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"You Don't Talk Right or Dress Right or Act Right": A Comparative Analysis of Italian Translations of Octavia E. Butler's Kindred

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Introduction

The main focus of this research is translation, in particular, a comparative analysis of two retranslations of the neo-slave narrative and novel *Kindred*, by Octavia E. Butler. Translation was one of the pivotal parts of my master's degree course, however, this is not the sole purpose which guided me to the choice of this topic. I have been familiar with translation for many years now, as I spent five years of high school analyzing and translating texts in Ancient Greek and Latin, and later on, another five years dealing with specialized and complex translations of contemporary languages, among which, English, Russian and Spanish. Additionally, this thesis is not solely focused on translations from English to Italian, but more specifically on the translation of a neo-slave narrative pertaining to the topic of Anglo-American literature, a course which I pleasantly followed both during my bachelor and my master's degree. University gave me the chance to deepen my knowledge on a portion of literature which is rarely dealt with in other educational contexts and which I found extremely interesting and current. As I attended both courses on Anglo-American literature I was mostly interested in the history of slavery and the consequences of this institution on the lives of Black people in the current era. The neo-slave narrative *Kindred* fits perfectly in linking the topic of translation with Anglo-American literature, in particular, in comparing two Italian retranslations which have been made respectively in 2005 by Silvia Gambescia, with the editing of the University professor of Anglo-American literature M. Giulia Fabi for the publishing house Le Lettere, and in 2020 by Veronica Raimo for the publishing house SUR. The structure of my thesis reflects the mental map which I decided to follow while working on the comparative analysis of the two retranslations of *Kindred*. I believe it is fundamental to have a profound knowledge of the source culture alongside that of language in order to produce an accurate translation which reflects the intended meaning crafted by the author. It is not merely necessary to know more than a language when approaching a translation, or in this case the analysis of a pre-made translation, to render the source text accurately. Moreover, the consultation of a dictionary and the retrieval of an equivalent word in the target language is not the final step of a translation, but the first from which it is necessary to deepen the analysis on the socio-cultural context of both the source and target culture and language.

The pivotal research question which guided my dissertation was whether a deep knowledge of the source text's culture, in addition to the mastery of more than a language, was relevant in determining a better and more faithful translation. That is to say, as translating is a complex activity, the mere knowledge of a language is not sufficient to produce an accurate translation without disrupting the original core and essence of the source text.

The first chapter focuses on the issue of equivalence and untranslatability, which are crucial in illustrating the challenges faced by a translator, who cannot aim at rendering a source text with a perfectly equivalent target text. Following the theories of the linguists Roman Jakobson and Anton Popovič, and the critical analysis of the translators Susan Bassnett and Lawrence Venuti, the inevitable changes occurring during translation are examined. The translator adheres to a series of modification and conscious choices in order to produce an acceptable and adequate interpretation of the source text, as total equivalence is impossible and there are many aspects of a text which are untranslatable. Additionally, I examined the foreignization and localization translation strategies, theorized by the scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher at the beginning of the 19th century and deeply discussed in Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*. These strategies are focused on bringing the reader and the target text respectively closer or farther from the author and the source text, changing its perception. The binomial *tradurre* or *tradire* is at the base of the reflections on translation presented in the first chapter, which develop towards the analysis of why retranslations are produced, following the contributions of the French translator and scholar Antoine Berman, and the translators Franca Cavagnoli and Lawrence Venuti. The motives behind retranslations are analyzed in order to create an outline which subsequently examines the reasons behind the retranslations of *Kindred*.

The analysis on translation moves on towards the specific instance of translating African American Vernacular English (AAVE), through the illustration of the genesis and development of this language and the major debates surrounding its status and legitimization, mainly following the works of the linguists Lisa J. Green, Geneva Smitherman and the translator Franca Cavagnoli. One pivotal concern is the translation of AAVE into Italian, and the specific translation strategies that should be adopted to maintain the language's dignity and peculiarity. Cavagnoli suggests the use of terms and constructions of colloquial language, without risking falling into the use of dialect or

ungrammatical forms. Lastly I present the current case of Amanda Gorman's poetry's translation, linked to the debate upon who should translate a Black author. This deals with the need for marginalized groups to have an adequate representation in the translating field, which is often negated. In addition to that, the theme of a profound knowledge of the culture of the source text is remarked in the presentation of the research question.

The second chapter follows the structure and the aim of the first one, as they both create an overview in which the comparative analysis will insert itself. This section of the thesis concerns the examination of the slave narrative and neo-slave narrative genres. The first part illustrates the genesis and development of slave narratives through the contributions of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents*, in the analysis of the differences occurring between male and female narratives, alongside with the critical works of the scholars Philip Gould, D. Bruce Dickson Jr and Vincent Carretta. Afterwards, the birth of the neo-slave narrative genre in the 1960s, an historical period of important changes concerning historiography and the Civil Rights Movement, is illustrated with a particular attention on the first problematic work adopting a first-person perspective on slavery, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* by William Styron. The change brought about by neo-slave narratives was crucial in reviewing the institution of slavery in its horrors but also in giving voice to those who had been silenced for a long time. The appellative of "liberatory narratives" given by Angelyn Mitchell contributed to the re-definition of these literary works, in the lens of a quest for liberation from oppression. The theoretical framework is followed by a presentation of the author of the novel, the Black writer Octavia E. Butler, renowned for her sci-fi literary works but also for her neo-slave narrative *Kindred*. Interviews are employed in examining the author's life and the genesis of the novel, with the aim of presenting the main topics concerning life in the antebellum South and the journeys between past and present. Dana, the protagonist, has to endure and sustain the difficult conditions of a 19th century Maryland plantation in order to grant the survival of her bloodline. Moreover, Butler crafts her experience of slavery in order to challenge her beliefs and help her gain a new consciousness on the past.

The two retranslations are examined on the basis of the theoretical framework outlined during the first two chapters and following an initial analysis of the first translation made in 1994 by Urania, which is crucial to the creation of the subsequent

ones. The 2005 translation by Le Lettere and the 2020 translation by SUR are analyzed on different aspects, beginning from a general overview of the publishing houses, the covers and the linguistic and syntactic features. The core of the third chapter is the analysis in which I detect terms specific to the institution of slavery, stereotypes and nouns and adjectives crucial in defining the meaning of peculiar sentences. These elements are studied on the basis of a profound research of the cultural context through the consultation of the Oxford English Dictionary, Enciclopedia Treccani and important works on the institution of slavery. This analysis is provided for every example taken into account, in order to properly examine the accuracy or not of the translations employed in *Legami di sangue*. Significant differences are detected in most of the terms examined, leading to different levels of faithfulness towards the source text, the intended meaning given by the author and the historical accuracy of many figures which pertain to the institution of slavery. These findings reveal diverse approaches to the translation strategies presented in the first chapter and to the genre of neo-slave narratives, creating an inevitable and evident gap between the two translations and providing a clear answer to the research question posed at the beginning of the dissertation.

1. The Complexity of Translation: *tradurre* or *tradire*?

Translation is by definition the act of carrying across. Etymologically the word comes from the Latin prefix *trans-* (across) and *latio* (from *latum,* the past participle of the verb *ferre*, which means to carry/transport) (Buden, 2009, 196). In performing this act, more specifically, in carrying meaning from one language to another, some elements might be drastically changed, adapted or even lost. In this chapter I am going to focus on the specificities of translation, and more in depth on the role of the translator and the outcome of translation itself. Moreover, I will introduce African American Vernacular English (AAVE), in relation to the most useful strategies to adopt whenever translating it. It is important to notice that the task performed by the translator is not simply to transfer meaning. The translator is also reader and interpreter at once, with an approach that considers all the specificities of a text, notably language and culture, using their own creative reading to render the text in the target language (Bassnett, 2002, 86)

1.1 Equivalence and Untranslatability in the Loss and Gain of Translation

From the 1960s a revolution has occurred in the realm of Translation Studies, mainly concerning equivalence and untranslatability. The first concept, equivalence, is dealt with by the linguist Roman Jakobson, who determines the impossibility of full equivalence as the central issue relating to the three main modes of translation: intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic[1] (Bassnett, 2002, 23). Moreover, equivalence, following the linguist Anton Popovič's classification, is distinguished into four types: linguistic, or word for word equivalence, which concerns the linguistic level; paradigmatic, which refers to the paradigmatic level, for example concerning the similarity between grammatical elements; stylistic, which regards meaning and impact of the message; and textual, which relates to the equivalence of the form and structure of the text - (Bassnett, 2002, 33). In an ideal case all the above mentioned types of equivalence should be respected so that the translated version of a text matches the original. However, this is not possible, because many translations of the same source text (ST) will never produce the same version of target text (TT) (Bassnett, 2002, 35). Therefore, equivalence

[1] Intralingual translation, or rewording, is a translation that occurs within the same language. Interlingual translation, or translation proper, is the translation which involves two different languages. Intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, is a translation which involves the use of nonverbal sign systems to translate verbal signs (Bassnett, 2002, 23).

is not to be expected as "a search for sameness" (Bassnett, 2002, 37), as innumerable variants influence translation, but as "an adequate interpretation" (Bassnett, 2002, 24) following Jakobson's definition, who underlines the impossibility of total equivalence. It is important to note that, although the translator has to make changes while translating, the "invariant core" of the original text persists in any translation, as theorized by Popovič. This stable feature is composed of invariant semantic elements constituting the semantic core that remains stable and constant in the different translations produced (Bassnett, 2002, 35).

The second concept, untranslatability, is divided into two types by Ian Catford: linguistic and cultural (Bassnett, 2002, 39). The former is related to differences existing in the realm of language between the source and target language, occurring whenever there are no lexical or syntactic elements to substitute an item from the SL (source language) in the TL (target language) (Bassnett, 2002, 39). The latter resorts to a difference in the realm of culture and concerns the absence of a certain feature of the SL in the TL culture (Bassnett, 2002, 39). Another contribution on the topic comes from Popovič who has tried to define untranslatability primarily distinguishing between a lack of denotation or connotation in translation, analogous to Catford's linguistic untranslatability, and secondarily as the lack of an adequate linguistic element to express a creative subject (Bassnett, 2002, 43). The latter part of Popovič definition concerns the realm of culture and linguistics simultaneously, as a linguistic term always carries a certain cultural meaning and is consequently understood by native speakers with all the nuances it holds, which cannot always be replicated in translation.

Equivalence and untranslatability show that translation is not an activity anyone may pursue. The mere knowledge of more than one language is not enough to perform a good translation (Bassnett, 2002, 16). Translation, as a matter of fact, is not a simple transposition of words from one language to another, because it requires an "act of selection, assemblage, structuration and fabrication – and even [..] falsification" (Bassnett, 2011, 45). It is an act in the true sense of the word, a practice which requires authorship and decision-making on the part of the translator (Bassnett, 2011, 45). As the linguist Randolph Quirk explains, translation is "one of the most difficult tasks that a writer can take upon himself" (quoted in Bassnett, 2002, 16). An inexperienced translator, or somebody not specialized in the field, tends to employ the word-for-word method

(Bassnett, 2011, 12), which is also defined as literal translation, avoiding to analyze the use of words, and how they relate to the ST culture. The skills required in translation are the most diverse, and include the knowledge of the historical context, genre, author, theme, language, appropriate vocabulary, the ability to read and analyze, but also to write and render a text in a good and readable way. The translator is a reader, an editor, and a re-writer simultaneously (Bassnett, 2011, 119).

Returning to the title of this chapter, *tradurre* or *tradire* (which respectively mean: to translate or to cheat, distorting the original), there will always be a loss in translation, because the target text is inevitably different from the original, as can be seen in the impossibility of full equivalence and in the issue of untranslatability. Therefore, it is constantly necessary to adopt changes in order to adapt the translation to a new readership, the target reader. The loss always goes alongside the gain, which is represented by the translation itself, in which these two elements coexist generating a new outcome (Bassnett, 2011, 118).

1.2 Foreignization and Localization as Opposed Translation Strategies

The debate between *tradurre* or *tradire* may be further analyzed on the basis of which strategies may be adopted when translating. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a translation will never coincide with another, except for the "invariant core". The choices a translator follows reflect in a text that will convey certain ideologies, and that will give a specific view of the topic expressed (Venuti, 2004, ii).

Friedrich Schleiermacher in an 1813 lecture theorized two main translation methods: foreignizing and domesticating, synonym to localization. The former draws the reader towards the author, while the latter draws the author towards the reader (Venuti, 2004, 19-20). Schleiermacher favored the first option aiming to maintain the linguistic and cultural peculiarities of the original text and language, however, clarifying that it is not equally applicable to all languages, but only to the more tolerable and open in terms of linguistic innovation (Venuti, 2004, 101-102). This happens because in foreignizing the translator needs to try and match the linguistic canons of the original text as much as possible, without creating a translation that would be unreadable for the readership.

On the opposite side, domesticating involves the reduction of the foreign text peculiarities, in order to make the reader feel that he is reading a text originally created in

the language of translation. This is achievable through the employment of common terms and the observance of the target language literary canons (Cavagnoli, 2012, 40).

Schleiermacher considered the foreignizing method to be particularly suitable for an educated elite that could grasp the diverse references to the source text, and might entirely understand and appreciate the translation (Venuti, 2004, 102). Schleiermacher's nationalist view was concerned with an advisable development of one language, as opposed to the hegemony of another (Venuti, 2004, 116). Venuti follows this line of thought and goes more in depth noting how foreignizing could preserve the peculiarities of the original text, in opposition to the hegemony of the most influential languages (2004, 101), which are ultimately identified with English. This method is perceived as a mode of resistance against the imposed canon: "Foreignizing translation is a dissident cultural practice, maintaining a refusal of the dominant by developing affiliations with marginal linguistic and literary values at home" (Venuti, 2004, 148).

Venuti's criticism of the domesticating method goes in parallel with the issue of the translator's invisibility, against which he addresses his book. The scholar believes that translators should not be considered invisible and marginal, as it happens in the Anglo-American culture, therefore, receiving minimal recognition and being forced to give the least visible contribution to what they translate (2004, 8). Translators are never given authorship or the righteous recognition for their job, being persistently subordinated to authors and publishers, who often fail to mention their work on book covers (Venuti, 2004, 8). The U.S. publishing field aims at an immediate use of a text, with plain syntax and no semantic ambiguities, prioritizing fluency over distinctiveness, meaning that readability is the primary purpose at the expenses of the author's intentions, language peculiarities and culture (Cavagnoli, 2012, 40).

Translators, being dependent on editors and publishers, are encouraged to adopt the domesticating method toward a more readable and enjoyable translation for the book market, that will be successful in terms of sales, "insuring the neglect of foreign texts and English-language translation discourses that are more resistant to easy readability" (Venuti, 2004, 16). The translator's invisibility is necessary to create texts which conceal the peculiarities of the original, in order to hide the foreignness and the distinctive contributions that might come from the translator's creativity, masking "an insidious domestication of foreign texts" with the aim of creating a well-selling Anglo-centric

translation (Venuti, 2004, 17). Venuti describes this practice as a form of imperialism and xenophobia toward foreign texts and cultures (2004, 17).

The eradication of foreignness and of the role of the translator are absurd in Venuti's point of view, as he states that a translation should be a process in which similarities and dissimilarities are detected, and not removed entirely, granting the disclosure of different cultures, acknowledging "the unbridgeable gaps between cultures" (2004, 306), inevitably merging loss and gain, *tradurre* and *tradire*.

The Italian writer and translator Franca Cavagnoli observes how the publishing industry in Italy, up to now, has followed similar tendencies as the Anglo-American, disregarding the call for in-betweeness and for a liminal space in which cultural differences should be preserved and manifested (2012, 41). Cavagnoli gives the example of the word *ibrido* (hybrid), that is at the essence of what translation should be, preserving cultures and linguistic differences, creating something new and faithful both to the source and target culture. Unfortunately, the adjective *ibrido* bears a negative connotation in Italian, that emphasizes the existence of heterogeneous elements which struggle to justaxpose, instead of revealing the treasure they generate collectively (2012, 41). Publishers are startled at the possibility of combining "[l'] estraneo in tutte le sue manifestazioni e l'attuazione di strategie di traduzione innovative" (Cavagnoli, 2012, 41). However, in recent years it appears that a cultural revolution concerning translation ideology might have occurred. This has led to and increased attention for history, ideology and politics which are peculiar aspects that should be taken into account while translating in order to understand the diversity of the foreign, with the aim to embrace it (Cavagnoli, 2012, 41) and to "open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness" (Berman, 2004, 284).

Cavagnoli, who is on the same line of reasoning as Venuti for what concerns which method to adopt in translation, uses the terms *riscrittura appropriata* and *riscrittura appropriante* to refer respectively to foreignization and domestication. These words play on how the two methods of translation use the source text. On the one hand, *riscrittura appropriata* respects the peculiarities of the ST, the stylistic choices of the author, and a precise use in the vocabulary that should evoke the meanings that were originally used. On the other hand, *riscrittura appropriante,* is the type of translation that manipulates the

ST and most importantly "rende l'Altro uguale a sè", with a sort of appropriation that aims at eradicating differences (2012, 39).

Cavagnoli cites the post-colonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, translated into Italian by Adriana Motti in 1971 for the publishing company Adelphi, to show how foreignization (*riscrittura appropriata*) and domestication (*riscrittura appropriante*) are used. This translation, which is the only one existing in Italian, dates back to a time period in which domestication was the dominant tendency. Although Cavagnoli evaluates the translation as comprehensively excellent, it presents flaws in the rendering of Jamaican creole (2012, 43). This is an issue that spreads to many translations of post-colonialist novels and slave-narratives, in which the use of creole or pidgins are occasionally regarded as broken English or erased. In the source text the author employs code-switching in Tia's speech, a Black girl, mixing Standard English and Jamaican creole. In the Italian translation the code-switching is erased and replaced with Standard English, failing to use a literary device that would have maintained the peculiarity of Tia's words. Cavagnoli suggests the use of spoken language to render the creole and make the reader understand that Tia's language is different from Antoinette's, a White girl part of the analyzed scene. Tia's speech has undergone the process of domestication (*riscrittura appropriante)* in order to maintain a clean and clear language for the readership, while Antoinette's speech is translated without radical changes, respecting the source text (2012, 45). This example shows how the translator has chosen to domesticate, instead of foreignizing, creating an inevitable loss in the agency of the original text.

1.3 Retranslation

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, translation is an act that involves agency and authorship on the part of the translator. These characteristics are relevant also for retranslation, as the translator decides to give a new interpretation to an original text that has already been subject to translation (Venuti, 2013, 97). Retranslations are generally carried out because the translator is willing to "make an appreciable difference", except for the cases in which the interest is merely commercial on the part of the publisher, who prompts the strategies that will need to be employed, allowing limited usage to creativity and intentionality (Venuti, 2013, 100).

Retranslations have been a diffused activity since the Middle Ages, with a volume that has increased during the centuries, involving literary, religious, historical, political and philosophical texts (Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019, 10-11). The research upon retranslation has begun in the last decade of the twentieth century and has deepened since (Fusco, 2015, 113), becoming one of the contents of inquiry of Translation Studies. One of the main concerns is to understand the reasons behind retranslation itself. The term "Retranslation Theory", coined in 2006 by Siobhan Brownlie, is employed in the field of retranslations studies, which is relentlessly broadening and in development (Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019, 13).

The translator and philosopher Antoine Berman is one of the first scholars to have embarked on this quest, acknowledging the unclear nature of retranslation, while simultaneously claiming its inevitability (1990). He could be, in a certain way, accosted to Lawrence Venuti, whose vision was to prioritize foreignization over domestication, as exposed in the previous sections. Berman, in fact, believes that first translations tend to lean on domestication, in order to introduce the source text into the target culture, while subsequent translations are more focused on revealing the core and essence of the original text (Fusco, 2015, 116). However, this hypothesis, which is defined as the Retranslation Hypothesis, is nowadays believed to be insufficient and not entirely reliable to justify retranslations (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, 296).

It is necessary to point out that retranslations primarily concern literary texts, alongside texts that have achieved a "canonical status" (Venuti, 2013, 96), for example, religious texts such as the Bible, the Constitution, and philosophical and psychological texts of generally recognized importance (Fusco, 2015, 115).

1.3.1 Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis and great translations

Antoine Berman, one of the pioneers in the field, states in his "La Retraduction comme espace de traduction" that while original texts are *éternellement jeunes* (eternally young), translations "*vieillissent"* (they age). This status of translations causes a discrepancy with the progression of time, language and culture, leading to a lack in their communicative function (Berman, 1990). Consequently, all first translations and retranslations are destined to be outdated by subsequent ones, due to the passing of time and the impossibility of the existence of a definitive and ultimate translation (1990).

Moreover, the scholar believes that retranslations will always be more accurate as compared to a first or previous translation, defining in this way the Retranslation Hypothesis.

The connection between time and aging of a translation is not stable and foreseeable, as at times the acceptance and the longevity of translations vary, and occasionally *grandes traductions* are produced (Berman, 1990). Great translations are those that have collected a stable prestige over time, and are regarded by the general public as the most notable ones, bearing an aura of authority and literary power. The translation of the Bible made by Martin Luther, the *Don Quixote* by Tieck and the *Arabian Nights* by Gallan are all part of this category, as they remain unmatched. They are characterized by a great systematicity with the original text and they are all generally retranslations. In order to explain how all great translations are retranslations, Berman broadens the concept of retranslation. He explains that when a text is even partially translated in a certain language it constitutes a translation and, consequently, if that same source text is translated entirely in another language it directly becomes a retranslation and not a first translation. In doing so, the scholar defends his hypothesis that all first translations are never perfect, always *maladroit*, because they all bring along a certain level of failure.

Berman analyzes in depth and displays the tripartite classification of translation developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who distinguished three modes of translation connected to different eras of time. The first mode aims "at tout au plus à donner une idée grossière" (Berman, 1990), introducing the reader to the foreign, although maintaining the domestic perspective without a great displacement, in a soft manner. The second mode is free translation, "qui adapte l'original à la langue, à la littérature, à la culture du traducteur" and tends to approach and draw closer the foreign, however, without a proper foreignization, because it still relies on the creation of a false reality showing the foreign through the eyes of the domestic culture, employing adaptation and domestication (Berman, 1990). The third and final era is a proper translation and transposition of the source text and of the foreign in the target text, capturing "les « particularités » culturelles, textuelles, etc. de l'original" (Berman, 1990). The three phases are part of an inevitable cycle that every culture undergoes, tied to the passing of time, the same measuring device used by Berman for his Retranslation Hypothesis. Following this tripartite classification,

Berman confirms his thesis that no first translation is ever definitive and great, as the following translations will go beyond it; however, it is necessary to undergo the first mode of translation to reach the second and subsequently the third, as they are all crucial for the creation of a retranslation.

The historical repetition of time accompanies the repetition of translations - "toute action humaine, pour s'accomplir, a besoin de la répétition" - implying the inevitability of repetition, as "C'est dans l'après-coup d'une première traduction aveugle et hésitante que surgit la possibilité d'une traduction accomplie" (Berman, 1990). The earliest translations cannot refrain from being unsuccessful and failing, however, the repetition, inherent in the act of retranslation, leads to an improvement in the struggle against failure. At times, great translations are produced and although failure is not removed, the element of *l'abondance* (abundance) balances it. Abundance originates from the reiteration of translation in time, which contributes to the creation of retranslations that transfer the essence of the source text, embedding language with richness of terms and significations.

In addition to abundance there is *kairos*, which is defined as the favorable historical moment in which a translation can be performed successfully, a moment in which culture aligns with the need and ability of a society to have access to a literary work in a genuine manner (Berman, 1990). These two features contribute to the creation of great translations, overcoming the difficulties and limits of first translations, as the experience gained with the previous works manages to uncover the true spirit of the text (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, 295).

Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis could be useful to explain the genesis of some great translations, however, it is outdated and not sufficient, as not every retranslation fits in this model. Not all first translations follow the theory of domestication, and not all second or further translations follow the theory of foreignization (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, 296).

1.3.2 Literary and economic motives behind retranslations

On the one hand, aging and time passing remain a primary reason for retranslations, as Berman theorized in his essay. On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that retranslations occur mostly as a consequence of variations and modifications in the target culture, language and readership (Fusco, 2015, 115), but also as an economic strategy.

Whenever the public claims new needs and necessities, translations follow to maintain an audience. The creation of new interpretations becomes inevitable once a version of a translation fails to be a medium to convey values. Therefore, subsequent retranslations claim to be potentially more accurate and correct, evolving into fertile ground for the publishing industry.

Economic considerations often direct the choice of the works, authors and languages from which a retranslation should be carried on, with a tendency to an economic, rather than scholarly, value (Venuti, 2013, 97). The result of such a line of work is retranslations aimed at profit and readability, to guarantee an audience and sales. In some instances, publishers choose to print revised translations to economize the process and reduce the costs of production, which are considerably lower in the case of a reprinting (Venuti, 2013, 100). In the Italian publishing market, the release of revised and renovated pre-existing translations, which need a lower expense compared to the acquisition of the copyright or the hiring of a new translation, is a frequent practice (Campanini, 2019, 129). Publishers, therefore, tend to promote re-editions under the name of retranslations, which appear as more appealing to the customers (Fusco, 2015, 118). An example of this marketing strategy is the "traduzione riciclata" of the 2011 edition of Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* published by Dalai Editore as an original translation from English, when in reality it retrieves thoroughly, with some orthographical adjustments, the 1904 translation of Federigo Verdinois (Campanini, 2019, 129).

Another tendency related to economic motives is the growth of retranslations whenever royalties expire, which in Italy occurs after seventy years from the author's death. This typically generates a conspicuous amount of retranslations, as it happened in 2011 when six translations of Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* were published. In addition to this, a cinematic or television production and the reevaluation of a topic or an author may lead to the revival of literary works that were forgotten or outside the public interest, and, consequently, to new retranslations (Fusco, 2015, 117).

Venuti points out that the translator's volition is beforehand fixed by the context, society, linguistic usage, literary canons and publishers' directions, as retranslations "are designed deliberately to form particular identities and to have particular institutional effects" (2013, 97). Retranslations, nevertheless, are still a space in which translators autonomously determine how to distinguish the new version from a previous one,

rendering it in accordance to a different set of values, with the purpose of making it acceptable for the time and place where the readership resides. Venuti explains that retranslations occur whenever it is necessary to produce "a new interpretation that differs from that inscribed in a previous version [..] because it has come to be judged as insufficient" (2013, 97).

The new interpretation and declination given by retranslations tend to produce a denser text, filled with intertextuality and paratext, with the aim to demonstrate the radical change from the previous version, consequently signaling its recent creation. Paratext elements comprehend prefaces, introductions, conclusions, annotations and commentaries, used to justify the choices made during translation, or to restore "linguistic and cultural differences that translation necessarily removes" (Venuti, 2013, 105). On the other hand, intertextuality is employed to mark the differences, which characterize the most recent version (Venuti, 2013, 105).

Furthermore, technology and the devices available to translators have considerably increased in the last decades, concerning for example finer terminology databases, CAT tools and a better linguistic competence granted by access to the Internet, increasing the opportunities to produce better translations and retranslations. These tools grant finer resources that might enhance the knowledge of literary works, movements, authors and past cultures and societies, placing the translator at a superior level of comprehension. However, the above mentioned elements are not guarantee of better and more accurate retranslations, but they contribute to a deeper and extensive critical analysis (Fusco, 2015, 116).

Another notable consideration, that should be mentioned to comprehend the vast scenery of retranslations, is the dichotomy between "passive" and "active" retranslations, developed by Anthony Pym. The scholar believes that the usage of time to explain the occurrence of retranslations is a mere generalization (2014, 82). "Passive retranslations" are carried out in different historical and geographical settings, therefore, they do not have a substantial influence on one another: "there is likely to be little active rivalry between (them)" (Pym, 2014, 82). On the other hand, "active retranslations" are produced in the same chronological time and space, therefore, sharing the same values and socio-cultural constraints, and they show that the hypothesis of aging is not reliable, as there are different motives behind them (Pym, 2014, 82). Comparisons between passive retranslations

provide information concerning historical and cultural changes in the society of the translated text: for example, when in the early twentieth century free verse became popular in English, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were translated accordingly. Pym also believes that pieces of information retrieved through the analysis of passive retranslations are to be considered redundant since they could have been acquired without the analysis of translation history, and they indicate that "target-culture norms determine translation strategies" (2014, 83). Opposed to these, active retranslations' comparative analysis reveals more in depth the reasons behind such retranslations, locating "causes far closer to the translator, especially in the entourage of patrons, publishers, readers and intercultural politics [..] without blindly surrendering causality to target-culture norms" (Pym, 2014, 83).

Pym proves his theory with the examination of three different cases of active translations, which show how the occurrence of retranslations responds to other motives different from aging. The first example is a case of "target-based retranslations" located in twelfth century Hispania when Adelardus de Bada created three versions of Euclid's *Elements*, differentiated according to their purpose (2014, 82). The second case is the retranslation of Al-Zarkali's *Acafea* commissioned to 'Bernaldo el arabigo' and Abraham in order to revise a previous version made two decades earlier by Ferrando de Toledo. These two translations of the same text were ordered by the King of Castile Alfonso X, in the thirteenth century, who expected two retranslations in the same target language, and socio-cultural context. Aging was definitely not the reason behind these retranslations, as there must have been a "renewed enthusiasm" guiding the King's will. The third and last case is located two centuries later, in Spain, when the French book *Arbre des batailles* was translated twice into Castilian by two different translators for two different patrons, who were both interested in the book itself and its content, as it was a warfare manuscript. Once more, neither the reason of aging, nor the target-culture constraints and changes are involved, as the two retranslations were carried out around the same time, using similar translation strategies (Pym, 2014, 83).

In conclusion, through the analysis of Berman, Venuti and Pym's views it is possible to notice that retranslations' motives are various and differentiated, and that the Retranslation Hypothesis is not to be considered as a universal behind every retranslation, rather as solely one of the reasons. Scholarly, socio-cultural, economic, and other motives

come into the discourse of why retranslations occur, and need to happen, as Berman claims it to be an inevitable phenomenon (1990).

1.4 The Challenges of Translating African American Vernacular English

Translation is never a simple process, as explained in the previous paragraphs, and it becomes even more elaborate and complex when it concerns a linguistic system filled with peculiarities and a debated status of recognition. Over the course of three centuries different labels have been employed to define the pidgin first, and creole later, created in the plantations of the U.S. from African slaves, that gradually and not effortlessly evolved to become a recognized language variety. These labels were linked to the esteem in which African Americans were held, resulting, for example, in negative labelling which included the world "negro" during slavery and segregation (Green, 2002, 5-6). Some of these labels include the world "English" to underline the similarities with the English language, while in others it is omitted to highlight their relationship with African or Creole origins, as we can see in the extensive list made by Lisa J. Green:

> "Negro dialect, Nonstandard Negro English, Negro English, American Negro speech, Black communications, Black dialect, Black folk speech, Black street speech, Black English, Black English Vernacular, Black Vernacular English, Afro American English, African American English, African American Language, African American Vernacular English (AAVE)". (2002, 6)

Green explains that, though the last four are the most used nowadays, all of the terms presented in the list refer to the same linguistic system, even though some linguists prefer one form instead of another. Some researchers even coined a few of these labels, as William Labov did when introducing "Black English Vernacular" in his study to refer to the common language used by young Blacks from the age of 8 to 19 in an informal context of street life, while he understood the term "Black English" as the general language employed by Black people in the U.S. (Green, 2002, 7).

A label that is not included in the above list is "Ebonics". This term has been part of a controversial educational case in Oakland, California in 1996, when it was regarded by the public as a minor language spoken by Black students, in opposition to Standard English. Ebonics was first coined in 1973 by Robert Williams in *Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks*, referring to all the languages spoken by Black people of African descent, not solely in the United States, but also, for example, regarding the linguistic varieties of the Caribbean (Green, 2002, 7). Williams considered Ebonics (etymologically

from: “ebony” a type of dark almost black wood, and “phonics” from the Greek *phone* “sound/voice”) as the summa of languages that originated in Africa and had no connection with the Indo-European languages. However, the initial meaning was subverted by the negative connotation Ebonics acquired with the Oakland controversy (2002, 7). The Economist in 1997 resorted to the term Ebonics in a derogatory manner, comparing it to a virus, as stated in their article “The Ebonics Virus”, where the author played with the linguistic similarity to the Ebola virus, linking the language to Africa, continent from which the virus had spread (Pullum, 1999, 40). Later on, the term has started to be regarded as a synonym of all the terms above mentioned by Green (2002, 7).

1.4.1 Genesis and development of AAVE

Not only are the names used to regard the language spoken by Black people of African descent living in the U.S. controversial, also the language origins are still debated upon. The studies on African American languages started in the 1960s and focused mainly on the speech of the Northern urban working-class, therefore, concentrating on a target different from the original environment of the southern plantations in which AAVE developed, “leading to a kind of sociolinguistic nostalgia for the authentic vernacular speaker”, although, there has been a recent tendency to focus on the vernacular side of the language (Wolfram, 2015, 340).

There are three main hypotheses credited by scholars, the Anglicist, Creolist and Neo-Anglicist. The first to arise was the Anglicist Hypothesis, which rooted AAVE “to the same source as Anglo American dialects – the dialects of English spoken in the British Isles” (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998, 176), highlighting the correspondence with linguistic patterns of the Southern varieties of English in the U.S. (Green, 2002, 9). This position implies that AAVE generated as any other immigrant dialect which came into contact with American English, suggesting that the produce was a language in which the original features of West-African languages diminished with the passing of time, leaving space for more elements retained from the language spoken by the Whites, and eradicating the theory of a creole (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998, 176).

On the other hand, the Creolist hypothesis emerged in the 1960s-1970s, deriving AAVE from a creole language, that developed from a pidgin, “a simplified means of communication among speakers who do not speak the same languages” (Green, 2002, 9),

specifically referring to the slaves brought from different African regions, with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The pidgin was created in order to communicate. Data show that people from different African regions were mixed in order to establish a situation in which slaves could not communicate using their mother tongues, leading to the creation of new linguistic systems to overcome the distance imposed on them by masters and slave traders. Different sources claim that slave holders could not distinguish between slaves' native tongues, and violently enforced silence among those speaking the same language (Peterson, 2020, 100).

The evolution of a pidgin resulted in a creole, when native speakers furthermore developed the linguistic system extending the vocabulary and improving grammar (Green, 2002, 9).

The Neo-Anglicist hypothesis comes into being as a development and replacement of the Anglicist hypothesis. They share the similarity between AAVE and the earlier British dialect, however, the Neo-Anglicist hypothesis acknowledges the development of AAVE during the centuries. This led to a stronger distinction of AAVE, that has sharply differentiated itself from the early British dialects, resulting in a unique language (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 14). The Anglicist hypothesis underlined the fact that African Americans had acquired English in a similar way as other immigrants did in the United States. The Neo-Anglicist hypothesis disregarded this vision, highlighting how the process of acquisition had been different, due to slavery and segregation, leading to little similarities with local varieties of white English. The data supporting the Neo-Anglicist hypothesis is found in the recordings of slaves and diasporic communities, which show differences between the early British varieties and early African American English. The results showed how many peculiar features of AAVE are not identifiable in the British varieties, therefore, suggesting that they originated through subsequent developments of the language, for example, the stressed use of *BIN* (Kendall, Tyler, Jason McLarty, & Charlie Farrington, 2023)

Green puts forward a fourth hypothesis referred to as the "substratist hypothesis" that relates the development of AAVE to that of West African languages such as Kikolongo, on the basis of "structurally related" patterns (2002, 8). In this view, the similarities with English are less significant and only superficial, while West African languages (substrate languages) had a substantial role, for example, in shaping the

sentence and sound structures, in opposition to the reference language. A reference language, could be English, against which AAVE endures a "substrate social or cultural status of its speakers vis-à-vis those of the reference language" (Green, 2002, 9).

The debate upon the genesis of AAVE is still open as one of the main reasons is the challenging gathering of materials in support of one theory or another. The database on which research has been conducted splits into two main areas, the first concerning the analysis of written documents, while the second focusing on recorded testimonies (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 2). However, it is important to underline that, even though researches can be conducted, the materials are limited due to decades of written texts' manipulation and foreclosure of literacy to the detriment of slaves, which were the first to develop and use AAVE. As Frederick Douglass reports in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, slaves were kept "ignorant", from the deprivation of knowledge of their date of birth, to the denial of literacy in order to suppress any rebellious spirit, and to prevent enslaved people from using literacy to escape and making the real conditions of slaves known to the abolitionist North (1845, 2). Douglass recalls how he was introduced to literacy as a child by his mistress who regarded him as a human being, and logically decided to teach him how to read and write. However, after her husband discovered her practices he was "(shut) up in mental darkness" because the treatment she was giving him was other than "wrong", also "dangerous" (1845, 33). In addition to the neglect of literacy, Douglass mentions the manipulation of slaves' words that ranged from the distortion of their experiences, to threats whenever the truth about their condition was told. Slaves, therefore, learned to conceal the truth in order to survive (1845, 16). Another reason that invisibilizes African Americans' experiences was the need to distort and adapt the brutalities of slave narratives so as to render them acceptable to the White public.

In the 1980s a collection of audio and written records of ex-slaves was retrieved. The database also includes slave narratives collected in the 1930s by the Works Project Administration (WPA), letters written by ex-slaves in the 1850s and oral interviews from the 1930s. The analysis of these records suggests the accuracy of the Anglicist hypothesis.

Another database that contributed actively to the gathering of materials was that from the study of "black expatriate varieties of English", concerning communities of Black people that have remained in relative isolation and have preserved an earlier variety

of Black English. An example of this last case is the investigation of the language of a group of Blacks who in the 1820s migrated in Samanà, Dominican Republic, maintaining a fossilized variety of English until the present (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 3). In addition to this site of research, one of the main enclaves of study on the genesis and development of AAVE is Hyde County in South Carolina. In the region, the 1700s settlement of Europeans was followed by an outgrown in the African American population brought there soon after, creating a strong permanence of the original variety of Black English (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 4).

As mentioned with reference to the experience of Frederick Douglass, the lack of literacy and the manipulation of slaves' testimonies were a few of the obstacles to the creation of corpora. Written records typically resorted to formal register, rather than vernacular speech that would be the crucial forms to understand the genesis of AAVE. Moreover, there are issues concerning authorship of the documents written by African Americans, and the manipulation of the written code, as it is a challenge for writers to represent a vernacular (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 15). The investigations of written documents reveal an earlier tendency in representing heightened forms of African American speech, namely rare and inexistent structures of the oral language. This does not imply the uselessness of written documents, however, it underlines the necessity of a careful comparative analysis (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 18).

Another type of database is that of audio recordings, limited to evidence gathered from the 1930s, when they became possible. The collection of audios presumes that the people recorded were born immediately after the abolition of slavery in 1865, and therefore, carried a type of language closer to original AAVE. Although the audio recordings reach up to 75 in number, issues of quality and different interpretations arise, leaving margin for inconclusive results and no set verdict on the genesis of AAVE (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 19). Despite the debates, as James Baldwin states in "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me What is?" it is evident and recognized that AAVE is "the creation of the black diaspora", of the forced slave trade of Africans brought to the U.S., due to a necessity in a time and space in which people needed to communicate with each other without being understood from the White masters (1997, 6).

1.4.2 AAVE: language, slang or dialect?

Language is a tool directly connected to identity, a "political instrument [..] and proof of power" (Baldwin, 1997, 5). However, AAVE is a stigmatized linguistic system, often referred to as a broken oral variety of Standard English[2]. The stereotyping of a language reveals that the stigma is never solely connected to the means of communication, as it is indeed tied to racism and xenophobia (Peterson, 2020, 33). The label "Bad English" is strongly related to marginalization and discrimination, rather than to language itself. People are judged according to how they speak, and if their language does not correspond to the standard version of the country, they are perceived negatively (Peterson, 2020, 34-49). The linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum states that one of the reasons that makes AAVE such a debated language is its close relation with English, a language of elevated prestige, therefore, the vast majority of English speakers regard AAVE as a "badly spoken version of their language" or a slang, failing to recognize its linguistic status (1999, 40).

The label slang, used to refer to AAVE, cannot be considered correct, as slang is defined as:

> "Words and phrases which are very colloquial or informal, typically consisting of coinages, arbitrary modifications of existing words, playful or colourful figures of speech, coarse or offensive words, etc., and often used among younger people or (in a distinctive variety) among the members of a given group; such words and phrases considered collectively as a category of vocabulary" (Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "slang (n.4), sense II.5.a," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4566411586.)

Therefore, by definition AAVE cannot be regarded as a slang, as it is neither a "category of vocabulary", nor a part of a language, or a system lacking a specific grammar. As Pullum explains, "the mistake is like confusing a sprinkle of hot sauce with a dinner", as slang is just a minimal part of a linguistic system, which is not the case of AAVE (1999, 40).

[2] Standard English is a problematic term, as it is difficult to define what is standard, therefore, it is relative and bound to change according to socio-cultural changes. It appears to imply that only a single standard for any language exists, however, this is not the case, as multiple standards are diffused, e.g. the standard of television broadcasting, or the standard used to approach a formal authority, or the informal mode of talking with friends. In the scientific field of linguistics, the term Standard English is used to refer to a model of English used in given contexts with a certain level of recognized uniformity of use and which differs from varieties or dialects (Peterson, 2020, xx). It can be seen by the lay public as a synonym of "good English", in opposition to "bad English", however, this last label is even more problematic, as it implies there is a proper way of using the language, usually referring to varieties such as AAVE as "bad/wrong English". Scholars reject the use of these two terms, as "variation in language [..] is also a mandatory and inherent property of any healthy language" (Peterson, 2020, 30-31).

Scholars agree on regarding African American Vernacular English as a dialect, however, this term is mistakenly subject to negative stigmatization, due to the wrong associations it bears. Pullum explains that dialects and languages are on the same level, and should be both given rightful acknowledgement. AAVE is a dialect of Standard English, insofar as a dialect is never a mere linguistic system, but "*a dialect of* another (language)" and it bears no mistakes or lack of knowledge of Standard English, as it is not a "badly spoken version" of said language (Pullum, 1999, 40-44). Professionals define the word dialect as a neutral label, without any socio-cultural connotation, referring to "any variety of a language which is shared by a group of speakers", whose creation is almost inevitable in the context of physical and social separation of speakers (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998, 2-25). Pullum further states how grammatical and vocabulary elements of AAVE can be found in American English as well, holding consistency and shared rules as any other language does (1999, 45). However, it is fundamental to point out that AAVE, as a dialect of a language, is not mastered or known by all African Americans, as by definition a language could be acquired or not, and those who use it have learned a set of rules comparable to the process of acquisition of any other language (Pullum, 1999, 55) as "a logical, coherent language system" (DeVere, 1971, 40). Geneva Smitherman explains that there are multiple languages and dialects spoken among the African American community: US Ebonics that refers to language patterns derived from African languages, Creole languages of the Caribbean, and the mixture of English and African languages; the US Language of Wider Communication (LWC) alias "Standard American English"; Nonstandard American English that refers to language patterns which are non-African in origin; and various foreign languages such as Spanish, Arabic, Creole (2000, 20).

Given that AAVE is neither a slang, nor a bad version of Standard English, but a dialect, it is unmistakable that it has specific linguistic and phonological rule-governed features that characterize it, and equalize it to any other language. I will briefly list some of the most frequently used grammatical and morphosyntactic peculiarities, on the basis of Elizabeth Peterson's classification (2020, 106-111):

Feature	Example
Copula absence. This feature occurs only in the present tense, except for the first person singular where it is not used. It is interesting to mention that this linguistic feature occurs in other languages such as Russian, Arabic, Japanese etc.	*They going* ("They are going")
Habitual/aspectual be. This is possibly the most stereotyped feature, frequently used when mimicking AAVE. It is used to express the regularity and recurrence of an action.	*They reading* ("They are reading") vs *They be reading* ("They read often")
Remote past/stressed *BIN*. This emphasized form is used to place an event in the distant past, despite the fact that the event might still be occurring.	*She BIN running* ("She has been running for a long time") vs *She running* ("She is running") vs *She be running* ("She often runs")
Done [dən]. It is a finalization marker used to indicate the conclusion of an event.	*I would have BIN done did it* ("If I was in your place, this issue would have long since been taken care of")
Third person singular –s absence. This feature occurs in third-person singular present tense verbs, leaving only the verb stem. This happens also in Swedish and German.	*He go to school in the morning* ("He goes to school in the morning")
Ain't negation. In AAVE it is common to find the use of *ain't* instead of isn't, has/have not, did not.	*She ain't been here too long* ("She hasn't been here too long")
Double negation. This is a feature that was diffused in the Middle Ages in Standard English, for example in Shakespeare and Chaucer. The double negation occurs in the auxiliary form and indefinite nouns, however it is pleonastic, meaning that the second negative does not contribute to the negative meaning of the sentence (Green, 2002, 78).	*Ain't nobody can't beat me at chess* ("Nobody can beat me at chess")

1.4.3 The significance of orality

In addition to the syntactic peculiarities described in the previous sub-chapter, AAVE is rich in mastering communicative strategies that result in distinct rhetorical strategies. Green describes these elements as "speech events", which could be defined as

modes of speaking regulated by rules of speaking in the context of a speech situation. A speech situation differs from a "speech event", as it represents a scenario such as a ceremony or a party, associated with speech but not regulated by rules of speaking (2002, 134).

The African American oral tradition had a major role in shaping these characteristics, as slaves were excluded from literacy for more than two centuries in the United States. As a matter of fact, oral tradition still exists and it has become a unique verbal style that requires linguistic competence, and has a significant impact on the audience, for example, as a medium of meaning and political ideology's communication of contemporary politicians, leaders and preachers (Smitherman, 2000b, 58-66). Two exemplary models of this peculiar language usage are the boxer Muhammad Ali, and former U.S. president Barack Obama.

Muhammad Ali (1942-2016) was a professional African American boxer, who employed many elements of Black oral tradition. His speech might have sounded as in compliance with the norms of Standard English to a non-expert listener placed outside of African American culture, frequently leading to misinterpretations (Smitherman, 2000b, 138). An example of a misconception of Ali's words occurred in a discourse to Tanzanians in 1980 during an African tour. The boxer referred to the United States and Russia's presidents as "two bad white men". While the Tanzanians in the audience seemed to have no issue in understanding what Ali was saying, White listeners misunderstood his words and interpreted "bad" with the standard meaning of evil, negative. This is a case of "black talk", in which Ali with such adjective wanted to convey the meaning of "powerful", in compliance with the semantic of inversion of the African American oral tradition. This episode nearly unleashed a diplomatic incident because of the lack of familiarity with this rhetorical strategy (Smitherman, 2000b, 137). Ali's way of talking and use of signifying, playing the dozens and woofing (which I will analyze in the following passages) appointed him as a vigorous speaker, strongly celebrated by the Black audience, while White listeners considered him as a figure to censure due to their lack of knowledge of Black culture (Smitherman, 2000b, 138).

