbit-holes/the-classics-scholar-redefining-what-twitter-can-do (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[39] Wilson, E. (2018) "@EmilyRCWilson scholia," *Emily Wilson*. Available at: https://www.emilyrcwilson.com/emilyrcwilson-scholia (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

view minimizes the presence of other characters. For example, since Odysseus requests that the enslaved women be hanged, Telemachus obliges. The personhood of these women gets lost, not only in translation, but within the scene itself.

Classical reception makes it deeply vital for translators to have the implications of their words in mind, since their audience is different from that of the original canonized work, intended to be received by, in the case of the Odyssey, a more patriarchal society. It is imperative today that translators understand the platform that they are given: to relay words of the past into the framework of the now. The social justice, inclusivity, and awareness for which Wilson campaigns and champions in translation need institutional recognition.

The question of race is ever-present in the Classics and is certainly applicable to the scene of the enslaved women that Wilson points out. There is a constant distinction between suitors and herders throughout the *Odyssey* and within ancient social strata. The suitors are the men who attempt to pursue Penelope while he is away. Jackie Murray, in "Racecraft in the Odyssey," defines the herders to be a "group socially constructed as the racial opposites of the heroes."[40] This idea of "proto-racism" that Murray picks up on highlights the fact that "otherness" in terms of ethnic and cultural differences in ancient Greece differentiated "races," however, enslaved people generally shared the same skin color as their enslavers.[41] Murray goes on to say that "Heroes treat the herders as having alienated humanity."[42] Race as justification for dehumanization, segregation, maltreatment, and violence is a common theme throughout history,

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[40] Murray, J. (2021) "Race and sexuality: Racecraft in the Odyssey," in: *A Cultural History of Race in Antiquity,* ed. D. McCoskey. London: Bloomsbury. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/55515239/Race_and_Sexuality_Racecraft_in_the_Odyssey (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[41] Hunt, P. (2015) "Trojan Slaves in Classical Athens," in *Communities and Networks in the Ancient Greek World*, C. Taylor (ed.), K. Vlassopoulos (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 128–154. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198726494.003.0006 (Accessed: 13 August 2023).
[42] Murray, J. (2021) "Race and sexuality: Racecraft in the Odyssey," in: *A Cultural History of Race in Antiquity,* ed. D. McCoskey. London: Bloomsbury. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/55515239/Race_and_Sexuality_Racecraft_in_the_Odyssey (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

from which the Classics are by no means exempt. Murray brings up a double standard when Odysseus kills the suitors and the enslaved women.[43] The death of the suitors needed to be masked by a celebration so that a civil war, between Odysseus and other powerful families, would not erupt. Race precluded proximity to power, wealth, and status. The herders did not have the access that the suitors would, so, in the words of Jackie Murray, "they can be murdered without consequence."[44] Racially charged scenes such as these within the *Odyssey* planted seeds for modern racism and constructions of race.

Race may affect the way in which Classicists of color frame their scholarship and interaction with Greco-Roman culture, literature, and society. The diversity within translation lies not only in the logic that different translators will choose different words—ultimately producing their respective and unique translations—but also the fact that the choices a translator makes are due to their own judgment, tendencies, and even bias, all of which are affected by lived experiences. In the cases of marginalization and racism, the status of translated Latin and Greek works by scholars of color are less likely to be accepted into the modern literary canon, since these Classicists are often questioned for their motivations to engage with the Classics.

Jhumpa Lahiri, recipient of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, is an author, translator, and Classicist of color who now teaches at Princeton University. Lahiri is currently working on a new translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* alongside Yelena Baraz, a professor of Latin literature in Princeton's Classics Department. Lahiri and Baraz share significant experience in reading, analyzing, and educating others on Classical literature and civilization. They will join Stephanie McCarter as women who have published translations of the *Metamorphoses* into English.[45] There is also a forthcoming translation of the *Metamorphoses* by C. Luke Soucy, who

[43] Ibid., 150.
[44] Ibid., 151.
[45] McCarter, S. (2022) *Metamorphoses*. London: Penguin Classics.

labels himself the first biracial person and queer man to translate this epic into English.[46] He subtitles his scholarship of the *Metamorphoses* as "A New Translation, confronting the sexuality, violence, and politics that so many previous translations have glossed over."[47] Soucy's cognizance of the lack of recognition for these themes in translation, coupled with his own experiences of having been marginalized, are among the many reasons that motivate him to illuminate the power dynamics of epic and their relationship to sexuality and proto-racism.