On the other hand, Barack Obama, the first African American president of the United States, is not only an example of frequent use of Black oral tradition's modes, but also a misinterpreted figure, affected by subtle racism. Obama has often been referred to

as an “articulate” man, or as a “Magic Negro”, by important politicians as Joseph Biden, current president of the U.S., and former president George W. Bush. These labels are evidently racializing, as they imply an undertone of amazement, suggesting a certain difference between ordinary African Americans and Barack Obama (Alim & Smitherman, 2012, 34-35). The Black community perceives these epithets as negative, while the majority of Whites fails to notice their racializing content. Obama’s ability to style shift was essential in gaining Whites’ trust. Obama was forced to acquire different modes of speaking the same language in order to succeed in school and later on in his career, mastering styleshifting, which is different from codeswitching, as explained by H. Samy Alim and Smitherman: “many bilingual/bicultural Americans *codeswitch* between two languages [..], (while) many bilingual/bicultural Americans *styleshift* – move in and out of linguistic styles – between varieties of the same language” (Alim & Smitherman, 2012, 5). This is an ability mastered on a daily basis by many Blacks. As the surveys carried out by Alim and Smitherman in their publication *Articulate while Black* make clear, many Whites failed to notice Obama’s style shifting ability and the speech events employed, while they were evident to Blacks. Obama has displayed his compliance with Black language peculiarities in many situations, for example, in the use of signifying in a 2011 correspondents’ dinner at the White House. On this occasion, the president mocked his guest Donald Trump, who had joined the rumors about Obama’s not being a U.S. citizen. Obama highlighted Trump’s lack of political experience, and pretended to compliment him for his accomplishments on a show, highlighting how different they are in terms of political expertise (Alim & Smitherman, 2012, 11-12). Obama’s speech events are recognized by Blacks, who compare him to a Black preacher due to the employment of “cadence, timing, effective use of pauses, metaphors, rhythm and repetition, as well as Black discourse mode of signifying and storytelling” (Alim & Smitherman, 2012, 15). However, his ability to engage the audience is often only understood by Blacks. When speaking to a predominantly Black audience Obama tends to use more Black rhetorical devices, for example call-and-response. An episode is his 2008 speech in South Carolina, when Blacks were particularly receptive to his words and engaged in “a coded verbal game” of verbal and non-verbal responses, while the Whites present could not understand the situation or participate in the call and response (Alim & Smitherman, 2012, 19-20).

These examples demonstrate how simple it is for Blacks to be misunderstood and judged according to non-receptive norms on the part of Whites, leading to the creation of stereotypes as it happened for Muhammad Ali. Obama, on the other hand, although being perceived positively, suffers from the shading of his figure, based on the mainstream standards of the dominant WASP community (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, members of the dominant and elite class of people in the U.S.[3]).

Among the most popular and diffused "speech events" of African American orality stands signifying, a technique used when a speaker is referring to its audience in general or to a specific member of it, with a humorous or ironic tone (Smitherman, 2000b, 65). Henry Louis Gates defines it as "the black trope of tropes, the figure for black rhetorical figures" (1988, 57). The aim is not malevolent, and leverages on the use of unexpected utterances and double meanings, as Barack Obama did in the given example in the 2011 interaction with Donald Trump (Smitherman, 2000a, 260). The audience is expected to understand the playful tone of the speaker, but this is not always the case whenever a non-expert listener is involved.

Signifying originated during slavery and is linked to the African and diasporic folktale of the Signifying Monkey. The tale involves the figure of the mythological messenger of the gods Esu Elegbara, who was accompanied by a monkey. This figure originated in Yoruba folklore, and later on extended to the African American tradition with particular attention to the character of the Signifying Monkey (Gates, 1988, 58-59). Many poems and tales feature the Signifying Monkey as a trickster who speaks figuratively to a Lion. The Monkey often reports insults, which are one of the mode of signifying, uttered by the Elephant, causing the Lion to become angry as he interprets the Monkey's words literally, not being able to mediate between the literal and the figurative meaning of the tales told by the Monkey (Gates, 1988, 59). The animals included in these tales are not casual, as the Lion represents the King of the jungle, while the Elephant is the strongest animal in the jungle. The Monkey does not have a fixed evident role, however, with its ability to manipulate language it is able to prevail on both the Lion and the Elephant that are not capable of properly interpreting its words. The Monkey uses repetitions, rhymes and phonetic similarities in order to trick the listener (Gates, 1988,

[3] Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "wasp," accessed May 15, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wasp.

69). Slaves, in a similar manner, used signifying in order to survive in the master's environment, without exposing themselves. Frederick Douglass explains that slaves mastered signifying in their songs, which were "full of meaning to themselves". Whites were convinced that slave songs expressed happiness, as they could not grasp their true meaning, being filled with "antiphonal structures to reverse their apparent meaning, as a mode of encoding for self-preservation" (Gates, 1988, 73). Self-preservation is the key reason behind signifying among slaves, recalling the underlining motives of the Monkey's tales. As argued in the examples of Muhammad Ali and Barack Obama, signifying remains a frequent "speech event" used by African Americans.

Some scholars consider the "speech event" of signifying as equivalent to playing the dozens, using the terms as synonyms. However, others believe that signifying is "more human" as it targets the opponent and not his relatives, as it happens in the dozen, where the opponent's mother is targeted (Green, 2002, 135). Playing the dozens is typically based on utterances filled with rhymes and it originated during slavery, when ill or old slaves were sold in groups of a dozen at a convenient price (Smitherman, 2000a, 116). Another theory claims that the term comes from field slaves' insults towards house slaves, who were granted more advantages and were accused of entertaining relationships with their masters (Green, 2002, 137). Playing the dozens is currently very popular, as it was in the past, and it maintains at the center the figure of the mother, accompanied with body moves and gestures such as the finger hook and eye gaze, which play a significant role in the uttering of the sentences (Green, 2002, 137).

Woofing is another "speech event" often used by Muhammad Ali, who is considered to be "a skilled woofer" in relation to his superior athletic abilities when trying to intimidate his opponents (Green, 2002, 136). Zora Neale Hurston defines the term as "aimless talking" coming from the "purposeless barking of dogs at night" (1935, 247).

Call and response is another fundamental feature of African American oral tradition, as defined by Smitherman (2000b, 64). It is used to engage the audience in an active participation with the speaker, usually during religious services when a preacher makes a statement and the audience replies (Green, 2002, 147). In sacred functions the act takes the form of an actual response as "Amen", or as a series of gestures and acclamations that grow as the sermon proceeds (Smitherman, 2000b, 64). It is frequently

employed in non-sacred contexts as well, such as in the above mentioned example concerning Barack Obama's speech in South Carolina.

These "speech events" intrinsic to African American orality were employed to survive white oppression, which began with slavery and later on developed in segregation, leaving traces of discrimination up to the present. However, oral tradition served also as a medium to preserve African American agency and culture through songs, stories, tales, folk sayings and "rich verbal interplay among everyday people" as described with the "speech events" (Smitherman, 2000b, 199). Smitherman defines the practice of orality as "word-of-mouth", the one element granting the passing of culture to new generations since slavery, characterized by "belief sets, values, ways of looking and the world and the community of men and women" (2000b, 200). A significant value and importance is placed upon orality, that continues to be considered superior to the written word. This does not imply a deficiency of literacy among African Americans, as the relevance of orality is intended as a medium to preserve and perpetuate values and daily necessary practical skills (Smitherman, 2000b, 202).

As a consequence, some Blacks believe that knowledge needs to be passed down within the community and cannot be acquired from books. An example of this practice is "the talk" on racism and preferred behavior in situations that might lead to danger. This talk is forwarded through generations as parents instruct their children on how to behave in the presence of White policemen. In the young adult novel, *The Hate U Give,* Khalil, a Black teenager is shot by a White cop as he reaches to pick up a hairbrush that the policeman mistakes for a gun. Right before the killing happens the protagonist hopes that her friend Khalil was given the talk as her parents did when she was twelve. However, she reaches the conclusion that Khalil probably has not had "the talk" and therefore did not know how to behave properly in order to survive (Thomas, 2018, 24). This is an oral element of African American culture that is transmitted to children as a practical skill that cannot be acquired through school education or books. This is another example showing how orality is fundamental in the African American community in order to survive nowadays, as it happened during slavery.

1.4.4 Status and attitudes towards AAVE

In the United States, the birthplace of African American Vernacular English, in addition to the debate on the status of AAVE as broken English or a proper language variety, the question of its legitimacy in the public (and private) space is also widely discussed. Many claim that the one and only official language of the U.S. is American English, however, in the Constitution, the supreme document of the Federation, there is not an article defining an official language. Therefore, any language is legitimate in theory. The problem of language is directly connected to the issue of national identity that arose because of the multiculturalism and multilingualism present in the US. The United States has been a country of migration since its "discovery" made by Cristoforo Colombo in 1492, that led to the beginning of the European migration evolving in an internal migration throughout the centuries. This never-ending process caused a mixture of languages, cultures and people that may lead to the obvious answer that the most widely used language is English, however, "Diversity is emerging as America's 'manifest destiny' [..] Americans of European ancestry will become a minority. Indeed, we will all be minorities" (Takaki, 1993, 5). Europeans, South Americans, Asians, Africans, are all people that during the centuries have come to the U.S. escaping wars and oppressions (for example the Jews during World War II) or unwillingly as it happened to African slaves.

The idea to pass an amendment to declare English the official language of the United States arose in 1981, when Senator S. I. Hayakawa proposed the English Language Amendment, founding the movement *US English* two years later (Smitherman, 2000b, 291). The most common arguments in favor of this reform concern the integration of whoever does not use English as their first language, primarily targeting immigrants, claiming that economic success and full citizenship are achievable only by learning and actively using English (Scacchi, 2017, 11). This movement and the ones affiliated to it such as *EnglishFirst* and *ProEnglish* seem innocuous, however, they prove to be problematic in two ways.

On the one hand, there have "language policy implications [..] on a macro-institutional level", for example, in the attempt on the part of *US English* to abrogate the accessibility of multilingual ballots for the elections, and the limitation of government funding for schools providing bilingual education (Smitherman, 2000b, 291). On the micro-level, a consequence of the state implementation of English as the official language

has developed in controversial scenarios. For example, soon after the passage of the English-Only law in Arizona in 1988, the Parole Board of Arizona canceled a parole hearing of a prisoner who did not speak English, as the Article XXVIII of the Arizona Constitution establishes English as the official language of the State of Arizona, impeding a translation of the proceeding in compliance with the legislative disposition (Smitherman, 2000b, 292).

On the other hand, the underlying issue of this topic is that of English as a symbol of national identity to be preserved against multiculturalism (Scacchi, 2017, 11), which has been diffused since the foundation of the U.S.: "The rhetoric for speaking about language, is of course, often like that for race" (Shell, 1993, 116). The race issue was masked by language policies, deflecting the attention from the real problem that was being target. Language policy was active, for example, in the repression of African languages in the plantations, as slave traders separated Africans from the same areas and speaking the same language, and slave owners were careful in purchasing slaves of different native tongues in order to control communication, and limit chances of insurrection. Moreover, slaves were forbidden to speaking their native language or teach it to their children (Trimbur, 2006, 576-577), and there are records of slaves having their tongues cut whenever caught speaking their native language (Shell, 1993, 105).

In addition to the earliest prohibitions made in the plantations, there were other manners in which English was enforced, such as the Americanization process of the melting pot. The Ford Motor Company created a full-fledged ritual to assimilate immigrant workers in the early 20th century. The company claimed to elevate their unskilled workers to a "better standard of life" as the founder Henry Ford aimed to teach "the American ways, the English language, and the right way to live" (Meyer, 1980, 70). Schools were created to teach English and "the American ways", culminating in a ritual of graduation of those succeeding, while those who failed were discharged. The ceremony consisted in employees descending from a boat scene (representing how they came to the U.S.) wearing their typical native clothes, into a "melting pot" and coming out of it wearing new American clothes, waving the U.S. flag, as truly changed American citizens (Meyer, 1980, 77). The image of the Melting Pot is problematic and has been questioned since the 1960s, as it was used to indicate a uniform product, eliminating the cultural differences and backgrounds of immigrants in a one-way assimilation process. Philip

Gleason defines the Melting Pot as a “purger of “foreign dross” and “impurities”, as the melting pot "theory" tended to lose all association with the idea that immigrants could make valuable contributions to a yet unfinished American culture” (1964, 20-38). From this, it is clear that the attitude towards immigrants and different cultures aims at a cancellation of peculiarities.

Together with the repressions of different languages and enforcements of the “national tongue”, English was and is still seen as the language of democracy, bearing democratic values, which are believed to transfer to immigrants with its acquisition, relegating multilingualism to an “act of disloyalty” (Scacchi, 2017, 15).

The issue of multilingualism is crucial and evident also in education, as shown in the Oakland School Board judicial case of 1996, already mentioned in relation to Ebonics. The issue began when teachers noticed that African American students had lower grades and were at a lower academic level compared to other students of the school. The problem was detected in the discrepancy between the language spoken at home (AAVE) and the language they were required to use in school (Standard English). The school decided to facilitate academic acquisition by using bilingual educational strategies, inserting AAVE, or Ebonics, in the school learning process, as a “medium” towards Standard English and not a substitute (Smitherman, 2000b, 157). The situation escalated, generating a national debate upon the subject and legitimization of Ebonics as a language. The public misread the Oakland School Board resolution as they understood that Ebonics would be taught in place of Standard English. What is notable in this case, other than the issue on the legitimization of Ebonics, are its repercussions, as Florida, California, Georgia, South Carolina and Oklahoma presented anti-Ebonics legislative drafts (Smitherman, 2000b, 157). This, once again, demonstrates how multilingualism, specifically concerning AAVE, is widely perceived as a problem and not as an asset. The media generated a massive reaction against the threat at the national language and States tried to abolish Ebonics from schools and public spaces, declaring the language illegal.

1.4.5 Translating AAVE into Italian

As ascertained in the previous sections of this chapter, AAVE is a dialect, with many syntactic and phonetic characteristics, which shows the influence of orality and the history of African Americans in shaping the language. All of these peculiarities need to

be considered when translating, highlighting once more that translation is a complex process and maximum attention should be paid to all of the abovementioned elements in order to produce a high quality and accurate "carrying across" of the source text. In some cases, the dialect might vary according to the time, space and gender of the characters portrayed by the author (Sanz Jimenez, 2020, 209), as a dialect similarly to any language is bound to vary synchronically depending on many factors and to change and evolve in time.

One of the first matters arising concerns how to properly translate a dialect. The first solution might be to translate it with another dialect, in order to remain faithful to the non-standard variety of the original text. For example, in Italy there are many dialects, and while one would think that using one of them would be the best solution, this is not the case as they hold deep cultural roots that would completely distort the target text. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason claim that translating a dialect with another dialect leads to the distortion of the effect that the text should evoke in the reader (1990, 41). Berman defines this hypothesis as a mixture of exoticization and popularization, in which the dialect is not only ridiculed but also forced to fit in a different culture that tries to domesticate the foreign to its standard and values (2004, 294).

On the other hand, a simple adherence to the standard language would completely annihilate the peculiar effect of the dialect, creating a translation devoid of uniqueness (Hatim & Mason, 1990, 41). Berman defines the choice to entirely eradicate a dialect from a translation as a "very serious injury" (2004, 294). Cavagnoli follows the same line of thought, explaining how a dialect has a peculiar form related to orality, and the risk is to lose its distinctiveness, if the proper strategy is not employed (2010, 85). She also adds that publishers often urge translators to follow the eradication of the dialect in the source text, prioritizing the mere narrative function to the detriment of its aesthetic function (200, 85).

Preserving the difference between AAVE and Standard English is essential also in the perspective of code-switching, a linguistic strategy that needs to be preserved in translation, in order to make the reader understand that two different codes are being employed (Cavagnoli, 2010, 87). Berman highlights the importance of maintaining the relation between standard language and dialect, defined respectively as surface language and underlying language (2004, 296). The difference between the two linguistic systems

is erased whenever the translator wants to render the text clearer and elegant, with a subsequent "destruction of the letter in favor of meaning" (2004, 297).

What should a translator do whenever translating a dialect? The answer appears more immediate on the part of what a translator should not do. Berman defines the practice of using italics and translating in the standard language what in the source text is part of the dialect as absurd and problematic (2004, 294). This appears as an oxymoron, as the reader of the translated text is introduced to a sentence that follows the standard form, but at the same time it is emphasized in italics, making it impossible to detect the dialect behind it. The typographical deviation of italics that seems to indicate a differentiation, but is inexplicable on the part of the reader, as it follows the standardization of the rest of the text. As Cavagnoli explains, this mode of translation creates confusion in the reader, who is not able to understand the reason behind why some words or sentences are in italics (2010, 86).

Another translation strategy that might be adopted to translate a dialect is the creation of a new dialect to render the one in the source text. This approach is defined by Cavagnoli as the worst possible, as it renders the dialect exotic at the maximum, resorting to stereotypes and racism (2010, 86). The outcome typically features ungrammatical sentences similar to baby-talk, downgrading the dialect and the characters using it to a state of infantilization and ignorance. An example of infantilization is found in Culicchia's Italian translation of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Both Huck and the Black slave Jim speak English. Jim's mode of talking is more pronounced as he uses the vernacular of the Southern regions of the United States. However, both the characters use a similar informal version of English (Scacchi, 2012, 280). On the one hand, Culicchia resorts to a colloquial version of Italian to give voice to Huck, while, on the other, he employs an ungrammatical and almost childish version of English for Jim, as highlighted in the following passage: "No, non fare male me! Mai fatto male me, a uno di fantasma. Sempre piaciuti me, morti, e tutto quello che poteva ha fatto me, per loro. Andate e ributtatevi dentro fiume, che quello sta posto di voi, e non fate male vecchio Jim, che sempre amico vi stato" (quoted in Scacchi, 2012, 280). This version of Jim's talk makes him appear as a person who does not speak English as a native, and is trying to formulate a cohesive sentence without much success, when, on the contrary, in the source text the reader would never have this impression. In the original

text it is clear that Jim and Huck speak two different versions of English, however, it is also obvious that Jim's use of English is regular as it resorts to specific rules, and it is neither the language of a child nor the language of someone that does not speak English (Scacchi, 2012, 280).

Cavagnoli suggests the use of the resources of the spoken language to avoid the risk of ridiculing and mocking whenever rendering a dialect, creating an effect similar to the one originally intended in the source text. To achieve this effect in Italian, the translator might want to favor parataxis in place of hypotaxis, meaning that subordinates should be avoided and coordinated should be preferred. In addition to this, the dislocation of the pronoun and segmented sentences with anaphoric references are manners that maintain the spirit of oral language (Cavagnoli, 2010, 81).

Secondly, the translator should employ conjunctions that require the indicative mood as *anche se*, rather that the subjunctive mood as *sebbene* or *benchè*, in order to maintain the sentence in the registry of orality, distancing from the formality of the written language (Cavagnoli, 2010, 81). With reference to this last point, in Italian the use of verbs as *penso* (I think) and *credo* (I believe) require the subjunctive mood, therefore, they should be substituted with forms as *mi sa che*, which are more informal and colloquial and require the indicative mode (Cavagnoli, 2010, 81).

Thirdly, the relative conjunction *che* (that/which) has many different usages in the informal spoken language, which are defined as *che polivalente* (Cavagnoli, 2010, 82). As explained in Enciclopedia Treccani, this phenomenon should be taken into consideration for its wider use in subordinates in which other more specific conjunctions ought to be used. For example, in relative-temporal, final, causative sentences, or in association with the indicative mood, that normally does not require it.

Lastly, Cavagnoli suggests the doubling of the personal pronoun of first person *mi*, with *a me mi*, that is used in the oral language exclusively, and the use of *qui* and *là*, to reinforce the demonstrative pronouns (*questo qui/quello là*). For what concerns vocabulary, general informal forms should be preferred (Cavagnoli, 2010, 82).

Punctuation might seem irrelevant in the realm of translation, however, Cavagnoli explains that the choice of the author to use a full stop or a semicolon is pondered and should be respected when translating to maintain the pace provided in the original (2010, 118-119). This is not the only aspect of the source text that should be preserved, as also

the poetic rhythm is an essential feature of the source text that conveys musicality with the employment of assonances and alliterations, for example (Cavagnoli, 2010, 119).

In general, translators can adopt these techniques if they hold a proper knowledge of the dialect they are translating, and are able to recognize it in any instance, and consequently render it an appropriate manner, without risking to create "una traduzione assimilante ed etnocentrica" (Cavagnoli, 2010, 95).

The strategies proposed in this section are not exclusively conceived for the Italian translation of AAVE, but also for other languages, as in the case of Spanish in the following example. Sanz Jimenez reports in his essay on the translation in Spanish of James McBride's neo-slave narrative *The Good Lord Bird*, the employment of a pseudo dialectal translation, meaning the translator resorted to colloquial Spanish and non-standard language. With this strategy the African American characters preserve their true voice even in translation, with a definite separation between standard language and dialect (Sanz Jimenez, 2020, 217).

The translation of a dialect carried out in a proper manner, grants the transmission of cultural traits that otherwise would be lost in the neutralization or standardization of the language. Some words have equivalents in the target language, however, others might not have a proper correspondent, and the choice of standardizing these terms brings along the loss of an aspect of culture. The researcher Sara Corrizzato notices this issue in the Italian audio-visual translation of Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*, whenever an equivalent term of a particularly important cultural expression does not exist in Italian (2012, 118). Corrizzato explains that the term *coon* can be considered as a synonym of *nigger*, however, Italian lacks a specific term to translate *coon*, and renders it in the same way as *nigger*, losing its particular cultural connotation evident in English (2012, 117). Another case, might be that the translator finds a corresponding expression in the target language, but it is dismissed because of the lack of knowledge of the source culture on the part of the audience, that would fail to grasp the meaning, resorting to a more familiar term (Corrizzato, 2012, 118-119). The cultural connotation and meaning is lost in the Italian translation because of a lack of the historical and cultural background.

1.4.6 Who should translate a Black author? The Amanda Gorman case

Language and culture are intrinsically linked and a translator should never attempt to consider one disregarding the other. As Susan Bassnett claims, language "is the heart within the body of culture [..] the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril" (2002, 23). From this perspective a translator needs to evaluate both language and culture as fundamental elements in translation. Therefore, it is essential to hold proper language and culture knowledge, alongside with expertise, to create an appropriate and acceptable translation. However, the debate on the translator's requirements seem to have broadened, reaching the realm of ethnicity and race, as it happened with the Amanda Gorman case.

A superficial reading on the discussion might suggest that the translator's ethnicity is a fundamental trait in allocating translations, meaning, for example, that only Black translators should translate Black authors, only women should translate women etc. However, a deeper analysis of the case shows that the issue does not simply revolve around the translator's ethnicity, as it actually concerns Black people's representation in the translation field and the opportunity to be considered when selecting a translator.

Amanda Gorman is a 26-year-old African American poet and activist, who took part in President Biden's inauguration ceremony on the 20th January 2021. Gorman recited her poem "The Hill We Climb" as a call for equality, justice and union in the United States, a nation that has faced many dark moments, such as slavery, but also the Capitol attack that occurred two weeks before the inauguration. The poem is directly aimed and created for the United States' audience through the use of the typical American literary device of the jeremiad. The jeremiad implies a beginning of lament and a subsequent conclusion of hope for the future. The title seems to recall and at the same time diverge from the Puritan myth of the "City upon a Hill" that referred to the United States, at the time the Massachusetts Bay Colony, as a new Jerusalem, and later on developed in the metaphor of the United States as a perfect and democratic union. Gorman uses the word "hill" in reference to the long journey that the U.S. will have to cover to reach equality, while the myth intended the "hill" as a place of elevation where the exceptional new world stood. It is clear that the poem has a peculiar meaning, strongly related to the United States' culture, history, and social issues, including racism.

In February 2021 the Dutch publisher Meulenhoof announced the appointment of the Dutch poet Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, winner of the Booker International Prize in 2020 with their debut novel, as the translator of Gorman's poem. This news provoked almost immediately a debate on social media, as the Dutch activist Zaire Krieger announced her adversity for the translator's choice (Kotze, 2024, 8). The discussion proceeded as Janice Deul, a Surinamese-Dutch journalist, declared the assignment of Rijneveld for the translation as an "incomprehensible choice", underlining the importance of inclusivity of Black translators who are often excluded or marginalized in the field (Kotze, 2021b). On the 26th of February Marieke Lucas Rijneveld announced on Twitter their renunciation of the project. The debate continued as the ready to be published Catalan version of the poem, made by the white translator Victor Obiols, was declined by its publisher.

The core of Deul's statements was misinterpreted and referred to as a call for a correspondence in terms of identity between author and translator. However, as Marshall argues in his article "Amanda Gorman's Poetry United Critics. It's Dividing Translators" the issue does not revolve around the translator's identity, but on the "lack of racial diversity" in the field of translation. Marshall reports that publishers should search for qualified and suitable translators, something that Meulenhoof might not have done. Haidee Kotze argued that Rijeneveld was mainly chosen for their recent prize victory in hope of visibility for the translation, demanding for more inclusivity and "space [..] to participate, to be visible." (2021a) following Deul's call for a broadening of the choice of translators, to give representation and visibility to people of color, who are often marginalized and systematically excluded in the publishing field (2021b).

This interpretation might be compared to how Black people are often not only excluded from the publishing field, but also from many other environments, in which racism prevails, preventing people of color from having the same opportunities as White people, as shown in this chapter. Exclusion and racialization on the part of Black people and AAVE are still diffused in the United States, as recalled in Gorman's poem.

Lori Saint-Martin links what happened with Gorman's translation to power relations dominating the translation field. Just by thinking about the number of languages taken into considerations in translation, it is noticeable that a conspicuous amount is left out and never considered whenever deciding from which language to translate, generating a manifest loss of authors and works of literature. The publishing elite believes in the idea

that the best writing should be the object of translation and diffusion around the world, however, how are the criteria set? Those who are part of the elite make the choice on what may be translated dictating the tendency. Saint-Martin underlines how the majority of translators are white men, reporting data from a study carried out by the Authors Guild in 2017 on the ethnicity of translators in the United States. The research revealed that 83% of active translators were White, while African Americans account for 1.5%. Evidence indicates a significant discrepancy, however, not to be intended in relation to the hypothesis that only Whites should translate Whites etc., but as proof of the discrimination diffused in the field and the lack of opportunities. The scholar calls for an opening on the part of publishers in translators' selection process, commenting that "the choice of a young female black translator (for Gorman's poem) would not only have been a magnificent symbolic and political gesture, but also a gesture of support for diversity" (2022).

1.5 Retranslation of AAVE and Black Authors' Literary Works

As I have presented above, retranslation can occur in any language, and it is applicable to AAVE as well. The context to which a retranslation of a work in AAVE refers to, is not merely linguistic, but also cultural. In this dissertation I will mainly deal with two retranslations of the neo-slave narrative *Kindred* by Octavia E. Butler: the 2005 retranslation by Silvia Gambescia, and the 2020 retranslation by Veronica Raimo. The major goal is to analyze and compare the two retranslations, in order to understand how different approaches, render AAVE and the African American culture. How can a translator follow at best the author's ideals, message, and spirit and consequently its work's intentions? This makes us return to the beginning of this chapter in which I analyzed the debate between foreignization and localization. However, the issue is broader. Translators should hold a broad knowledge of the culture in which the work they are approaching is located. I am going to analyze how a deep and profound knowledge on the African American culture can lead to a better translation. It is mandatory for a translator to be familiar with the context and culture, in order to render its peculiarities, which are often unfamiliar to the lay Italian reader. Therefore, I will briefly report an example, that will be deeply analyzed in the third chapter, concerning the translation of

the term “mammy”, to show how differently it has been translated and what its consequences are.

The first version of 2005 maintains the original word as in Italian there is no correspondence or any term that would properly refer to this term, due to the specificity of this figure which is peculiar to the U.S. slavery context. The mammy figure has been imported in Italy through literary works or audiovisual productions such as TV series of movies, but it is not peculiar to the Italian tradition. On the other hand, the 2020 version translated the term “mammy” with the word “mami”. This Italian word is to be considered as a colloquial diminutive of the word “mum”, as Encyclopedia Treccani explains. Children often refer to their mothers with this word, rendering this word not recognizable by Italians, who would not be able to associate it with the slavery figure of the mammy. This leads to the obvious question concerning the faithfulness of the Italian translation to the original text, but also more deeply of the actual knowledge that the translator held on slavery. The mammy is a central figure that I will analyze in the third chapter, and that is well-known to anybody who is familiar with Anglo-American literature, or U.S. history. This once again, poses the question on who should translate Anglo-American literature and, as above mentioned, a Black author. It is evident that there needs to be a solid acquaintance of the culture and context in which a given work is located, in order to preserve its peculiarities and present the reader a faithful vision of history. I am not implying that a translator who is not of African American descent cannot translate a Black author, but that a translator who holds a proper knowledge of the context can be appointed as a good translator for such field. In this specific case, the Italian reader will read the word “mami” and think that Sarah, the character to which this word is referred to, is regarded as a mom, and not that she actually resembles the historical figure of the strong and authoritative woman leading a white household, the mammy. Silvia Gambescia followed the intentions of Octavia E. Butler and correctly rendered this term. We can presume that she was familiar with that given figure and was consequently able to ponder how to render it in Italian. It is also necessary to mention that the 2005 translation, *Legami di sangue*, was edited by M. Giulia Fabi, a university professor and author specialized in Anglo-American Literature and U.S. history. This gives a stronger relevance to the translation that has been produced ensuring the accuracy of the final work.

Additionally, a literary work's accurate translation featuring AAVE is not only to be analyzed in terms of linguistic precision of the peculiar linguistic system, but also in terms of cultural truthfulness. These are both fundamental aspects that should be examined when comparing and analyzing retranslations and translations of an AAVE work of literature. As I have established at the beginning of this chapter, following Susan Bassnett's remark, the mere knowledge of more than one language is not enough to perform a good translation. This does not solely refer to the ability to select the right translation strategy, but also to hold the competence in interpreting correctly the author's message and choice of words, in relation to the socio-cultural context of the literary work and from whom the author comes from. A perfect translation is never guaranteed, however, an accurate translation is advisable and preferable.

2. From Slave Narratives to the Neo-Slave Narrative: The Case of *Kindred*

In this chapter I will focus on the genesis, development and themes of slave narratives, their importance in the history of the United States and their influence on the perception of slavery. Afterwards, I will analyze the rise of the neo-slave narrative genre as a consequence of the rediscovery of slave narratives in the 1960s, focusing on the novel *Kindred* written by Octavia E. Butler in 1979, which I will introduce as an early example of the genre and examine on the basis of the themes of time travel and motherhood. This is a necessary and useful preliminary analysis to then approach the translations of *Kindred* in the third chapter of this dissertation.

2.1 Socio-Cultural Background and Emergence of Slave Narratives

Slavery is nowadays generally recognized as a major event which took place in the United States, deeply shaping its history as well as that of most of the West. However, its recognition has gone through a long path of denial and minimization on the part of political institutions. Many unofficial and official apologies for slavery have been issued at both State and Federal level. The very first official apology was delivered in 2007 by the state of Virginia, and was consequently followed by Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, with the most relevant made by the U.S. House and Senate, respectively in 2008 and 2009. On the other hand, unofficial statements include Bill Clinton's recognition of slavery in 1998, and George Bush's speech in Senegal on the legacy of slavery in 2003. The content of each resolution is different, but they all concern the acknowledgement of institutions that maintained slavery, in the form of an apology. However, they generally avoid adopting proper and tangible reparations for slavery, merely hoping for remembrance and recognition (Davis, 2014, 272-275). For example, they fail to mention the inequalities perpetrated in criminal justice and education, leaving room for questions on their efficiency as statements. Davis highlights how these apologies appeared during peculiar moments linked to particular political events, that is to say the presidential campaign and election of the first African-American president Barack Obama, as well as efforts on the part of the United States to engage in international fights for human rights (2014, 274-275).

Although in recent years official apologies have been issued by states and the federal government of the U.S., African Americans have yet to be *de facto* fully recognized as citizens, and to be given the chance to fully partake in the social and economic rights of the United States. The inequalities between the White and the Black population concerning employment, education, criminal justice, housing and on many more fronts, are still relevant and cannot be simply dismissed.

Not only slavery as an institution had to undergo a difficult and long process of acknowledgment, but also its written testimonies encountered alike obstacles. The experiences of African-American slaves have been passed on in the form of slave narratives, which had and still have the power to subvert the common belief of slavery as paternalistic and positive, showing that is was an economic system based on brutal exploitation which set the base for American capitalism (Scacchi, 2020, 950).

Slave narratives began to be considered as valid and useful in the interpretation of history from the 1960s. Prior to this, since the ratification of the 13th amendment in 1865, which *de iure* abolished slavery in the United States, neglect began to surround the topic of slavery (Scacchi, 2020, 949). A major change in historiography was central to the reconsideration of slavery as a fundamental and undeniable experience in American national history. The main powers leading towards a modification of history were the Civil Rights Movement, which protested and fought against racial segregation and discrimination, and the Black Power Movement, that advocated for economic independence and racial pride within the African-American community (Rushdy, 1999, 3). These movements were pivotal in drawing the attention of the general public towards a shift from the dominant narrative of what had happened in the United States, to what had been hidden and obscured (Scacchi, 2020, 949).

In addition to this, the 1960s are characterized by the emergence of the "bottom-up approach" to history, in the context of historians being part of the developing New Left movement, which aimed to achieve social justice and equality. New methodologies and approaches were adopted in order to examine the experiences of marginalized social groups such as African Americans, but also Native Americans and women, for example. One of the main tools in this renovated historiographical methodology were slave narratives, which were pivotal in debunking the White master narrative and the belief that slavery was simply an anomaly in the democratic history of the U.S. (Nehl, 2016, 24-25).

Slave narratives constitute a written testament of the United States' violation of their own publicly declared rights and democratic values (Spaulding & Henkle, 2005, 1). The U.S. Constitution, in force since 1789, opens with the emblematic calling "We the people of the United States, [..] establish Justice, [..] and secure the Blessing of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity". These first utterances are widely betrayed in the institution of slavery, which was already extensively diffused in the U.S. since the seventeenth century. However, slavery was not seen as a violation of human rights or of the national Constitution, because slaves were not regarded as human beings. As the sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel explains: "Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human". Those above the line of the human are recognized as human beings, and therefore, are granted access to human rights, while those below the line of the human are considered "subhuman or non-human", and do not enjoy human rights (2016, 10). In this case, the dominant White population of the United States (WASP) is to be placed above the line of the human, while slaves were below, therefore, as non-people they were not included in the "people of the United States" defined by the Constitution or the Bill of Rights (first ratified in 1791, and consisting of the first ten amendments). This shows how slavery and democratic values could coexist in American history because they were not perceived as opposed to one another, as slaves were not part of the "We the people" of the Constitution.

Slave narratives, as a peculiar United States' genre, serve as an instrument to reshape the perception of slavery, toward a more accurate representation of what took place from the 17th century and still influences many people's lives. The original slave narratives include works from the 18th and 19th century, for example, William Wells Brown's 1853 *Clotel*, Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*, but many literary works from the 20th and 21st century, such as for example, Octavia E. Butler 1979 *Kindred* and Lalita Tademy 2000 *Cane River* (Spaulding & Henkle, 2005, 1), also narrate the experience of slavery. The latter group of novels are defined as Neo-slave narratives, and will be dealt with in the continuation of this chapter.

2.1.1 The development of slave narratives and its themes' variation

Slave narratives developed during the 1770s and 1780s in the context of the abolitionist's ideas and movements, which gave a central contribution to the publishing of such works. The themes, language and literary conventions were shaped by religious and abolitionist political associations, reaching with time a recognized form of standardization that is identifiable in most of the literary productions. In the early slave narratives, until the 1830s, one of the principal motives was the religious one, that later on shifted into a more political focus, related to denouncing the brutalities of the plantations and slavery (Gould, 2007, 11-13).

Some scholars attempt to define the first slave narratives as a religious genre, filled with a language recalling sermons and the Bible, aiming at spiritual and physical liberation and salvation. The strong influence of religion is explained through the context in which early slave narratives developed. Many evangelical groups were keen on the stories told by ex-slaves as a means to share their religion. Therefore, many of them, in particular, the Methodists and Baptists, served as publishers. One of the main topics of these narratives was the religious conversion and the influence of the Christian religion on the life and path towards salvation of the protagonist. Olaudah Equiano, who is generally recognized as the pioneer of the slave narrative genre, in his *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* refers to the relevance of religion, alluding to "the importance of dreams and visions to his spiritual life", and he is portrayed with an open Bible in the frontispiece of his literary work (Gould, 2007, 11-16).

As explained above, early slave narratives are more strictly related to religious interpretations, while subsequent ones are more focused on abolition, thanks to the stronger influence that abolitionists movements began to have at the end of the 18th century. These associations, for example, the English Abolition Society and the American colonial assemblies, gave an impetus to the publication of slave narratives and testimonies of former slaves. They also influenced authors on the theme of natural rights reframing Locke's philosophy on such matters, while, on the other hand, proslavery groups used the same ideas to justify the condition of slaves' subalternity. Slave narratives and abolitionists' propaganda began to assert African Americans' humanity and their demand to enjoy human rights. However, the influence of religious ideas and Christian tropes

continued in the antebellum publishing field, as "antebellum culture was still highly religious" (Gould, 2007, 16-20).

In the decades preceding the Civil War, between 1830s-1840s, changes in the abolitionist movements affected slave narratives, in particular directing the protests against the perpetrated violence in the South. Slave narratives were major political documents, as one of their main aims was to fight for the abolition of slavery (Gould, 2007, 28). Abolitionism turned more radical and many more written means of propaganda started to diffuse, for example, newspapers, periodicals, yearbooks, alongside slave narratives, whose authors began to take action in the abolitionist movement. Frederick Douglass is one of the figures who actively participated in the abolitionist press and became well known as an orator, other than a writer. The antebellum slave narrative genre was keen on showing how life really was in the plantations, highlighting the brutal violence and false paternalism that masters perpetrated. There was a new interest in exposing the evidence of slave life, with a detailed documentation of the horrors taking place in the South, as for example in Douglass' *Narrative*. The major and pivotal themes that later on became essential part of the genre developed in this particular period of time, and they include: "the depravity of Southern planters and the irrepressible fact of sexual miscegenation, the hypocrisy of Southern Christianity, scenes of brutal whipping and torture, rebellious slaves who are murdered, and the strategic mechanisms by which the plantation maintains what Douglass called the 'mental and moral darkness' of enslavement" (Gould, 2007, 18-19).

D. Bruce Dickson Jr. points out three directions towards which slave narratives developed, that I will briefly summarize here and explain subsequently. The first one concerns the support of the abolitionist movement, as the narratives fought against proslavery reasoning defending slavery as a civilizing institution. Secondly, they engaged in the process of democratization that developed in the antebellum United States. Thirdly, they cooperated in the articulation of the concept of freedom (Dickson, 2007, 29).

Concerning the first point, the collaboration with the abolitionist movement, slave narratives served as means to explain how and why pro slavery propaganda's ideas and arguments were absurd and illogical. For example, one of the main points on which proslavery was built was the concept of race, and the natural inferiority of Blacks, that justified the conditions to which they were relegated, as mentioned by Grosfoguel in his

essay “What is Racism?”. Slave narratives became a tool to show that slaves were neither inhuman, nor at a lower level of intelligence compared to Whites. The act of writing a literary work was itself a display of their intelligence and competence, that was remarked in the titles of slave narratives with the use of the utterance “Written by Himself” in Equiano, Douglass and many others’ works. Equiano was the first slave narrator to use this sentence, which appeared in more than one thousand 18th century narratives by writers whose authorship might be questioned by readers (Carretta, 2007, 54). These authors had the capability to write and tell their story, therefore, they were equal to Whites in their mental capabilities (Dickson, 2007, 29-30). In a way this recalls the theory of the philosopher René Descartes: “Cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). The emblematic sentence implies that a subject who is able to think, exists and, in this context, is human. The claim of racial equality in slave narratives is not limited to these authors, but it extends to all Black people as a whole.

Race was not the only claim on which proslavery arguments were built. Another important topic was that of the positive role of slavery on Black uncivilized slaves, who had a chance to come into contact with European and Euro-American civilization thanks to their life on the plantation. One of the first theorizations on this argument concerns religion, in particular the Christian religion, that slaves became familiar with in the United States. Slave narratives demonstrated that true believers among slaves were condemned and denied actual access to the Bible, as it was distorted in its meaning to maintain slaves in their condition of inferiority. Religion was employed as a tool for domination, and masters perpetrated a type of faith “that served slavery more than God” (Dickson, 2007, 30-31). In addition to the denial of accessing the Bible, there was the denial of literacy and education, as reported in Douglass’ *Narrative*, who was kept ignorant until he took upon himself the burden of literacy (as described in paragraph 1.4.1 of the first chapter).

The false claim of slavery’s beneficial role for the U.S. was also exposed in the narratives with the portrayal of how slavery actually corrupted masters and society itself. The praised and central ideals of the family in U.S. society were upturned with slavery, in particular regarding the role of the husband/master and his children. The paternal figure was, in fact, a brutal slaveholder who served as a sexual predator and as a punisher in the plantation. His role was not of educator and beacon of values, but of a vicious unfaithful husband, who cheated on his wife with non-consenting slave women, forced to amuse

their masters to prevent whippings. An example can be found, once again, in Douglass' *Narrative* when he recalls the whipping of Aunt Hester. The woman was obliged by her master to be in an exclusive relationship with him, and when she was caught with a male slave she was whipped almost to death. In addition to this, in many cases slaveholders had children with slave women, but refused to recognize them as their own, and in many occasions even sold them (Dickson, 2007, 31-33). The selling of children affected slave families, who were often separated, as family ties were neither accepted nor acknowledged in the plantations. An example of this can be found in the neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, which will be analyzed in detail in the final part of this chapter. In Octavia E. Butler's work Sarah is a household slave who had four children, three of which were sold by the master Tom Weylin, to acquire money for his second wife Margaret, who wanted to buy new porcelain for the house (2003, 76, 95). Another episode of family ties being disrupted concerns Alice's husband, who is first beaten and later on sold, because the master's son, Rufus, does not accept their union, and wants Alice to be his. In the book it is also mentioned that Tom Weylin had several children with multiple slave women, when Margaret is seen slapping them as she is secretly aware that they are her husband's (Butler, 1979, 85). All of these examples demonstrate, once again, the objectification of slaves whose feelings and fate were decided by Whites, who did not recognize their humanity and subordinated them to exploitation and suffering.

The Southern plantations were completely different from how proslavery groups presented them. These institutions fought to discredit slave narratives' authors in order to invalidate their testimonies. They based their arguments on the impossibility of slaves to be intelligent and articulate, claiming that their literary works were the product of abolitionists' pens. However, authors such as Douglass were able to demonstrate their literacy and competence in their speeches, in which they also proved their cleverness. Frederick Douglass' 1852 speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" shows his eloquence and oratory ability in combining "social analysis with compelling argumentative skills and an adroit use of rhetoric" featuring the use of many figures of speech (Andrews, 1996, 108). He employs many metaphors, for example, when he compares the Christian Church of America to a bulwark that shielded and legitimized slave-hunters. Another example is that of a simile comparing the audience's inability to act towards Blacks' freedom to the stillness and coldness of an iceberg, as opposed to the

enthusiasm they feel towards others instances of revolution such as the French one. In his oration Douglass does not praise the U.S. and the Declaration of Independence, on the contrary, he condemns the historical situation of that time revealing North's hypocrisies in the genre of the Jeremiad. His style of speech and discourse were specifically shaped in order to show African Americans' humanity and dignity. He begins his speech with a *captatio benevolentiae* in which he excuses himself for his "limited powers of speech" (Andrews, 1996, 109), a practice considered by Cicero as fundamental in oratory. However, for the remainder of his talk he shows that his powers of speech are rather articulated. Douglass highlights his fight for equality and his exclusion from the celebration of freedom, as this the fourth of July does not represent his national independence day. He employs the pronouns "you" and "your" all throughout the speech to indicate his listeners, White Americans, therefore, distancing himself and other African Americans from the freedom they do not enjoy.

The second point of Dickson's categorization deals with democratization of the political and social sphere in the United States. This issue is strongly related to the first one, as it deals with the power of slave narratives to create a voice and a space for African Americans to prove their humanity. Dickson further adds that Blacks were seeking political representation, from which they were categorically excluded. The political democratization of the U.S., taking place in the antebellum 19th century, was including a larger portion of the White male population in the public sphere, but was still excluding African Americans, among others like women. Therefore, slave narratives proved to be a new space to express the experiences and stories of slaves, as their social approval urged White Americans to take actions on the problem of slavery. Black ex-slave authors were the perfect subjects who had the right to talk about slavery, having lived and endured it (Dickson, 2007, 34-36).

Dickson's last point concerns slave narratives' influence on shaping the idea of freedom. Freedom was generally seen as liberty from constraints, especially concerning coercion and labor. Slave narratives represented plantation dynamics, underlining how freedom was completely denied, as slaves were kept under strict control by the constant menace of physical violence. Moreover, labor was not free, in fact, slaves were at the mercy of slaveholders and had to work without any type of regulations protecting them, without profiting from their efforts. In addition, the ideas of freedom were kept hidden

from slaves in order to prevent rebellions. Any contact with the abolitionist North was despised and impeded. Literacy, therefore, was prohibited to prevent the spreading of abolitionist newspapers, pamphlets and other slave narratives. Although slaveholders strived to maintain their slaves in ignorance, connections with the North happened, and ideas on free labor and personal freedom penetrated the plantations. Slave narrative authors denounced the coercive system of exploitation perpetrated in the South and the impossibility to benefit from their work in the plantations (Dickson, 2007, 37-38).