Minoritized translators often grapple with and process personal experiences of marginalization by advocating for an institutional push towards equity and representation in translation. McCarter, in "How (Not) to Translate the Female Body," surveys different translations of Latin poets to demonstrate the pervasive tendency of translators to oversexualize female characters through the double standard that adds a physical description that is lacking from the original. McCarter begins this essay with a lived experience, a story about her daughter, which opened her own eyes to the way in which certain (especially anatomical) words sexualize women despite lacking a specifically gendered denotation, thereby defining the female body, and the female in general, as "other."[48] Lahiri, too, frames her piece, "Why Italian?," on her lived experience of feeling as though she must have a valid reason for her interest in the language. This preemptive justification—that she must rationalize or even apologize for her engagement with European or Western culture—stems from what the environment around her influenced her to believe: that "no one expected [her] to speak Italian."[49] Her passion for Italian was reduced to an anomaly because of her ethnicity. Being a woman of Indian descent made her interaction with the Classics too to be "unconventional," as explored in her book chapter "In Praise of Echo:

[46] Soucy, C.L. (2023) *Ovid's metamorphoses: A new translation*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
[47] "C. Luke Soucy: Classical translator for the modern day" (2020) *Luke Soucy*. Available at: https://www.clukesoucy.com/ (Accessed: 23 August 2023).
[48] McCarter, S. (2019) "How (not) to translate the female body," *Sewanee Review*. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/729297 (Accessed: 20 August 2023).
[49] Lahiri, J. (2022) "Why Italian?", in" *Translating myself and others*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 9–23.

Reflections on the Meaning of Translation."[50] Lahiri's story, as a translator who is cognizant of how her translations are received as well as how she is received, shows that even the most accomplished Classicists are questioned due to factors beside the impressive body of their work alone.

Ultimately, the hierarchical stereotyping between power and race exists within the word and linguistic distinction of "Classic" itself. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the etymology of the word "Classics" back to the Latin word *classicus*, meaning "of the first class and highest rank of importance."[51] This definition preserves superiority in studying a "Classic," whether a well known book or an ancient language, over a non-canonical work. I would take the metaphor of "canonization" further to argue that Western society has canonized Latin and Greek. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines "Classics" and the "Classical" as "of or relating to the ancient Greeks or Romans and their culture."[52] Merriam Webster also echoes the "recognized value" that Classical institutions hold over those without such name recognition. Students of underrepresented and underfunded communities, disproportionately those of color, often lack what is thought of as a "Classical" education. Furthermore, Arabic, classical Chinese, and Sanskrit—to name a few—are among the time-honored languages of the east, however, they are rarely encompassed under the umbrella of Classics, with a capital C, that is reserved in European studies for Latin and Greek. Eurocentrism must be challenged in order to prove that Classics is not a "dying" field, simply by virtue of being conventionally, in the modern day, unspoken. Rather than leaving equally influential ancient languages to drown in the rain of modern disdain

[50] Lahiri, J. (2022) "In Praise of Echo: Reflections on the Meaning of Translation," in: *Translating Myself and Others*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 44–60.
[51] Simpson, J.A. (1991) 'classics', *The oxford english dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
[52] 'classics; classical' (1989) *The new Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc.

for the past, the umbrella of what constitutes a "Classic" should welcome the East with open arms. The conception of "Western" Classics is inherently exclusionary to people of color.

I want to close by considering another so-called "first" in the translation of ancient epic, one that is lesser discussed. In her translation of the *Ramayana*, Sattar demonstrates gratitude for the traditional aspect of translation, ushering in the translator into discourse about how their choices compare to those of other translators. Sattar is deeply interested in the relationship between Ancient and Modern Indian society, in which she uses Sanskrit as a vehicle of connection.[53] Translating the currently unspoken into accessible words allows Sattar to engage in a transhistorical conversation. In this, she gestures towards the thesis of Classical reception: since translations must change as time passes, newer translations are continually needed to reflect newer priorities.[54] Not only does the original work provoke thought and interpretation, but the many translations that writers put forth are their own 'originals.' This means that translations spark a conversation and environment around them with a comparable richness to the work from which they originally took inspiration. Every translation brings something to the table, and in Sattar's view, the table of translation has infinite chairs. Sattar demonstrates optimism by seeing translation as exciting rather than nervewracking. Vulnerability does lie in translation and its reception; the translator must stand by their work and defend the choices that they have made. In no way does Sattar undermine the difficulty of translating an ancient text; instead, she yearns to take on the challenge that is inter-lingual compromise.

Sattar is by no means deterred by the fact that her language receives less representation in mainstream media through the title of a Classical thread. Emily Wilson's activism too is fueled

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[53] Sattar, A. (2017) "Continuities between Ancient and Contemporary India," *Economic and Political Weekly*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/44166821 (Accessed: 23 August 2023).
[54] Martindale, C. (1993) *Redeeming the text: Latin poetry and the hermeneutics of reception.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

by the neglect to recognize the personhood of women as equal to that of their male counterparts. When reading the Classics in translation, the stories of the minorities to which the institution has historically paid and even continues to pay a blind eye tend to be silenced further. Prejudice and inequality is certainly present in the canon, made up of an echelon of books penned by elite writers in their respective "Classical" language. The act of translation reminds us of the importance of being intentional and unpacking the origins of the most taken-for-granted, seemingly most mundane words. In turn, the words that society adopts are telling of the people whom society favors. Re-examined answers to the question, "What is a Classic?," must therefore be articulated at the same time that the question itself must be reformulated.

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