Another crucial element outlined in slave narratives was the arbitrary power exerted by slave owners. This was an additional burden to slaves' difficult life conditions and denial of freedom. Slave masters were driven by passion and their own arbitrary will in the exercise of punishment and ruthless authority. From physical whippings and punishments as a result of minor mistakes, to those carried out just for the sake of hurting an innocent slave, there was no truce in their lives. In *Kindred*, Margaret Weylin often punishes Dana with futile excuses. For example, she throws a pot of hot coffee at her claiming that it was cold, just for the sake of complaining about something (Butler, 1979, 81); or when Rufus, who feels his relationship with Dana threatened by Sam, a male field slave, arbitrarily decides to sell him, separating him from his family (Butler, 1979, 238). The arbitrary will of Whites cannot be contrasted by Blacks, who cannot oppose their decisions. Dana, for example, cuts her wrists to escape the plantation when she understands that she has no voice in Rufus' decision to sell Sam, because she had no other way of being listened to or peacefully arguing with him (Butler, 1979, 239). In *The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* the author recalls the episode of the hotel slave Aaron, who is beaten with fifty lashes as his owner claimed that he did not properly clean a knife, and is also subject to have his devastated back washed with rum, to enhance the punishment. It is evident that violence turned into sadism and slaves were often punished for the pleasure of their masters (Dickson, 2007, 39). The regime of arbitrariness perpetrated in the South, reported in slave narratives, was a signal of the violation of the "most deeply held American standards for authority and order" (Dickson, 2007, 40). The ideas of happy and content slaves were disregarded and substituted with the reality of brutality. Slaves were not satisfied with their state of coercion and exploitation, they sought freedom, contradicting pro-slavery arguments. However, they were never able to achieve freedom legally from their masters. Josiah

Henson reports in his *Narrative* that he had agreed with the mistress of the plantation on a price to obtain his freedom, but when he paid his debt the agreement was not respected, and he was kept in slavery (Dickson, 2007, 38). Slave narratives always concern the fight for freedom, among other central themes as equality and literacy. Slaves were ready to risk their life to escape from plantations and coercion, being aware of the major threats that the runaway involved. Hunger and risks were commonplace for the fugitives. Moreover, if they were caught by their masters they were brought back to the plantation and severely whipped, to instill in them the fear of never trying to escape again. On some occasions they were even killed as a punishment, and the other slaves were forced to assist as a warning of what would happen if they tried to escape as well. Not only their masters were allowed to recapture them, any White man was allowed to catch fugitives, and from 1850 with the Fugitive Slave Law, there was the legal duty for Northerners to render them to the South (Dickson, 2007, 40-41). Although being aware of the risks of escape, many slaves pursued the runaway path. In *Kindred*, Alice is born as a free woman but is later on purchased by Rufus when she is captured with her fugitive husband Isaac, as they were trying to escape to have a free life together. Helping a slave to escape was considered a crime. After she is captured, Alice despises life as a slave and condemns Dana who had helped her recover from the dog bites and beatings. Alice never accepted her status as a slave, nor her children's condemnation to never be free. Even though she had already experienced being a runaway she decides to attempt it once more but she fails, and when she understands that neither her nor her children will ever be free she hangs herself.

Slaves were ready to die to escape their captivity. The former slave Harriet Jacobs in her narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* states: "'Give me liberty, or give me death,' was my motto" (Dickson, 2007, 41). This shows how terrible their conditions were, as slaves would rather die than keep on living in coercion. On the other hand, other slaves, for example Sarah in *Kindred,* accepted their condition in order to survive. Sarah is aware of her privileged condition of having a life with her daughter Carrie, therefore, she does not attempt to escape. This is considered as a type of "weak" resistance, often implemented by women that used to sabotage slavery in ways that would grant the survival of their children, like the case of Sarah and her mute daughter Carrie. Other forms of "weak" resistance include abortion to deprive masters from a future workforce and inefficiency on the field or in the household (Scacchi, 2020, 953).

As a closing note, it is necessary to briefly mention the figure of Olaudah Equiano, who is considered to be the founder of the slave narrative genre by the most significant African American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois. Equiano claimed to be an African man, born in 1745 in Nigeria and enslaved at eleven years old when he was sold in Virginia. He was given the name of Gustavus Vassa, in compliance with the tradition of slaves being attributed ironical historical names to emphasize their condition of subjugation and inferiority to their masters. Gustav Vasa was a Swedish King considered a national hero for freeing his people from Danish tyranny in the 16th century.

In his narrative, Equiano claims to have escaped slavery and bought his own freedom in 1766. He became an active opponent of slavery and the most famous Black man thanks to the publication of his 1789 *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* which became very popular both in Europe and the U.S., with multiple re-editions. This narrative is considered as the "fundamental text" of the slave narrative genre (Carretta, 2007, 44-45). It set the structure and basic characteristics that the following slave narratives acquired: an engraved frontispiece containing the author's portrayal, a claim of authorship usually featured in the title with the words "Written by Himself/Herself", testimonials, an epigraph, the narrative, and documentary evidence to prove the author's authority (Carretta, 2007, 44).

Recent studies have uncovered documents that may invalidate parts of the life experiences Equiano described in his *Narrative*. Evidence has been found on the actual birthplace of Equiano not being Nigeria, but South Carolina, around 1747, meaning that he fabricated his African childhood and the transatlantic slave trade voyage to reach the United States. Vincent Carretta proposed that the author manipulated his origins to develop an effective literary work to fight alongside the abolitionist cause. Equiano probably understood that a first person report on the slave trade would have been more effective, rather than the typical arguments posed by White voices who did not experience its horrors. Therefore, he built his African origins to include the Middle Passage voyage, from Africa to the U.S. across the Atlantic Ocean, into his *Narrative,* to further spread the reality of what happened, "supplying [..] (a) much-needed voice" (Carretta, 2007, 47). Other historians, however, question Carretta's reliance on those documents against the numerous oral sources validating Equiano's narrative of his life in Africa.

2.1.2 Douglass's *Narrative* and Jacob's *Incidents*: male slave narratives vs female slave narratives

The slavery experience was not the same for men and women, even though many similarities existed. Among those we find: the fight for freedom, the difficulties of slave life and the commitment to help fellow slaves escape. Different narratives of resistance were produced by men and women, in compliance with their diversified experiences on slavery and emancipation. However, in most of the critical and academic studies there is not an equal attention in considering the two types of narratives. In fact, the master narrative focused on male slave narratives' themes is prominent, creating a generalization that annuls women's slave narrative peculiarities generating the loss of a history portion (Beaulieu, 1999, 9).

The experience of men and women slaves were different from the beginning of the enslavement process. The journey from Africa to the U.S. was conducted in two different ways: men were chained and imprisoned below deck, while women were unconstrained on the quarter deck. This placement created an easier way for sea men and crew members to molest and sexually assault women, as they were physically accessible on deck. In addition to that, when enslaved women were sold in plantations they suffered a double oppression: the hard work on field alongside male slaves and the sexual molestations of slaveholders and more generally White men (Beaulieu, 1999, 11).

Studies on slave narratives highlight that those written by men were strongly devoted to stressing the importance of literacy and the suffering for not being able to access it. Literacy is connected to the use of the written word to write the story of the escape and emancipation in order to prove one's agency and self-worth. An example is Douglass' *Narrative* in which he firmly recalls his pain as a child for not being able to write and read, highlighting his quest to conquer literacy. Additionally, beyond the *Narrative* it is evident how important literacy was for Douglass, for example, in his many speeches in the United Stated but also in Europe, as a way to affirm his autonomy as a human being.

On the other hand, women were not so focused on the significance of literacy in their slave narratives. This does not mean that they did not believe it was a necessary tool to emancipate oneself, but rather that other themes and worries prevailed. An example is found in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents* that also features the typical phrase: "Written by

Herself". However, for what concerns the narrative proper, the themes are not so keen on literacy. Jacobs and other women writers used to emphasize womanliness, family and community relationships.

For a male slave it was imperative to show his authority using public discourse and writing a narrative, on the contrary, for a slave woman, relationships as a wife, mother, daughter or friend proved and indicated her womanliness. This is also related to the different stereotypes that the two genders had to face. Men had to fight against their infantilization and authority deprivation that reduced them to be considered as "boys", meanwhile, women had to struggle with being regarded as helpless victims or fallen women (Morgan, 1994, 76).

Douglass considered literacy as the power to free oneself, therefore, identifying slavery with ignorance. In his life he wrote two autobiographies (1855, 1881) after his *Narrative* (1845), collaborated with newspapers and national periodicals, other than being a proficient orator. He was able to "(gain) control of his life by gaining control over the means of communication" (Morgan, 1994, 77-79). The popularity of his *Narrative* made it become the lead of the whole genre, probably because it also reflected shared patriarchal ideologies and values accepted in 19th century U.S. culture. Men were to be the leader of the family, and women were subordinate, as for example, Aunt Hester and other minor female figures present in his literary work. Differently from men, Black women could have never reached freedom solely by means of literacy, because the society in which they lived did not measure their worth on self-realization and power standards but rather on their chastity and decency.

Women certainly aimed at being literate, but they were aware that this would not help them reach emancipation (Morgan, 1994, 82). Jacobs did not embark on a quest to conquer literacy, as she had access to it at a young age. Moreover, she does not stress literacy as fundamental for her freedom, and merely hints at it in the Preface of her narrative (Beaulieu, 1999, 9). Black women's worth was measured on the basis of what made White women respectable: being married, taking care of the house and children and adhering to the standards of morality. Most of the enslaved women were excluded from these requisites from a young age, as they were raped by their masters and often had fatherless children as a result of sexual violence. Publishing their narratives often involved "a certain amount of infamity" as they did not comply with the pure womanhood

that White readers valued. They could not report their abuses without being victimized or considered fallen women, nor their fatherless children and young age pregnancies (Morgan, 1994, 91). Women, therefore, used relationships to construct their pathway to emancipation, and in their narratives attempted to show they were "someone's children, sisters, wives, mothers, and friends" to remind their readers they were human as well (Morgan, 1994, 90). The family roles Jacobs plays provide her with freedom and an identity (Beaulieu, 1999, 10). Harriet Jacobs in her *Incidents* shows that women typically did not think of themselves as singular human beings separated from other members of the community, nor as singular fugitives. She had a strong relationship with her grandmother, children, brother, aunt, uncles and friends. However, she also had an affectionate relationship with some of her earlier owners, going beyond family ties. Jacob often relied on her family and children for support whenever she felt like she couldn't endure her condition anymore. She affirms in *Incidents* that after the birth of her children she felt more attached to life and she found a reason to keep living (Beaulieu, 1999, 10). At the beginning of her story she describes the history of her maternal grandmother alongside peculiarities of her family members (Beaulieu, 1999, 10). By demonstrating the importance of relationships she shows that slavery corrupts them. Masters are unfaithful to their wives and have children that they do not claim as their own, disrupting family ties and perverting all relationships (Morgan, 1994, 84-87). The majority of male authors consider freedom as personal autonomy, while, as Morgan states, female authors "seem to define freedom as interdependence within relationships" (1994, 91). Women who were free had a chance in pursuing their relationships without any limitations or impositions by others, such as slaveholders separating families, or impeding marriages as it happened to Jacobs who was prevented from marrying the man she loved. Harriet Jacobs determines her role as a woman and as a mother in her life choices. On the one hand, she refuses her master's sexual advances and she takes a White lover to control her sexual life. On the other hand, she hides in her grandmother's attic for seven years as she wants to run away from her enslaved life, without leaving her children alone (Beaulieu, 1999, 10).

The differences between male and female slave narratives show a different perception of slavery, and even though they are partially overshadowed in the study of slave narratives, they are prominent in neo-slave narratives, especially those written by

Black women writers who are committed to give voice to Black enslaved women of the past, challenging the master narrative based on male-written narratives.

2.2 The 1960s Debates and the Emergence of Neo-Slave Narratives

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the change in the perception of history from the "bottom up" of the 1960s was pivotal in rediscovering 18th and 19th century slave narratives. This decade is not only important for the rise of attention towards slave narratives, but also for the birth of a new genre, closely related to that of slave narratives: Neo-slave narratives (Rushdy, 1999, 5). The need for new black-authored documents grew alongside the flourishing and diffusion of the Black Power movement in American society, but also in the academic field. It was the movement itself that inspired African American authors to adopt a new perspective on slavery, a firsthand view of what had happened, and had been concealed until then. The new approach on history could not but give a boost to this process of slavery reevaluation (Nehl, 2016, 25). The scholar Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu argues that the emergence of neo-slave narratives in the 1960s-1970s is related to the Bicentennial (1976), celebrating two hundred years of the Declaration of Independence from England. The celebrations praised the freedom acquired in 1776 from the undemocratic English monarchy. However, internal freedom was officially reached only a century later, and in reality was still not effective. Most African Americans on the U.S. soil did not feel as part of the celebrations, and this possibly contributed to creating an impetus in reclaiming their past and the present demand for freedom (1999, 144).

In 1967 White novelist William Styron published what appeared to be the first novel adopting a first-person perspective on slavery: *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Black intellectuals responded negatively to the publication, in particular, for its racist depiction of Turner's 1831 Virginia rebellion. This was not the product at which the Black Power movement was aiming by urging new representations of slavery. As the scholar Ashraf Rushdy explains, the novel proposed a "nonheroic slave rebel, [..] uninformed appropriation of African American culture, [..] and almost conservative allegiance to the traditional historiographical portrait of slavery" (1999, 4). Turner was depicted as a man driven to the rebellion by the love passion for a White woman, rather than by the urge for freedom (Scacchi, 2012, 950). The critical debate upon Styron's novel as an improper depiction of slavery, not aiming at a change of history from the "bottom up" with the

voices of those left out, contributed to the development of Neo-slave narratives as more accurate reports of the past (Nehl, 2016, 25). Black authors attempted to move on from the master narrative of slavery. What was collectively known and accepted in society, as Styron's narrative, was cast aside to reach new, deeper, and more faithful representations of slavery.

The term "neoslave narratives" first appears in Bernard W. Bell's *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987) with reference to Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966), a novel on the story of a mixed slave living in the South during the Civil War (Nehl, 2016, 46). Afterwards, Rushdy defines Neo-slave narratives - (the form is capitalized by the author in his study) as a genre shaped on the antebellum slave narratives, in particular, for what concerns the form, conventions and the first-person accounts (1999, 3).

Why did 1960s authors decide to employ the same approach, form and conventions of antebellum slave narratives belonging to more than two hundred years prior? Why did they keep a connection with this genre to tell the story of African Americans and their ancestors? Rushdy outlines two major hypotheses.

Neo-slave narratives' authors chose to redress the improper use of slave narratives made in the sixties, with reference to White appropriation of African Americans' voice, as in Styron's novel. This still is a controversial issue in the U.S. discourse on cultural appropriation. In particular, Neo-slave narratives' authors were using their literary work with the same purpose slave narratives' authors had used theirs: to assert their agency and authority. Moreover, they were also able to affirm the power of African Americans' voices in literary works that had long been excluded from the academic attention (Rushdy, 1999, 6).

Secondly, they identified a connection between the prominence of race in the antebellum and Civil War era, and in the sixties, a moment in which Black subjectivity was increasingly gaining recognition. Therefore, authors wanted to use the same literary form to link the two periods of time, distant but at the same time very close to each other. Slave narratives were the "first form in which African American subjectivity was articulated". Neo-slave narrative authors demonstrated that the same genre could be employed in a modern reinterpretation of the same fundamental problems, concerning race and equality (Rushdy, 1999, 7).

The scholar Markus Nehl divides neo-slave narratives into two main categories: first generation and second generation neo-slave narratives. Nehl employs this division to highlight similarities and differences between the narratives written from the 1960s to the early 1990s (first generation) and the 21st century narratives (second generation). Toni Morrison is considered by Nehl as the pioneer and most famous writer of the first generation with her novel *Beloved* (1987). Morrison in her essay "The Site of Memory" argues that slave narratives were focused on creating a literary work addressed to a White audience, leading to a careful selection of the themes to include and to strategic silences. The writer believes that in neo-slave narratives it is necessary to move on from this tendency of the past in order to represent what had been concealed, such as female experiences of rape and the intimate and personal life of slaves, and to report everything that was too brutal to be disclosed in the earlier works. Morrison chooses to expose in detail the truth and the horrors of slavery, without having in mind an ideal audience that might become upset or susceptible when facing reality (Nehl, 2016, 31-32).

It is important to mention that slave narratives' authors did not entirely conceal the horrors of slavery, because many writers such as Douglass reported brutal episodes of violence, for example, Aunt Hester's whipping. However, White abolitionists and the White audience in general preferred not to be faced with brutal violence, and editors often tried to mitigate harsh occurrences to please their readers. Anim-Addo and Lima argue that censorship of slave narratives caused "silences" that neo-slave narrative authors should try to fill. In some cases, these gaps in history are irretrievable, however, authors can try and reimagine what happened to give voice to those who could not use theirs (2017, 3-4).

Nehl underlines that with regard to publishing opportunities, second generation neo-slave narratives had the advantage of coming after first generation ones, therefore, the struggles were fewer. Commercial success was almost granted considering the reception of the first generation that are nowadays still re-edited and widely famous. First generation authors had to deal with several obstacles, for example, finding a publisher. Sherley Anna Williams entered the fiction marketplace with her short stories and novels, as the celebrated *Dessa Rose* (1986), only after facing racial and gender discrimination in an editorial world dominated by White male authors. Plenty of publishers refused to publish the works of African Americans, and many others compelled writers to revise

their works in order to appeal and be acceptable to the White audience. Williams experienced this issue when she was forced to add an author's note as a premise of her neo-slave narrative to assure the reader of the fictional nature of her novel. It is clear that this practice leads us back to the conditions of antebellum writers whose authority was challenged (Nehl, 2016, 32-33).

From the first and second generation there has been a change in readership, with a wider audience interested in accessing second generation neo-slave narratives. Many of these literary works are being translated in several languages to make them accessible to different people around the world. Another crucial element of second generation neo-slave narratives is the authors' choice to connect the literary text with contemporary society and "contemporary discourses on the African diaspora and on the ethics of narration", for example, forms of systemic racism (Nehl, 2016, 34-35). Neo-slave narratives are written to explore and expose problems of the past in a contemporary way. Moreover, the issues which seem to be confined in the past are shown to be fairly diffused in the present. Therefore, neo-slave narratives unmask systemic inequality and racism, which have never been solved or addressed properly. These issues are the same that slave narratives' authors were presenting in their works, and have never ceased to influence Black people's lives (Anim-Addo & Lima, 2017, 7).

Will neo-slave narratives ever stop being written? It is very unlikely, as three centuries of chattel slavery were a tremendous crime against humanity, which still has not ceased to have an impact and "social, economic, and psychological wounds of slavery have been passed down through the generations, open wounds that remain raw and continue to fester" (Anim-Addo & Lima, 2017, 11).

The scholar Hazel Carby argues that there are three main reasons why authors keep going back to the slave narrative genre. Firstly, Carby claims that slave narratives stand at the basis of African American literary tradition, generating a continuous interest and relevance as a central element. Secondly, slave narratives portray a "prehistory" that explains current social issues. Thirdly, the pivotal element of the "ideology of the folk", the cultural folklore and traditions of the African American community, is central to the slavery experience and consequently to slave narratives, and has since been maintained in literary productions (quoted in Spaulding, 2005, 8).

Valerie Smith points out how the genre has developed into different literary productions that range from texts set in the antebellum slavery regime to those set in the Reconstruction era up to the present. The genre is articulated in various approaches to the institution of slavery. Some authors decide to set their novel on the historic ground using a realistic style, others opt for speculative fiction reaching satire or fantasy and science fiction dimensions. However, even if authors take different approaches on the same issue, they all revolve around the fundamental concept of the afterlife of slavery in contemporary times. Neo-slave narratives all deal with the legacy of slavery, trauma, the interrelated major themes of race and gender, the power of orality and literacy, the ambivalent role of religion, and freedom (2007, 168-169). Neo-slave narratives author's do not merely rewrite slave narratives. They add an important contribution to the review of history providing readers with a better understanding of slavery and the chance to heal from the residual horrors and consequences of it (Mitchell, 2002, 4).

2.2.1 Liberatory narratives: an interpretation of women-written neo-slave narratives

Not all scholars agree on the name given to the neo-slave narrative genre. Angelyn Mitchell prefers the term "liberatory narratives" to refer to women-written neo-slave narratives, as they are stories focusing on the quest for freedom rather than enslavement. In particular, she refers to five literary works produced in the 1980s-1990s: *Kindred* (1979) by Octavia E. Butler, *Dessa Rose* (1986) by Sherley Anne Williams, *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, *Family* (1992) by J. California Cooper, and *The Prince of a Child* (1995) by Lorene Cary. Some of these works have already been mentioned in this chapter as fundamental texts of the neo-slave narrative genre. Mitchell does not deny their status as descendants of slave narrative, but prefers to highlight their focus on freedom (2002, 3). Mitchell defines the liberatory narratives as "a contemporary novel that engages the historical period of chattel slavery in order to provide new models of liberation by problematizing the concept of freedom" (2002, 4). These narratives are not simply an evolution of slave narratives and a change in society. They represent a new call for freedom in a more complex way both in form and content from 18th and 19th century slave narratives. Liberatory narratives deeply analyze the protagonist's own self and their achievement of freedom, as the main character is well aware of their own value as an

autonomous self and fights to attain liberation. Racial enslavement is primarily refused in the naming of the genre, which leaves out the word "slave" as an identity that should not determine oneself. Sometimes they are also defined as "freedom narratives" or "emancipation narratives" all being synonyms (Beaulieu, 1999, 14). Mitchell, in her study *The Freedom to Remember: Narrative, Slavery and Gender in Contemporary Black Women's Fiction*, refuses to use the word "slave" substituting it with "enslaved Black/African American men/women". The scholar wants to underline how being a slave was not an identity, but a status attributed upon people who had no choice but to accept it, with the awareness that it was undermining their true identity. Enslaved people were self-conscious about their humanity, even though slaveholders and the American society tried to instill in them the established idea of their inhumanity. Mitchell includes in her categorization of liberatory narratives Black women-written productions, as she believes that these are the most representative of the contemporary revision of slavery and its articulation of the pursuit of freedom with regard to the Black female identity. These narratives are pivotal in providing a change in the reader's mind and perspective, presenting the history of slavery and its participants in a new way that characterizes them all as human beings, both men and women. The focus, however, is not only on the past, but also on the present consequences that slavery brings about, offering a chance to heal from racism and inequalities. In many cases, liberatory narratives present aspects of slavery history which were not considered, showing the reader more of the past reality in order to understand the present. Liberatory narratives aim at creating a parody of slave narratives, not in the sense of mocking, but of critically analyzing and questioning the past, offering a new critical perspective, different from the master narrative (Mitchell, 2002, 5-7). Instead of concentrating on the heroic triumphant male fugitive, they focus on enslaved mothers, who found their true freedom in relationships. Black women writers aim at giving relevance to these figures "creating subversive gender roles for these characters" and consequently restoring their womanhood and their heroic status (Beaulieu, 1999, 14-15). Beaulieu considers the renewal and revitalization of slave narratives as the most considerable advancement in late-twentieth century American literature, introducing a new discourse on race, gender and enslavement in the American literary field (1999, 143).

Mitchell also argues that the liberatory narrative genre, and more in general the neo-slave narrative genre, is so popular among writers, especially women, because of the compelling influence of slavery in the 20th and 21st centuries. Although slavery and segregation have *de iure* been abolished respectively in the 19th and 20th century, the consequences of these interrelated racializing systems are still pervading society. Moreover, women nowadays continue to be in a position of social inferiority compared to men, and this worsens for women of color, as the intersectionality theory explains. Black women face a more difficult experience because of the intersection of race and gender in the shaping of their life experience (Crenshaw, 1991, 1244). Not only are they discriminated against because they are women, but also because of their skin color, and this happened in slavery and post-slavery as well. Both men and women were objectified, however, women were in a worse condition a priori, as also outside of slavery they were considered inferior to men. This caused an even bigger gap in history on the conditions and experiences of Black women. If Black men were able to reach emancipation, and tell their stories in slave narratives, women had more difficulties in doing so. This is evident in the number of literary productions showing that most slave narratives were written by men, compared to the fewer written by women. It was not typical for women to tell their story, as they were not seen as heroic individuals as former slave men were. Women had to be the "perfect wives" and the American society did not take pride in seeing women's narrative, unlike men's narratives, which were celebrated and highly used by abolitionists to support their cause (Morgan, 1994, 90). This presumably connects to the fact that abolitionists had to convince and influence men of power in order to make a change. Women were not allowed the same rights as men were, therefore, they could not participate in politics as they did not have the right to vote until 1920 with the 19th amendment. Moreover, women enjoyed less reliance in the patriarchal society. Male-written slave narratives were seen as recalls of triumph runaways, while women narratives were considered merely in terms of victimization (Morgan, 1994, 90).

Black women writers aim at using fiction to "recover a usable past" from the narrative of exploitation and censorship against enslaved women. They were silenced and had their true feelings barely preserved in a limited number of testimonies, often influenced and adapted to the social conventions of the time (Mitchell, 2002, 17). With their work of restoration, Black women authors are pioneers in challenging the silence

enforced on slavery (Beaulieu, 1999, 137). They are a necessary and essential component in telling these stories, as American literature needs their testimony to not be lacking in its composition, because their contribution enhances the literary canon (Beaulieu, 1999, 147-149). As Toni Morrison argues in her essay "The Site of Memory", she is willing to fill the gaps of slave narratives by removing "the veil" placed upon their stories (1995, 94). Unfortunately, slave narratives' authors "were silent about many things, and they 'forgot' many other things" because of conventions and expectations imposed upon them (Morrison, 1995, 91). This has resulted in blanks in their history that also comprehend the exclusion of personal and intimate life recalls, which are deeply focused on in the neo-slave narrative genre. Morrison feels that her duty as a writer is to "rip that veil drawn over 'proceeding too terrible to relate'" and to finally give a comprehensive voice to stories that have only partially been told (1995, 91).

Morrison aims at using the strategy of slavery as a "site of memory" accompanied by imagination, employing the past as a source to understand the present and project the future. This is precisely the purpose of liberatory narratives, who are to be used as a "site of memory" in their function of "allowing its readers to go beyond the events of slavery into the feelings and thoughts of the people who imaginatively had the experience" (Mitchell, 2002, 17). Characters featured in liberatory narratives are mostly fictional, or to be more specific, they are often inspired by real figures of the past, but they take shape through their writers' mediation who explore and construct their lives. The liberatory narrative allows its readers to analyze the United States' past in a way that connects to the present and creates a higher knowledge of why society and life are the way they are, disregarding the hegemonic master narrative and reclaiming history. Black women writers claim their ancestor's past, recognizing its power in the shaping of history and society, they advocate "the need for the black woman to allow her heritage to empower her" creating women of resistance both in their novels, and as a result of who reads them as well (Beaulieu, 1999, 154-157). Their stories help fight against Black women's marginalization, giving the chance to find pride and power in their ancestors, contesting the perpetuation of stereotypes (Beaulieu, 1999, 155). A striking example of how this process of interrelation between the past and present takes place is found in *Kindred* by Octavia E. Butler, where the two dimensions of time dialogue with one another in portraying the differences and similarities of the life of an 19th enslaved Black woman

and a 20th century free Black woman (Mitchell, 2002, 17-18). The protagonist reveals secrets of the past and at the same time is able to define her present and future (Beaulieu, 1999, 142).

2.3 Octavia Estelle Butler's Life and Works

Octavia Estelle Butler (1947-2006) was born on June 22, 1947 in Pasadena, California to Laurice and Octavia M. Butler as an only child. Her father, a shoe shiner, died when she was three, therefore, Butler was raised by her mother and grandmother. During her childhood and teenage years, she lived in the mixed neighborhood of a city that was de facto segregated. As a child she recalls accompanying her mother who worked in wealthy White people's homes as a maid, and having to access through the back door because of their skin color (Rothberg, 2021).

During her school years Butler struggled with dyslexia and her teachers, at the Pasadena public school, considered her a lazy and unenthusiastic student because of her learning difficulties. However, Butler managed to get through her dyslexia and eventually found a passion in reading and writing, defining her local library as her "second home". She discovered her passion for science fiction at nine years old, after watching the 1954 movie *Devil Girl from Mars*, deciding to write stories based on this genre. She found science fiction interesting, enjoying hearing and reading about it, making it the focus of her literary production. Butler is very careful about distinguishing between science fiction and fantasy, two literary genres that are often confused. The essential difference lies in the fact that science fiction is based on science and uses it to explain events in its plots, whereas fantasy does not give rational reasons for facts that deviate from the laws of our reality (Rowell, 1997, 55). Butler began taking her literary production more seriously when at thirteen years old one of her school teachers recognized her talent and passion for science fiction, encouraging her to submit her short stories to a science fiction magazine (Rothberg, 2021).

In 1968 Butler graduated from Pasadena City College with an Associate's Degree, and later on continued to specialize in writing by taking classes at California State University and afterwards at the University of California, both located in Los Angeles. Alongside with her writing specialization she persisted in studying various disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, physics, biology, and geology. To sustain herself

during her first years of writing, she worked a series of diversified jobs, until the publishing of her first novel in 1976, the first book of the *Patternist* trilogy, that later on became a collection of five novels. The series narrates the life of a society of telepaths, who attempt at creating a superhuman race, and includes the following novels: *Patternmaster*, *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Survivor* (1978), *Wild Seed* (1980), and *Clay's Ark* (1984). Four years later, in 1979, Butler published *Kindred*, her most popular novel, that I will analyze in depth in the next paragraph of this chapter (Becker & Curtright, 2004, 2).

Among her science fiction literary works, we find the *Xenogenesis* trilogy that she began to write in 1987 and concluded in 1989, including: *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989). The trilogy is set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans are near extinction after a destructive war which destroyed the vast majority of the Earth. The three novels were published in the single volume *Lilith's Brood* in the year 2000. In 1993 Butler published *Parable of the Sower* and in 1998 its sequel: *Parable of the Talents*. The first novel focuses on the young Black woman Lauren Olamina living in post-apocalyptic 21st century Los Angeles. The protagonist creates the Earthseed faith that in the second novel will have a central role in trying to save humanity. A third novel was planned to create a trilogy, however, it has never been written due to a writer's block. Butler's last novel was published in 2005, the year before her death, with the title of *Fledgling*, following the theme of diversity explored in *Parable of the Sower* in the context of a vampire story (Becker & Curtright, 2004, 2).

Butler has been awarded many prestigious prizes for her works. She won a Hugo Award twice, first for her short story "Speech Sounds" in 1984 and later in 1985 for her novella *Bloodchild*, which also won the Nebula Awards. In 1995 she was the first science fiction writer to be awarded a McArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant, which economically sustained her for five years. Finally, in 2000 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award in Writing from the PEN American Center and in 2005 the City College of New York's Langston Hughes Medal (Rothberg, 2021). Butler suddenly died in Seattle on February 24, 2006 outside of her house, without a determined cause, that is believed might be a stroke (Rothberg, 2021).

Butler's mother and grandmother were fundamental figures in her life. She was named after both of them, her first name was the same as her mother's, Octavia Margaret,

and her second name was that of her grandmother's Estella. Her grandmother Estella was born in Louisiana and worked in the fields as a sugar cane chopper alongside with being a laundry woman for her own family and the White families for whom she worked. Butler recognizes the difficult conditions that her grandmother had to endure and affirms that her death at fifty-nine was no surprise after a long life of hard work. Estella had seven children among which Octavia Margaret in 1914, the eldest daughter. The family decided to move to California because of racial segregation at the beginning of the 1920s while their children were still young. In fact, in the area where they lived in Louisiana there were no schools for Black children, therefore, they could not get an education if they had stayed there. Octavia's mother was already seven or eight years old when she had the chance to begin school, and she was admitted to third grade because of her age, making her face the school system without any prior knowledge. Octavia Margaret always felt inferior compared to her classmates because of her level of education. She stayed in school for three years in order to gather a basic education and then was sent to work. This happened because she was the oldest daughter, therefore, she was sacrificed and denied the chance to continue school to start working and help sustain the family economically, unlike her older brother who continued school. This is also the reason why Butler's mother worked her whole life as a maid, alongside the fact that she was Black. Butler in an interview states that she researched the life of her ancestors alongside with that of her mother and grandmother, discovering she would not have wanted to live like them, because of the difficult and terrible conditions they had to endure (Rowell, 1997, 50). As she grew up, Butler understood what it meant to be a Black woman in the U.S. in the 20th century, in a factual segregated environment. When she was young she used to accompany her mother as she worked in White people's houses, and as she got older she understood that Octavia Margaret had to withstand White people's behavior and inappropriate comments, without reacting in order to preserve her job and be able to sustain her family (Rowell, 1997, 51). Octavia Butler was aware of what her mother, grandmother and ancestors had to go through during their lives, and she understood to be grateful for the chances she had growing up, thanks to their sacrifices.

While in college at Pasadena City College, Butler had an important experience, which instilled in her the idea for the neo-slave narrative *Kindred*. In the context of the Black Power Movement that was beginning to spread among young students, she had an

interaction with a Black male peer who condemned his ancestors for their behavior. He believed that Black people's contemporary status was to be blamed on their actions in the past and their endurance of subalternity and inferiority, saying: "I'd like to kill all these old people who have been holding us back for so long. But I can't because I'd have to start with my own parents." (Rowell, 1997, 51). Butler explains that with the words "old people" and "us" he was referring to Blacks and their efforts to survive slavery first and segregation later. This young man was not able to understand that what Black people had done was necessary to survive just like Butler's mother had done, and not a source of shame and anger as he intended it (Rowell, 1997, 51). In *Kindred* Butler wanted to use the knowledge she acquired on how her peers saw their ancestors' struggle, to show what life was really like in the antebellum era. In fact, the protagonist, Dana, does not have complete awareness of Blacks' struggles in the past and time traveling multiple times she is forced to live as a Black woman in a 19th century plantation (Kenan, 1991, 496).

2.4 *Kindred*: Origins, Genre and Major Themes

The neo-slave narrative *Kindred* was written by Octavia E. Butler in 1979 to make her contemporaries understand and reflect upon how life was during slavery. *Kindred* is the story of a 20th century Black woman, who without an explanation goes back in time to 19th century enslaved Maryland. Dana, the protagonist, finds herself as the hero of her own story and ancestry, as she needs to guarantee her ancestor's survival in order to ensure her own survival. Her continuous travels back in time create in her a new consciousness and maturity, alongside permanent physical and psychological scars. She confronts a society in which Blacks had no rights or freedoms, learning how they endured slavery and how to reach personal freedom in a caged environment. Dana becomes friends with most of the enslaved people she encounters, creating a web of mutual help and solidarity. Butler challenges her protagonist's life even more, as she gives her a White husband, who is not accepted either by her relatives in the present or by the enslaved society of the past, where interracial marriages were illegal. Dana learns how to cope with being regarded as the lowest rung in the hierarchy of human beings during slavery, and with her controversial past.

Butler's final aim is to bring pride to anybody who is Black and suffered a past of enslavement, which should not be regarded as shameful (Kenan, 1991, 496). In a similar

manner to what happened to Butler herself when she did not understand why her mother endured abusive White people's behavior, or when her classmate declared to hate his parents and Blacks as a whole for not adequately rebelling against exploitation and segregation, Dana does not acknowledge her privilege in the 1970s, and "has no historical awareness" (Beaulieu, 1999, 118). She takes for granted her rights and freedoms and does not recognize what of the past persists in the present, as she blindly accepts the master narrative told by the dominant side of the United States (Scacchi, 2013, 318).

At the beginning Dana enters 1815 Maryland with boldness, for example, in judging the house-slave Sarah as someone who chose safety over rebellion because she was afraid to challenge the system and the position to which she was assigned. With the continuation of the novel Dana understands that Sarah had accepted her status to ensure her daughter's survival, therefore, being courageous and rebellious in her own way. Dana herself understands how difficult it is to escape when she tries to run away and is recaptured and brutally whipped as a punishment. In the end, Dana becomes more similar to Sarah than she had thought, recognizing what the woman endures and learning to do the same to ensure her and her own bloodline survival. Dana also tries to pass on her acquired knowledge, trying to convince Alice not to escape, as Sarah had done with her at the beginning of her journey (Scacchi, 2013, 318-319).

During her trips Dana realizes that the knowledge she had of the past was not adequate, being a "sanitized version" produced ad hoc by the media (Crossley, 2003, 276). The reports on slavery and the plantations created by the popular *Gone with the Wind*, or any movie featuring slavery, are insufficient and deficient in representing the truth. Dana has a "false sense of security" derived from her historical knowledge and education. During her stay in Maryland she finds herself comfortable in the cookhouse, where slaves usually gather undisturbed. She witnesses young kids eating there, and she compares this with other accounts of slavery describing littler kids being fed similarly to pigs. Dana is referring to an episode from the fifth chapter of Douglass' *Narrative*, and is glad to see that in Weylin's cookhouse and plantation this does not happen. Crossley explains that Dana's perception of safety and humanity in the cookhouse is soon disregarded when she is caught by Tom Weylin as she is teaching Nigel how to read (Butler, 1979, 106). The security of the cookhouse, never visited by Whites, breaks and Dana is brutally whipped, until she travels back to the present (2003, 277).

Kindred does not fall in the science fiction genre, very dear to the author and predominant in her novels. Butler declared in multiple interviews that *Kindred* is not science fiction as there is no science featured, but a neo-slave narrative which uses fantasy. Some might associate it with science fiction because of time travel, however, Butler explains that there is no time machine or any scientific explanation for the time travel, therefore, this novel cannot be considered as science fiction. Moreover, the story is not focused on understanding how the travel takes place, because it is seen as a device to get to the real focus of the novel, a 20th century Black woman that experiences life on a 19th century Maryland plantation (Kenan, 1991, 496). Butler explained that *Kindred* is not part of science fiction in multiple interviews and in one in particular she declared that when she was ready to publish it she had difficulties, because it falls outside of the typical genre she tackled. She could not find a publishing house ready to accept it, because "They didn't know what it was, so they didn't want it", and this might be partially related also to the novelty of the neo-slave narrative genre, which was at its dawn in 1979 (Schweitzer, 2022).

Kindred represents a combination of genres, creating a stylistic hybridity composed of fantasy on one side, and neo-slave narrative on the other. Time travel is representative of the fantasy nature of the novel, since it is not explained how it happens and it is an unrealistic device. The 1815 Maryland sections, on the other hand, are examples of the neo-slave narrative. They take as their foundation the salient slave narratives episodes and structure, alongside a psychological insight on the experience of slavery and a deeper account of its horrors. It is evident that Douglass' and Jacobs' slave narratives stand at the base of many events, such as the brutal whippings, the runaway, the importance of literacy and the sexual violence perpetrated by masters against enslaved women (Elia, 2019, 23). The protagonist herself, Dana, experiences severe whippings on two occasions: after she is discovered in the act of teaching a young slave how to read, and after she is caught attempting to escape the plantation.

Literacy is an important theme in the novel, not because it benefits Dana at escaping, as she is already literate coming from the 20th century, but because she can use it to write fake permits that might save her own or her friends' lives. Moreover, she tries to teach how to read and write to Nigel, and later on Carrie, two young slaves that in her opinion should acquire literacy in hope for a better future. Literacy, however, turns into

a negative tool when Dana is deemed dangerous because of it, and therefore highly despised by the Weylins. Rufus uses literacy against her, when he forces her to be his scribe. Dana detests writing for other people since being in school to become a secretary and later on when Kevin, her husband, expected her to write for him as he does not like to do so himself.

Finally, sexual abuses are central to the novel because Dana needs to ensure Alice's sexual relationship with Rufus in order to preserve her bloodline from being erased from history. Dana is called on to convince her friend Alice to give herself to Rufus, otherwise he will take her by force. This is not the only episode in *Kindred* featuring sexual abuse. Butler describes the life of the slave Tess who is forced to be Tom Weylin's mistress and until he gets tired of her she is allowed to work in the house. However, later on in the novel she is sent to the fields, and feels she is treated like an old dog (Butler, 1979, 181). As soon as Tess begins working in the fields she becomes the overseer's mistress, who exploits her both during the day and at night. During the story she continues to be abused by Edward, the overseer, and after Tom Weylin dies she is sold. Dana suggests that she might have been sold because she had no children, therefore, she did not add any value in terms of new workforce to the plantation, or that Margaret Weylin might have wanted to take revenge on her for being her husband's mistress in the past (Butler, 1979, 221). Rufus explains that Tess was sold because of his father's decision when he was still alive, giving credit to the hypothesis of being barren. Anyhow, what is important from this episode is the way in which this woman is treated (Butler, 1979, 225). She is sold in spite of after having had a sort of emotional attachment to the master, who decided to dispose of her anyway. This shows how meaningless a slave was to a White person in the antebellum South.

At the beginning of the drafting, Butler wanted to use a male protagonist, however, she soon realized that it would not make the story realistic in terms of survival. A 20th century man sent to a 19th century plantation would not know how to behave properly and would have been killed before he could adapt to submission and learn how to act because he would be perceived as dangerous. On the other hand, a female character might as well be dangerous, but surely would not be perceived as so in a society in which women had no right and were at the mercy of men. Hence, a woman would be considered controllable and less dangerous, compared to a man and would have survived in the plantation system.

A woman would be beaten and raped, but probably would not be killed, as it happened to Dana, the protagonist (Rowell, 1991, 51).

Adriano Elia argues that sending Dana, an emancipated Black woman, to the antebellum South is an important political statement to obtain a reaction from the reader. In a deeper sense, Dana undergoes a terrible and profound trauma when she is forced to live in a reality where slavery is the canon and not an obscured and concealed wound of the past. Following Dana's story, the readership is placed in a difficult position because it has to face the reality of slavery for what it really was and accept the true narrative of what happened (2019, 20-21). During the voyage back in time the protagonist experiences the lives of enslaved people, she encounters them, becomes their companion and friend, shares her feelings with them and sees them as real people rather than words printed on a white page (Crossley, 2003, 270). Dana and her readers are forced to accept the existence of enslaved people through this neo-slave narrative, and to acknowledge them as figures of the past who suffered unspeakable horrors that need to be told in order for future generations to understand the past and the present. This narrative contributes to a "recovery of historical and psychological realities" through the use of literary fantasy (Crossley, 2003, 271). In addition to that, enslavement as a 20th century woman seems even more absurd, because other than not realizing how terrible the conditions were, Dana does not believe that such violence can exist. Dana has to deal with physical and psychological violence. The whippings, beatings and the patroller's aggression culminate in the loss of her left arm on her last trip home. Rufus holds her arm in the past, meaning that she comes back missing a part of her body, which indicates more than that. Dana leaves something in the past as she spent more than a year in different segments of time creating relationships and coming to consider Maryland as her home. However, at the same time, as Butler explains, her lost arm symbolizes the trauma that slavery leaves in people. Dana is not the woman she was before her first trip to the 19th century, she is different. She discovered and understood what slavery was like, and will be marked by this experience for the rest of her life (Kenan, 1991, 498). In the Epilogue of the novel Dana and her husband Kevin take a trip to Maryland, to try and find evidence and proof of their voyages in the past, but also to try and find closure for the traumatic experiences they had to endure. They encounter an environment very different from the past and they attempt to understand what happened after Dana killed Rufus right before coming back

definitively to the present. They leaf through old newspaper articles and they are able to find an article which bears witness to a fire at the Weylin plantation on the day of Rufus' assassination. In addition to that, they discover information on the selling of Weylin's slaves, noticing that not all their friends' names were on the lists. Dana feels terribly guilty for the fate of her slave friends, as once their master Rufus was killed part of them were sold, while others were not recorded in the archives, therefore, we do not know what happened to them, possibly the were able to escape and have a life of their own. Kevin urges Dana to stop worrying about the past, and they both realize that their trip was necessary and essential to get a final closure of an experience that will forever be part of their identity, similarly to the relics of slavery still shaping African Americans and U.S. society.

2.4.1 *Kindred*'s dynamic structure: a dialogue between 1815 and 1976

Dana (Edana) Franklin is a Black 26-year-old African American woman, who at the beginning of the novel just moved in with her White husband Kevin. She lost her parents at a very young age and was taken care of by her aunt and uncle, who encouraged her to become a secretary, a very similar hope to that of Butler's mother. Dana does not want to follow the career path determined by her relatives, because she desires to become a successful writer. Like Butler did, Dana follows some extensive writing classes in college and to sustain herself works the most disparate jobs. For example, when Dana and Kevin meet, they are both working for a labor agency at an auto-parts warehouse. In an interview with Schweitzer, Butler declared that she used her personal life as an inspiration for some of Dana's characteristics, such as the jobs at which she is employed during her early years (2002).

Dana and Kevin conduct the "normal" life of an interracial couple in 1976 United States. The couple is shamed and dishonored by its closest relatives who do not accept their union, in addition to the mocking they undergo at their workplace, where they are called insulting names such as "Chocolate and vanilla porn" and "the weirdest-looking couple" (1979, 56-57). On June 9, 1976, the couple is unpacking in their new apartment in Los Angeles, on Dana's 26th birthday, when she suddenly feels sick and in a vortex of dizziness she finds herself on a riverbank, hearing a child screaming and realizing he is

drowning. This is Dana's first time traveling to Maryland 1815, where she encounters her great-grandfather Rufus Weylin.

Throughout the novel Dana is transported back to the antebellum South six times, and in one occasion she accidentally brings along her husband Kevin. The journeys last a variable amount of time, from a few minutes as in the first time travel, to several months. The double settings of the novel, 1976 Los Angeles and 1815 Maryland, do not proceed equally in temporal terms, as the time she spends in the past is not matched in the present. For example, a few months in the past correspond to a few hours in the present. Therefore, Dana is almost the same age throughout the narrative, meanwhile Rufus at the beginning is a little child and at the end has grown to be a 25-year-old man, likewise all the other characters who also age. The time travels happen whenever her ancestor Rufus "calls" her because of life-threatening situations in which he could die. Dana's role is to save him and ensure the continuation of her bloodline, in particular, the birth of Hagar, the daughter of Rufus and Alice, whose name is found by the protagonist inscribed in the family Bible. Hagar Weylin Black, her grandmother, had built a family recount of their ancestors, however, failing to mention that her father was a white slaveholder of the South. This information is unexpected for Dana, who will need to accept her troubled past and to actively engage in its realization. Rushdy defines Dana's discovery of her white ancestor as the unveiling of a family secret, leading her to the acceptance of her own Black ancestry with pride, but also the knowledge of having a White ancestor (2001, 100).

The six chapters of which the novel is composed reflect the six voyages to the past. Each chapter begins with Dana in her home in Los Angeles, and later on she is called back to the past, where she has to handle an issue, represented by the chapter's titles. The first chapter, "The River", refers to the river in which Rufus is almost drowning and from which Dana rescues and revives him. The second, "The Fire", alludes to the fire provoked by Rufus on the house draperies that Dana needs to extinguish. The third, "The Fall", pertains to Rufus' fall from a tree due to which he breaks his leg. The fourth, "The Fight", refers to the quarrel between Rufus and Alice's husband, Isaac Jackson, who defends his and his wife's honor after Rufus had raped her. Dana needs to prevent Isaac from killing him, consequently saving her ancestor even though she despises him for his actions. The fifth, "The Storm", alludes to a terrible storm in which Rufus almost dies as he is drunk and unconscious on the ground with his face in a pool of water. The last chapter, "The

Rope", is slightly different from the previous ones. This section does not refer to a situation of danger in which Rufus is dealing with a rope, but to Alice's suicide. She hanged herself with a rope in the barn, leading Rufus to desperation and the threat to harm himself.

Dana is not able to control her departure from the present, but is somehow able to understand, with the passing of time, how to escape from the past. In fact, whenever she finds herself, or puts herself, in a dangerous situation she is brought back to the 20th century. The system of return benefits Dana, but also condemns her to almost fatal episodes, for example, when Tom Weylin brutally whips her after he discovered her teaching a slave literacy or when she cuts her wrists to escape a reality she cannot withstand anymore. The journeys to the past end once she kills the reason why she is called back in time, Rufus. However, in doing so she permanently loses her left arm. Robert Crossley connects Dana's time travel to the Middle Passage voyage of her ancestors. She suffers a disorienting and terrible involuntary movement through space and time, similar to that of enslaved Black people, who were deported from their home country to exploitative plantations (2003, 268).

The choice of both the time periods and locations are not causal. 1976 is the year of the United States' Bicentenary, the celebration of the independence from England, the birth of a nation which saw itself as more promising and a cradle of freedoms. However, two centuries later, segregation was still widespread, and American citizens were divided into unofficial hierarchies of importance and legitimization. It is not casual that Butler placed Dana's final return to the present on July 4, 1976, the exact date of the Bicentenary celebration. The writer wanted to highlight the "inherent contradictions" of American history (Mitchell, 2002, 44). The protagonist deals with the festivity with a new consciousness and understanding of both the past and the present (Crossley, 2003, 276). However, Dana does not have time to celebrate the Fourth of July, because when she is about to be convinced by Kevin and some of their friends to leave the house and go and see the fireworks, the dizziness grips her and she is transported back to the past. Once Dana comes back to 1976 Los Angeles, the day has not yet concluded, but for her it does terminate as she faints because of her amputated arm connected to the wall. There is no chance for Dana to celebrate the National festivity. This cannot but be a conscious choice on Butler's part, as a protest against a day in which the greatness of a country is

celebrated, hiding a reality which is rather problematic. With her new awareness Dana would probably not be as festive as she was previously in her life, because she experienced slavery, and she gained a better understanding of her present. This recalls Douglass' "Fourth of July" speech of 1852, where he portrays the festive day as a celebration for Whites, rather than for the whole citizenship of the United States, denouncing the lack of freedom suffered by Black people, alongside with the issue of slavery. Crossley argues that Butler's choice of the time travels beginning on the date of the protagonist's birthday and ending on Independence Day, is made to link Dana's birthday with the nation's birthday. This is done to connect "individual consciousness with social history" and to make the reader reflect "on the relationships between personal and political identities", how someone's experience is mirrored in the society and vice versa (2003, 276).

On the other hand, 19th century Maryland is chosen as the setting of the slavery plot, because it is often not remembered as a Southern state enforcing slavery, even though it was below the Mason-Dixon line. This is the demarcation line established by the astronomers C. Mason and J. Dickson in the 1760s along the 39° latitude to define the border between Pennsylvania and Maryland. Later on in the antebellum era, the Mason-Dixon line was employed to divide between the free northern states and the southern slave states. This is also Douglass and Harriet Tubman's state of birth from which they both escaped, emancipating themselves. Mitchell argues that Butler's choice of Maryland has been made to show the reader how widespread, terrible and brutal slavery was, even in the states not within the deep South, demonstrating how exploitation was terrible and inhumane everywhere in the United States (2002, 44-45).

2.4.2 A journey between the past and the present: Alice vs. Dana

Butler establishes an even stronger connection between the two centuries by creating a doubling of the protagonist: her great-grandmother Alice Greenwood (Mitchell, 2002, 46). Dana and Alice physically look alike and are considered by Rufus as "Two halves of a whole" because of the role they play in his life (1979, 257). Alice explains that she is the woman Rufus likes "in bed", meanwhile Dana is the woman he likes "out of bed" (1979, 228). However, there is a fundamental difference between them. Alice is an enslaved free-born 19th-century Black woman, meanwhile Dana is a free

emancipated 20th-century woman, who needs to condone and facilitate her great-grandmother's sexual abuse in order to preserve her bloodline.

Differently from Alice, Dana maintains her sexuality under her own control, not letting another person choose a partner for her. Both in 1976 and in 1815 she remains an "empowered agent [..] (who) acts of her own volition" (Mitchell, 2002, 46). In the present she chooses to marry Kevin, a White man despised by her closest relative, who condemns her for her choice. Dana's uncle reacts heavily to her marriage announcement, disinheriting her from his real estate, as he desires a Black man for her (1979, 112). Mitchell argues that their bond as wife and husband becomes even stronger once he is transported to the past with her on her third trip, as he places his hand on her before she leaves the present time. During their time travel together Dana returns back to the present alone because of Tom Weylin brutally whipping, leaving Kevin in the 19th century for five years. The separation only lasts eight days for Dana, while five years for Kevin. However, as soon as is brought back to Maryland she is determined to find her husband. Rufus tries to prevent their reunification because he is jealous of their bond, and thinks that if Dana did not have her husband in the present waiting for her, she would stay in the past with him.

During their trip to the past, when they are together, Dana and Kevin act as slave and master, in order to preserve her from being sold or employed in hard jobs. However, with the passing of time, people around them notice that they have a particular bond. They attempt to maintain a close relationship in the Weylin plantation, for example, carving out some intimate and private time both outside and inside the house. Inside the house they sleep in Kevin's room to preserve their marriage and Dana's sexual integrity. This strategy turns their relationship from a legal marriage in the 20th century, to a secret relationship between a master and his concubine, implying that she is his property. Interracial marriages were prohibited until 1967, when they were legalized in compliance with a decision of the Supreme Court. Therefore, in 1815 the protagonist's marriage was invalid. When they reunite, after their five years' separation, they are able to return to the present as Rufus shoots at them to convince Dana to not leave him, and when they get home she initiates a sexual act. The sexual intercourse is considered by Mitchell as "an act of liberation" in confirming their return to 1976, but also Dana's reclaiming of her

sexuality, as she "assumes complete control over her sexuality" and does not suffer a traumatic experience as it happens to Alice (2002, 47).

However, there are two episodes in the novel in which Dana's body is threatened sexually. The first occurs during Dana's second trip when she seeks refuge in Alice's mother's cabin and she is attacked by a patroller who tries to rape her. The second episode happens at the end of the novel when Rufus obliges her to become his mistress and to take Alice's role in his life after she hanged herself. She is called to become "The two halves of a whole" that Alice and Dana represent. However, she firmly refuses to let Rufus determine her destiny and she escapes the attempt of rape by killing him (1979, 257). Rufus has exceeded the limits of their relationship and of Dana's personal freedom, which she does not condone since the beginning, as for example, when she explains to Kevin that she is not a piece of property, "a horse or a sack of wheat" (Mitchell, 2002, 50). Rufus' combination of the two women can be interpreted alongside the "monolithic way of defining Black female identity" without any attention to their individuality and subjectivity, alongside the depersonalization and dehumanization of slave subjects (Mitchell, 2002, 51).

Dana is able to save her body from sexual assault, however, other women in the novel do not have this chance. In *Kindred* several Black women are endangered in their sexuality. The violation of women's bodies and sexuality is not limited to rape, and molestations, because it is reflected also in their relationships and in their roles as mothers. Alice's mother is an example of a free woman who is not free in her relationships because she is married to an enslaved man. The couple does not have the freedom to live together and whenever they want to meet he needs to bear a pass. In the beginning of the novel Alice's father is caught by a forerunner of Ku Klux Klan and beaten because he is outside of the plantation without a permit. It was in Weylin's interest to prosecute him as he is involved in a relationship with a freewoman, and this means that his children were not automatically slaves, as breeding followed the *partus sequitur ventrem* law, meaning that children acquired their mother's status (Scacchi, 2013, 309). Enslaved black women were seen as "beasts of burden" without any right on their bodies, and with the only duty to bear children and to work in the fields (Mitchell, 2002, 48). Because of that, Weylin urges Alice's father to take a new woman in the plantation and to have children with her, rather than with a free woman on whom he does not have any rights.

Even though Alice is obliged to give herself to a man she does not love, she demonstrates to bear self-awareness of her own body and identity, similarly to Dana. The woman is proud of her freedom, and once she is enslaved in the Weylin's plantation she highly suffers her condition. Moreover, she determines her love life, marrying an enslaved man she loves, and refusing Rufus' advances until she is forced to accept him as her sexual partner. Alice fights until the end to save her illegal marriage with Isaac, after Rufus raped her, leading to a fight between the two men. As slaves they were not allowed to legally get married, but they still decide to try and have a life together, even though being aware that Rufus is potentially looking for them, and that they are in the wrong for having attacked a White man. They escape towards the North, until they are caught by dogs and patrollers and brutally beaten. Isaac's ears are mutilated before he is sold South, and Alice is purchased by Rufus, who finally owns her body, but will never be able to own her spirit. She resists him until she dies, never desiring him as a partner as he does, and never forgiving him for his act. Alice resents Rufus for her life as an enslaved woman who was once a freewoman, and is never able to trust him, not even when they have four children together, as she continues to feel like a concubine. Alice wishes to have enough inner strength to kill Rufus and never ceases to secretly plot her escape. She runs away after the birth of her last child, Hagar, believing that death would be preferable to enslavement if they get caught (Mitchell, 2002, 51-52). In the end, Alice perishes because of the difficult situation of resistance in which Rufus places her. He takes away her children, refusing to bring them back when she gets seriously ill, leading to her death. Alice prefers to kill herself, in an act of proud resistance, rather than keep living in a household where she is continuously threatened and unhappy.

Another element that links Alice and Dana is motherhood. Alice is mother to four children, two of whom die at a young age due to improper medical care, meanwhile Dana does not have children of her own, but she assumes the role of mother towards both Alice and Rufus. She nurtures Alice after her escape with Isaac, as she is reduced to a state of infantry because of the physical and psychological trauma she experienced. Dana feeds her, treats her injuries and dog bites, guiding her towards a rebirth as an adult. Alice even refers to her as her mother during her convalescence, and learns from her how to regain her abilities. After her recovery their relationship becomes more similar to that of two sisters who can count on each other. An example is that of when Alice reveals her

escaping plan and asks Dana to provide her with the necessary to leave the plantation with her newborn.

Dana can use her role as a mother to give advice to Alice and Rufus, helping them to make better decisions for their life. On the contrary, Alice suffers her role as a mother, because her children become weapons in her conflict with Rufus. He uses them to threaten her and convince her to do as he pleases, turning them into the object of his blackmails (Mitchell, 2002, 53). Their relationship culminates towards the end of the novel, when Alice expects Rufus to free their children. Equally to what he always does, he believes that she has to earn his favor before freeing them, sending them to Baltimore to "punish her, scare her". This leads to Alice's death, which is not an act of submission but a choice of freedom (1979, 251). Alice is more powerful than her owner because she chooses to end her terrible life and to comply with her will, leaving him alone and punishing him for his actions (Mitchell, 53-54). Alice is not free in her role of mother, because she cannot choose her children's life, nor raise them as she pleases. She is always blackmailed with her children used against her, turning her experience as a mother into an agony. She needs to plot an escape and later on her death to try and live as a free woman, and as a free mother, and she is deprived of the joy of living peacefully with her children. Motherhood was never free during slavery. White slaveholders always interfered in its implementation. This happens also with Sarah's three sons, who were sold to buy new china for Margaret Weylin or with mothers who could not take care of their children because of the countless hours they had to spend working in the plantation, leaving their kids to the so-called "othermother" (Scacchi, 2013, 314). An example is old Aunt Mary, who lives in the Weylin plantation, and being too old for fieldwork is assigned the care of little children whose mothers are employed in the fields.

On the other hand, Dana behaves like a guardian, a "surrogate mother" towards Rufus, whom she meets as a little child and tries to raise as a tolerant future slaveholder (Beaulieu, 1999, 120). Beaulieu argues that Dana's maternal guidance upon Rufus will allow her to undergo a personal rebirth in the end of the narrative, in the aftermath of her journey in Maryland. (1999, 120)

When they first meet in Weylin's house he refers to her with the derogatory term "nigger" and she tries to teach him that it is a despicable word, hoping that he will grow to be a better person with regards to slaves (1979, 25). Dana begins to refer to him with

the tender nickname "Rufe" and she tries to protect him from his father's bad temper helping him to extinguish the fire and hide any evidence.

Rufus' parents are practically absent in his life. His father Tom Weylin believes him to be stupid and most of the time is bothered by his child's presence. Weylin uses violence to instill dominance and rigor in his son, but also with regards to his wife. Rufus unfortunately adopts his father's behavior towards his mother, treating her badly because he feels legitimized by his father and later on in life behaves likewise towards Dana. Both Tom and Rufus believe Blacks and women to be inferior, therefore, at the mercy of their decisions and will. Margaret Weylin, on the other hand, treats Rufus as an eternal child, suffocating him with her superficial attentions, without listening to his needs. She wants to protect him from Dana, mostly because she notices how much his son likes her, becoming jealous of her and trying everything to distance them. Moreover, Margaret is scared of Dana from their first encounter, as she cannot understand how she appears unexpectedly in their life. Tom Weylin is also afraid of Dana, mostly because she is a literate slave, and because he believes she might be some sort of supernatural creature. (Beaulieu, 1999, 123-124). Margaret changes her attitude towards Dana only at the end of the novel, as she is old and mentally ill, and wants to be assisted exclusively by her, employing her as her personal companion and reader.

Ultimately, Dana fails in her mission to render Rufus a more "humane slaveholder [..] (as he is) undermined by familial and societal norms that are stronger and have a greater impact on shaping Rufus' day-to-day life" (Beaulieu, 1999, 126). She has tried to nurture him, but in the end he is responsible for his own actions and choices. During her final journey in the past she meets Rufus in a new guise, because she is not anymore a mother figure to him, but a woman. As he asks her to take Alice's role in her life he expects her to be his woman, but she stops seeing him as a child or a sibling. Rufus has become just a heartless slaveholder, an animal that is trying to rape her. When she stabs him he emits a weird noise, similar to that of an animal, finally losing all his humanity (Beaulieu, 1999, 127).

Dana's role as a mother entails two burdens: protecting Rufus until the birth of Hagar, regardless of his controversial behavior and threats, and ensuring the development of history. In guarding Rufus, she is aware of her poor influence and massive difficulty in a White-dominated society. However, she tries to exert a meaningful influence in the

19th-century environment, becoming the mother of more than a character. She extends her role as a mother, burdening herself with teaching how to read to Nigel and Carrie, and later on to Rufus' children. She wishes to do something positive for most of the people she encounters in the past, and once she definitively returns to the present, after Rufus' murder, she goes on a trip to Maryland to discover what happened to the people she cared the most (Beaulieu, 1999, 122-130). As she kills Rufus, the only owner of the plantation and of the slaves, she is preoccupied with their destiny, and keeps troubling herself because she cared about them as if they were her family (1979, 264).

Dana completes her role as a mother granting the birth of her grandmother Hagar, and trying to help in the best way she can her enslaved friends, instilling in them the knowledge that could help them survive in the past. However, she is not the only one teaching something, because she also learns a lot from them. She becomes a new woman once she returns in 1976, partially because of her physical scars and the loss of an arm, but also because of the renovated knowledge she holds. She is more mature and aware of what the past means for an African American woman, descending from a generation of people who sacrificed their whole life to render the U.S. the country it is nowadays. Dana and everyone reading this novel should take pride in what enslaved people had to endure, learning how to appreciate their efforts and how to read and interpret American history. *Kindred*, as a neo-slave narrative, contributes to the trend towards a redressing movement of U.S. historical master narrative, providing the reader with a new and more accurate point of view on slavery and enslaved people, especially women, whose testimonies are still disregarded.

3. *Legami di sangue*: on the Translations of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*

Having established the cultural and historiographical background of the 1979 neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, in this final chapter I will focus on two of its Italian translations, briefly also mentioning a third one in the first section. At first I will focus on the three editions and their publishing houses, examining also the translators' backgrounds and approaches. In addition, I will also analyze the book covers and their promotion. Subsequently I am going to compare the two retranslations of *Legami di sangue*, in order to understand how the source text has been rendered in Italian, with a focus on the terms specific and peculiar to the institution of slavery. I will examine the translations also on the basis of the analysis carried out in the first chapter, regarding why retranslations are performed and how to properly translate AAVE in Italian.

3.1 *Legami di sangue*: Editions in Comparison

The neo-slave narrative *Kindred* has been translated into Italian by three different translators in three different and independent editions. The first ever Italian translation dates back to the end of the 20th century, fifteen years after the original publication of *Kindred*. The edition was published on the 21st of August, 1994, by the Italian publishing house Mondadori, in the collection Urania. The novel was translated by Paola Andreaus, who first inaugurated and created the Italian title *Legami di sangue*, later on maintained for the two following versions. The Italian title is not exactly a literal translation of the original English title, but it evokes a similar concept of family ties, referring to the blood relationships existing between people who are relatives. This highlights the consanguinity and parentage between Dana, the protagonist, and her 19th century ancestors Rufus and Alice. The bonds established during Dana's time travels change the perception of her ancestry, as she discovers that her great-grandfather Rufus was a White slaveholder. The title *Kindred* represents the fusion of the Black and White identity that are mutually influenced by slavery. This is successfully translated in Italian with the title *Legami di sangue* (Scacchi, 2013, 319). Additionally, the title might refer not only to the protagonist's family history, but also to America's history concerning the inextricable links and connections existing between Blacks and Whites, inseparable in the account of the past. Blackness cannot not be erased from the United States' past, it is indissociable

and it cannot be hidden or obscured. This might be once again Butler's call for remembrance and revaluation of slavery as a fundamental pillar of history, and as a shaping force of American society.

As above mentioned, the first translation was published by Urania, a paperback series belonging to the Mondadori publishing house, created in 1952. The collection is a product of the emerging interest in science fiction among the Italian public in the 1960s. This phenomenon sprung as a consequence of economic growth, alongside with the development of technology and science in Italy. The worldwide charm for cybernetics, computer science and artificial intelligence extended to the Italian audience, who demanded access to literary and audio-visual products featuring these newly-interesting elements. Urania was developed with the aim to present foreign literary works of classic and contemporary sci-fi authors, for example, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke etc., to the Italian public (Corbella & Alessandrini, 2019, 99). The paperback series was promoted and created thanks to the translator Giorgio Monicelli, who was also an editor and fond of science fiction. Monicelli coined the Italian term *fantascienza* as a literal translation of the English word "science fiction". His project of fostering translations has proven to be successful, and Urania is still active in publishing them. At its beginnings, as Giulia Mozzato explains in an article for the magazine Mare*mosso*, Urania started as a monthly periodical magazine and published only a total of fourteen numbers before being closed. It was simultaneously launched as a series of sci-fi novels under the name of "I romanzi di Urania", that from 1957 began to be known simply as "Urania". The first translated novel was *Le sabbie di Marte* (*The Sands of Mars*) by Arthur C. Clarke, published on October 10, 1952.

Urania decided to include the translation of *Kindred* in their collection in the context of sci-fi literary works, because of Butler's popularity as a science fiction writer. However, as already mentioned in the previous chapter (see 2.4 "*Kindred*: Origins, Genre and Major Themes"), *Kindred* is not a science fiction novel. The only element attributable to said genre is the time travel, which is merely used as a device to transport the protagonist across time, without any further explanation of how it functions. Moreover, as Butler explained in several interviews, *Kindred* is to be considered a work of fantasy and a neo-slave narrative, categorically excluding its belonging to the science fiction genre. This particular characteristic concerning the proper genre might not be evident to

the lay public who was not aware of *Kindred*'s genesis. This led to an inaccurate interpretation of the novel as science fiction, through which the readership does not realize that it belongs to a hybrid composition of genres, made of fantasy and neo-slave narrative, misinterpreting its true meaning and Butler's original aim.

The second translation of *Kindred*, *Legami di sangue*, was released in 2005 by the Italian publishing house Le Lettere. This first retranslation of the novel was part of the series "Pan narrativa" focused on publishing internationally relevant literary works, including authors as Baldwin, Timm, and Butler. The translation was carried out by Silvia Gambescia, on whom there is not extensive information available, with the support of Maria Giulia Fabi, a university professor of Anglo-American literature, highly specialized on the topics at the center of the neo-slave narrative. Fabi edited *Legami di sangue*, adding a postface with an analysis and commentary on the salient and major themes of the novel. The presence of an expert in the editing of the translation is a guarantee of accuracy concerning peculiar topics of American history and African-American slavery experience. Fabi collaborated with Le Lettere as an editor for several other literary works' translations pertaining to the African-American literary field, for example, *Sabbie Mobili* (*Quicksand*) by Nella Larsen, published in 1999, *La stanza di Giovanni* (*Giovanni's Room*) and *Appunti americani* (*Notes of a Native Son*) by James Baldwin, published respectively in 2001 and 2007. Le Lettere presents itself as a publishing house with the aim of distributing literary works from the tradition, the so-called "classics", alongside those more experimental and unconventional. It was founded in 1976, by Federico Gentile, who was involved in the field of editing as he worked for a long time in its father's publishing house, Sansoni, until 1975. The 2005 edition of *Legami di sangue* is nowadays out of print for non-defined reasons, compromising its accessibility as a high-level translation. Urania's number is also difficult to find as it was published and available on newsstands. Only in recent years it has been possible to retrieve some of Urania's sci-fi novels in book shops, but it is still problematic due to the original system of publication.

The third retranslation of *Legami di sangue* was published by SUR in September 2020. This edition was translated by Veronica Raimo and is part of the series BIGSUR which deals with Anglo-American literary works. SUR describes itself as an independent publishing house, born in the year 2011, with an initial predominant focus on Latin American literature. Since 2015 its catalog has broadened, with the inclusion of

translations from English, and the birth of the BIG SUR series, featuring Anglo-American literature. Raimo, the translator. explained in a 2021 interview for the Pisa Book Festival, that she discovered Octavia E. Butler only in recent years, after translating one of her short stories. Being struck by her complex and articulated plots, Raimo proposed to SUR to feature Butler in their BIG SUR series, as *Kindred* was in line with their philosophy and the topics of the collection. In addition, a similar novel on slavery, *La ferrovia sotterranea* (*The Underground Railroad*) by Colson Whitehead, had been published in translation in 2017 by SUR, enjoying a big success and suggesting *Legami di sangue* might be a good translation to invest on. *Kindred* was chosen among Butler's other works, as the most fitting novel for the particular historical moment, in the context of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests both in the U.S. and in Italy. Raimo, in the interview, further highlights that she is aware of the existence of some previous *Kindred*'s translations, never explicitly mentioning the 2005 edition, and only briefly referring to the 1994 one. She claims to have neither read nor taken into account the previous translations, as she could not access them because they were either discontinued or difficult to retrieve. In her opinion the re-edition with SUR contributed to a renewed popularity and interest for the novel, arguing that the publishing house helped the novel to detach from the science fiction label. In the interview Raimo defines *Legami di sangue* as an adventure novel ("libro di avventura"), claiming that even a fifteen-year-old can approach this novel, because it is easy to read and fluid in the language and style. I believe that this is an over-simplification of the complexity of the novel, in particular, concerning the strong message behind Butler's work and aim. Raimo's statements are, in my opinion, matched in the translation of *Kindred*, which appears as a soft reading, leaning towards an adventure novel, adapted in the language to the modern standards of the 21st century. In fact, the translator highlights that she was really focused on the plot and at the same time she aimed at maintaining Butler's easy and fluid language. The translation appears at times over-simplified, eradicating in a way its peculiarities and the 1976 setting, actually making it available to a fifteen-year-old reader. This affirmation does not imply that Butler's aim was to create a sectorial readership, because it was a primary purpose to tell the story of slavery to the general public without the restrictions that slave narratives' authors had to face. However, Butler had in mind the idea to instill in the reader an historical consciousness, which is the same that Dana missed and gained only at the end of her

troubled time travels. Slave narratives were never an easy read, and even though neo-slave narratives aim at being appreciated as novels, they also tell conscious stories that carry a certain level of authority as they are produced to tell the truth and disclose the horrors and real conditions of slavery. The scholar Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu explains that she had difficulties approaching slave narratives when she was an eleventh-grade student (16-17 years old), due to its horrors and raw stories (1999, xiv). This should be seen as a warning that neo-slave narratives, as a genre deriving from slave narratives, are not a simple read. I will explain in depth this issue in the following paragraphs, concerning an accurate linguistic and stylistic analysis of the translations under consideration.

The question on why *Legami di sangue* has been translated multiple times naturally arises. The first edition by Urania was a consequence of the three previous translations of science fiction novels by Butler published in the series. The first to be translated was the third novel of the *Patternist* series, *Clay's Ark* (*Incidente nel deserto*) in 1985, a year after Butler's publication. The second was *Dawn* (*Ultima genesi*), the first novel of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, published on May 1, 1987, and in translation four months later, on September 27. The third novel, part of the Urania science fiction collection, is the sequel of *Dawn*, *Adult Rites* (*Ritorno alla terra*), published on June 1, 1988 and in translation six months later, on December 4. The release of these three translations of Octavia Butler's science fiction novels was the driving force behind the translation of *Kindred*. The typical genre of work of the author mistakenly marketed her neo-slave narrative as a science fiction novel, leading to the choice of including its translation into a series of sci-fi publications.

Concerning the second retranslation by Le Lettere, there was most likely the need to rebrand *Legami di sangue*, by removing the science fiction label it was assigned by Urania. Moreover, the fact that an expert in the field of African-American literature was involved in the edition, shows an additional attention placed upon the accuracy and restoration of the original message of *Kindred*. In this second retranslation the main focus was to present to the Italian public a novel, which is also a neo-slave narrative, under a new light.

The third and last translation of *Kindred*, as of now, was published in 2020, fifteen years after the second edition. The translator, Veronica Raimo, claims to have suggested the retranslation as a result of her fascination for Butler, after translating some of the

author's short stories for SUR. The novel matched the prerequisites of the BIG SUR collection, and was accepted for translation, as Raimo declared in a 2021 interview. As mentioned above, the translator's aim was to give visibility to the author and the novel, which she could not find in translation, as the two previous editions were difficult to retrieve. With SUR *Legami di sangue* and Butler became well-known among the Italian public, which led to the retranslation of *Parable of the Sower* (*La parabola del seminatore*) published in July, 2024 in the same series.

It is a central concern of mine to examine the correspondence between the reasons why retranslations are carried out, explained in the first chapter of this dissertation, and the two editions of 2005 and 2020 of *Legami di sangue*. According to Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis, a subsequent translation should be more accurate compared to a previous one and although this is an outdated theory I will try and analyze the two retranslations from Berman's perspective as well, with the aim to find an answer to his question (1990). Another of Berman's theories behind retranslation is aging, which cannot be extended to this particular case because the two retranslations were produced fifteen years apart from one another, making aging as the substantial reason behind their creation impossible.

A hypothesis that is already evident to be behind the retranslations of *Legami di sangue*, is that of rebranding and economic motives. Le Lettere proposed a translation with the aim of detaching the novel from the science fiction label, restoring its original belonging to the neo-slave narrative genre. Economic considerations, on the other hand, had an influence in the 2020 retranslation, when Raimo, a well-known author and translator, and the SUR popular collection gave a renewed visibility to the novel. As mentioned in the first chapter (see 1.3.2 "Literary and economic motives behind retranslations"), retranslations tend to feature paratactic elements to signal a radical change in the translation. This is true for what concerns Le Lettere's edition, which includes an afterword by Fabi. For the last edition by SUR there are no particular elements of paratext which distinguish this version from the previous one. However, the style and language are different and will be analyzed in the next paragraphs of this chapter.

It is important to mention that the two translations of *Kindred* fall within the scope of the "active retranslations" created by Pym. The first retranslation was made in 2005, eleven years after the first translation, and the second in 2020, fifteen years after the first

retranslation. This implies that they are active retranslations which share the same chronological time and space of production, and the same socio-cultural values, as they were both developed for the Italian readership (2014, 82). However, I believe that there is a substantial difference between the intended audience, as Le Lettere retranslation is aimed for the general public interested in novels and neo-slave narratives. Meanwhile, the second edition by SUR appears to be addressed to an even broader audience, because as claimed by Raimo, it is defined almost as an adventure novel, addressed to readers of any age.

3.1.1 An analysis of *Legami di sangue*'s book covers

Urania's *Legami di sangue* follows the typical layout and style of the collection. The main consistent element present in all Urania's publications is a central red circle on the top of a white background, with the title and author placed on the top left of the page under a red stripe, separating this information from the header. In an article by Mare*mosso* it is explained that the iconic red circle was created in 1967 from an idea of the artistic director Anita Klinz, lasting on the covers until 1996. The Argentinian illustrator Oscar Chichoni was the designer for *Legami di sangue*'s edition. The red circle encloses two figures standing in a cotton field, a typical cultivation of the Southern states where slaves were employed, separated by a white and bright lightning. On the left we find a scared White man with outstretched hands dressed in old-fashioned clothes on a black and white background. Meanwhile, on the right, there is a Black woman portrayed from behind, dressed in a pair of dirty blue jeans and a stretched white tank top. The woman is on a colored background and holds a rifle at the White man in front of her. The two figures can be identified as Rufus Weylin and Dana Franklin, the two protagonists of the novel. The different color backgrounds represent the two epochs to which the figures pertain. Rufus stands in a black and white 19th century, while Dana belongs to 1976 California. The lightning between them and the clouds behind them make the scene appear similar to a catastrophic event, a sort of final battle, suggested by Dana's ruined and dirty clothes. She appears as she is about to win, holding the rifle and scaring the man in front of her, however, the image does not represent a scene of the book. There is an episode in which an armed fight almost takes place, but Rufus is the one holding the gun, and Dana is accompanied by Kevin. In this reproduction Dana resembles a heroine in her pose and in

the way she is depicted. Her body is accentuated, for example, in tight clothes emphasizing her fit body shape, differently from the man who is covered in elegant clothes and a hat. In the novel, it is typical for Dana to be called out for her style, which makes her look like a man, rather than a woman. This is because women did not use to dress with jeans or trousers, in the 19th century, differently from Dana's way of dressing in Levi's popular in 20th century California. The cover, therefore, respects Dana's way of dressing, though it tends to hypersexualize her. Another interesting aspect is represented by the choice of showing the man's face, but not the woman's. This might be a suggestion to the fact that the woman stands as a representative of any Black woman, who suffers from the same destiny of being a descendant of slavery, in a White dominated world, which is being challenged by the threatened White man. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that Urania was a collection of science fiction novels, therefore, the illustrator probably had this as a reference when creating the cover, portraying an unrealistic dimension resembling time travel in the two side-by-side epochs.

Le Lettere's cover is very different from Urania's edition of *Legami di sangue*. There is not a typical layout or color from the publishing house displayed in the cover, unlike the first translation of *Kindred*. The title and the name of the author are half in the color red, and half in the color white, and they are placed on the top left, with the title located in an almost central position. The dominant color is dark green, both on the background and on the fragments of pictures in the foreground laid out without an apparent graphic symmetry. With a closer analysis it is possible to identify the shape of a moving wheel in the background, which might represent the wheel of time connected to Dana's time travels from the present to the past. Above the green wheel there are some fragments of pictures in motion that seem to be placed randomly. However, following the theory of the wheel of time, the images appear to be moving in a suctioned motion towards the vortex created by the rotation. Two of the images portray Black women, in particular the one on the left shows a worker near a textile spinning machine, while the one on the right is a portrayal of a posing woman. The first image is also reproduced in another blurry fragment, placed below the previous ones, and closer to the center of the spinning wheel. This double presence of the same image might be a device to show that the fragments are moving, either towards the wheel implying that they are going inside of it, or away from it, meaning that they are coming out of the wheel. The third fragment which can be

identified in the foreground is a portrait of a White man, dressed elegantly with a top hat and a long beard. This picture resembles Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, during whose term of office, in 1865, slavery was formally abolished with the 13th amendment. Once again, as in the first edition by Urania, there are at least two figures: a White man and a Black woman. In addition to that, in the background of the right corner there is a small pocket watch, which is in motion as well. It can be seen that it is not positioned vertically, following the standard placement and depiction of clocks, as if it was being suctioned inside the vortex with the pictures as a moving object. The pocket watch is a symbol of the passing of time, which can be a sign of the two different dimensions on which the novel is based.

Differently from the first translation by Urania, which represented both the past and the present in a split image inside a red circle, Le Lettere's edition seems to portray solely the past dimension through fragments of pictures of the past and the pocket watch, common before the 20th century. The present epoch seems to not be represented in this second edition cover, leaving space only to the historic dimension.

The third edition cover of *Legami di sangue* by SUR was designed by Falcinelli & CO, a studio specialized in books' designs, that collaborates with major publishing houses, companies and institutions, as explained in their website. The cover features on the left the name of the author and the title, meanwhile on the right an image of two hands holding one another. The hand above is purple, and appears to belong to a grown person, probably a woman from the look of the nails. The other hand is light pink, and seems to belong to a child, as it is smaller compared to the other. At a first look the two hands appear to be simply holding one another. However, there could be another interpretation of the image, because the purple hand placed on top, seems to be pulling up the lower hand, actively holding it, while the White hand seems to be passive. This is noticeable also from the different positions of the sections of arms included in the cover, as the lower hand appears to be lifted from the side, while the upper hand descends in a vertical line. The two hands are probably representative of Dana and Rufus' hands, recalling the woman's mission to save her ancestor from life threatening situations. The hand being of a child might be a reference to the fact that at the beginning of the novel Dana meets Rufus as he is only a child. Moreover, this image might be a symbol for Dana and Rufus' connection and familial bond, meaning that they are connected despite their different skin

color. Their hands united connect the past and the present, but also two persons that seem so distant, but are rather so near to one another. The background is an orange wavy pattern horizontally oriented, that creates a contrast compared to the verticality of the two hands. This is the only cover among the three that represents a union, rather than a separation. In Urania the division is evident with the lightning striking between the two protagonists, while in Le Lettere there is not a particular hint either to a union or a division. However, the second version seems to be oriented to a division suggested by the fragments of images.

To summarize, one can infer that the first translation by Urania mainly portrays a split, the second by Le Lettere a time travel featuring both Black and White figures, and the last by SUR a connection between Blacks and Whites.

In conclusion, I would like to compare the Italian translation covers with the original first edition cover of *Kindred*, as the author might have contributed to it. Butler published her novel in June 1979 with the publishing house Doubleday, featuring a cover art made by the illustrator Larry Schwinger. The cover is very minimalistic in color, the headings and author's name are placed on the top half, and an image of two Black women facing opposite directions appears under them. The two figures are connected by a string of color behind their skulls and an hourglass in between them, representing the relationship between the past and the present. Their necks seem to connect and to become a whole with the hourglass edges. The use of an hourglass, a canonical symbol of time measuring, can be a signal to indicate that the time travel occurring in the novel has nothing to do with the dimension of science fiction, implying the exclusion of any time machine or magical device. On the left there is a woman with golden hoop earrings and a golden necklace that suggest she might be from the 20th century, as these pieces of jewelry were not accessible to slaves. Meanwhile, the woman on the right appears to be wearing a shirt with a pompous white collar of Victorian style, which suggests she is from the 19th century. The two women, therefore, might be representative of Dana and Alice, "Two halves of a whole", connected through time and space by their blood relationship and physical similarity (1979, 257). Comparing the original cover to those of the Italian translations there are no characteristics that have been maintained, as the translations' covers mainly focus on the relationship between Blacks and Whites, meanwhile the first edition's cover features two Black women. The only element in common is time, more

implicitly in Urania with the division between the split sections of the circle, and more explicitly in Le Lettere with the pocket watch and the wheel movement in the background. In compliance with the image of the hourglass, the pocket watch seems to follow the symbolism of the canonical time travel, excluding futuristic devices of transportation through different dimensions. In the SUR edition time is not featured, because the focus is on the relationship between Blacks and Whites, represented by the two hands holding onto each other.

The model of the original *Kindred* cover featuring two heads in the foreground, has been substituted in several re-editions by Beacon Press from 1988 to 2003 with the picture of a Black woman in a white long dress. The cover was then renovated in 2003 for the 25th anniversary edition, displaying the face of a Black woman wearing a white shirt on top of a row of rural houses. The original cover has been restored in an edition published on the 21st of May, 2024 by Beacon Press, with a modern and renovated graphic. Two faces belonging to the same Black woman face opposite directions, creating a difference from the original version featuring two different women. In this sense, the two faces can be a reference to Dana's split identity between past and present. The background is divided into two halves. On the left is displayed a modern skyline of a metropolitan city with high skyscrapers and a plethora of buildings, a clear reference to 1976 California. Meanwhile, on the right, the background consists of a stormy dark ocean, recalling the Middle Passage journey of the slavery era. The slave trade through the sea can be, once again, a reference to the time travel occurring in the novel.

The last graphic element on the covers is the presence of the inscription "a novel" in the first English edition, which is maintained and translated by Urania as "i romanzi" recalling the book series, and as "romanzo" in Le Lettere's edition. It is not present in the third and most recent translation by SUR.

3.2 Translating Slavery Stereotypes: Mammy and Uncle Tom

Kindred, both a novel and a neo-slave narrative, belongs to a genre not paralleled in Italian culture, generating difficulties in translating specific words, expressions and stereotypes tied to slavery. Before beginning the analysis on the Italian translation of the Mammy and Uncle Tom stereotypes, I believe it is important to make a digression on the theme of racism in Italy. This is a fundamental aspect to examine, because many people

fail to consider the impact racism had on Italy, a former colonizer of the African continent. Some words deriving from the U.S. institution of slavery are not matched in Italian, however, it is wrong to assume that this happens because Italy has nothing to do with racism. A large part of the Italian population is not aware of its country's colonial past, or actively chooses not to recognize this historical episode as relevant, omitting to consider the Fascist influence in shaping racism (Faso, 2012, 9). In contrast to what happened in the United States, Italians often describe their history of racism as "razzismo minore" (minor racism), implying that it is less impactful and severe compared to the American experience (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012, 18). However, the role played by Italy was not less relevant, just because it was apparently less incisive. Racism became institutionalized in 1937 with a Royal Decree on the prohibition of sexual and marital relationships between Italians and women or men of the African colonies. Children born from interracial unions in the colonies were despised and labeled as *meticci* (mixed), with the main concern being the contamination of Italian whiteness. Later on, in 1938-1939, the segregation and racism became stronger and widespread also on the Italian peninsula with the Fascist racial laws. Those were not the only discriminative rules developed during Fascism, because already in 1933 the exclusive category of race began to work in the colonies as a segregating tool. These laws were used to separate between those who were able to prove their Italian descent and were allowed to obtain Italian citizenship and those relegated to inferiority (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012, 24). Petrovich Njegosh argues, through the contributions of the scholars Gramsci and Villari, that immediately after the Italian union in 1861 instances of internal racism emerged, concerning the inferiority of the populations from the South of Italy (2012, 26). It is evident that racism and colonialism were pivotal elements of Italian national history, and in the building of a national identity (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012, 29). Episodes of racism are still diffused in Italy, but the myth of Italians as *brava gente* (good people) overshadows the recognition of guilt and violence. The myth *Italiani brava gente* was also a device employed after the Second World War to try and overcome the Fascist past and construct a new national identity alien to racism (Frisina & Kyeremeh, 2021, 310). What contributes to the exclusion of racism from the Italian scene is the belief that it is a violent and exceptional phenomenon, and in the apparent absence of these instances, racism is not under investigation as a major problem (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012, 37). A racist episode

analyzed by Petrovich Njegosh is about 1996 Miss Italia winner Denny Mendez, a model born in Santo Domingo, whose victory was criticized by a part of the pageant jury as she was not representative of the Italian beauty standards, because of the color of her skin. This is a signal that the Italian identity is constructed on the assumption of whiteness, therefore, someone who does not phenotypically correspond to the canon cannot be considered Italian. This issue persists in the ongoing challenge of accepting non-Whites as having the right to an Italian identity. An example is the Italian soccer player Mario Balotelli, who was attacked in 2009 with racist slogans for being both Italian and Black, a status that many find difficult to understand and accept (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012, 42). What I wanted to highlight with this digression is the significant role played by racism in Italy, both in the past and the present. In other words, the absence of a slavery past does not imply the nonexistence of racist issues. Leonardo Buonomo argues that the notion of Italians being "good people" serves as a legitimization to translate racially connoted terms with ease, without an accurate and sensitive approach to the issue of race (2012, 233). Although Italian tradition does not feature stereotypical figures, such as, for example, Mammy and Uncle Tom, issues persist in their representation, and in the translation of racially connoted terms.

In the retranslations of *Kindred* these terms are translated with different solutions. I will begin the analysis on the term "Mammy", comparing its three translations in the original text by Butler, the 2005 retranslation by Silvia Gambescia, and the 2020 retranslation by Veronica Raimo. The terms under analysis are in bold to emphasize their importance and indicate they are under examination. All other variations in formatting are preserved from the original texts.

TABLE 1 - Mammy

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
1. *Aunt* Sarah? Well, that was better than **Mammy** Sarah, I supposed. (pag. 86)	1. *Zia* Sarah? Beh, era meglio di **mammy** Sarah, pensai. (pag. 105)	1. Zia Sarah? Be', sempre meglio di **mami** Sarah. (pag. 112)
2. She was the kind of woman who might have been called "**mammy**" in some other household. (pag. 145)	2. Era il tipo di donna che avrebbe potuto essere chiamata "**mammy**" in qualche altra casa. (pag. 179)	2. In un'altra famiglia una donna come lei l'avrebbero chiamata "**mami**". (pag. 195)

3. "They be calling you **mammy** in a few years. You be running the whole house when the old man dies."	3. "Ti chiameranno **mammy** fra qualche anno. Governerai l'intera casa quando il vecchio muore." (pag. 206)	3. "Fra qualche anno ti chiameranno **mami**. Quando il vecchio muore, ti ritrovi a governare tutta la casa." (pag. 225)

The term Mammy in example (1) is used in a chat between Rufus and Dana, while the former is bedridden with a broken leg. The protagonist is pleased to discover that Rufus refers to the cook and housekeeper slave Sarah as "Aunt Sarah", and not "Mammy", a stereotypical figure originated in the South of the U.S. during slavery. The first use of the term dates back to a travel narrative about the South, written in 1810. The *American Dictionary of Regional English* explains that it derives from the combination of the words "ma'am" and "mamma" (quoted in Wallace-Sanders, 2008, 4). The Mammy is both physically and psychologically characterized in representations, resulting in a powerful stereotype that persisted through the centuries even after the abolition slavery. The Mammy figure was typically portrayed as aggressive, powerful and matriarchal in her relationships with other African Americans, meanwhile her behavior changed with Whites, who saw her as a submissive and inferior slave (Jewell, 1993, 37-38). These women were typically regarded as "Mammy" when they nursed children, or "Aunt" when they had been working for a long time for the White family (Morgan, 1995, 89). The use of this stereotypical character supported those who depicted slavery in a positive light, because the Mammy was portrayed as a happy Black woman, serving her master willingly, raising his children and even having an acceptable relationship with the mistress. Her physique and manners are the least desirable for men, who did not want her as a concubine. In the depictions of mammies, they are typically characterized as obese, very dark-skinned, with bright white teeth and extremely large breasts and buttocks. They are often portrayed wearing a drab calico dress and a headscarf, referred to as a "head rag" (Jewell, 1993, 39). Mammy's domestic aggressiveness and workplace submissiveness persisted even after slavery, with Black women being expected to behave like mammies in these two particular contexts. The historic relevance of the stereotype was carried on also because of the limited work positions available to Black women, who were often forced to accept jobs as maids and domestics in White households, until the changes brought up by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (Jewell, 1993, 43-44). Furthermore, the stereotype was especially popular because of the many portrayals in the

mass media, in particular in commercial advertisements from the 1880-1890s. Pictures had become the pivotal feature in advertising, and mammies were printed on trade cards and product labels to promote brands through these women's "well-honed domestic skills" (Morgan, 1995, 87). It is common to refer to the Black woman associated with kitchen duties as Aunt Jemima, a Reconstructionist evolution of the mammy first introduced at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and portrayed as a devoted cook for White families (Wallace-Sanders, 2008, 4). A popular depiction of mammy/Aunt Jemima is found in the 1889 pancake-mix advertisement for the Pearl Milling Company. The Minstrel show popularized the Mammy stereotype, since George Christy's impersonations of African-American women in 1844 (Morgan, 1995, 90). The 1939 movie *Gone with the Wind* and other audio-visual media contributed to the memorability of the stereotype. In the movie, in particular, Hattie McDaniel portrayed the mammy figure, strengthening the depiction of the Black matriarchal woman from the 1936 novel by Margaret Mitchell, which had been extremely popular, reaching a high number of sales comparable to the Bible. The novel's success foreshadowed the movie's reception and the persistent recognition of the mammy, who continues to appear in movies and media as a humorous character, only apparently detached from racial stereotypes (Goings, 1994, 51). An example of a worldwide recognized interpretation deriving from the Mammy can be seen in the 2007 comedy *Norbit*, by Brian Robbins and starring Eddie Murphy, who plays both the protagonists, Norbit and Rasputia. The latter is a Black overweight woman shaped on the slavery character of the Mammy, who is very little feminine, takes upon herself the role of protector for her friend Norbit, and later on becomes a tyrannical wife, in compliance with the historical stereotype. This movie is not only popular in the U.S. but also in Italy, where it grossed over 3 million euros in the first five weeks of distribution, according to the online blog MYmovies.

These examples demonstrate that the mammy stereotype is familiar to the Italian public, which frequently encounters it in the mass media, learning to recognize it. In the translations of *Kindred*, Gambescia retains the term in its original form, while Raimo changes it. In the source text, it is evident that Butler used this term to refer to the stereotypical figure of the mammy, as made clear through Dana's impressions of Sarah throughout the novel. Gambescia's choice can be explained by the lack of an equivalent term in Italian to describe this figure. Raimo, on the other hand, chose not to retain the

original term and used *mami*, possibly referencing the translation used in the Italian dubbing of *Gone with the Wind* in 1949. Even though Raimo's translation follows a prior usage of *mami* referring to the same concept, the translator also employs the term in other circumstances, making its interpretation more challenging for the reader. In fact, in the second chapter of the novel, when Dana reaches Alice's mother's cabin, Alice refers to her mother as "Mama".

TABLE 2 – "Mami"

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
4. "**Mama**?" said the child tentatively. (pag. 38)	4."**Mamma**?" disse esitante la bambina. (pag. 43)	4."**Mami**?" disse la bambina, incerta. (pag. 48)
5."Here I am, **Mama**." (pag. 39)	5."Sono qui, **mamma**." (pag. 44)	5. "Sono qui, **mami**." (pag. 48)

Examples (4) and (5) show that Raimo used *mami* to refer both to the mammy stereotype and Alice's mother. In the source text the two terms are different, Sarah is defined as a mammy, while Alice's mother is not a mammy, but she is called in an affectionate way "Mama" by her little daughter. By contrast, Gambescia decided to translate "Mama" as *mamma* (mom), indicating that Alice was addressing her mother, avoiding a term of endearment, but correctly translating the original word. Using the same word, *mami*, to refer to two different figures, a stereotype and Alice's mother, creates confusion for the reader, making it difficult to distinguish between the two roles. Moreover, the Italian word *mami* is an affectionate term that children use to refer to their mother, and would translate in English as "mommy". Therefore, it would be correct to use *mami* for Alice's mother, as Enciclopedia Treccani lists it as a vocative and affectionate term for "mum". The issue lies in using the same term for two different figures, generating inconsistency and the risk for the audience to perceive the mammy not as a stereotypical figure, but merely as a figure referred to as "mommy" by children (1, 2). Sarah is certainly a motherly figure for Rufus, however, using the term *mami* in the sense of "mommy" eradicates the negative stereotyping that the term Mammy brings about and Butler wanted to convey through Dana's journey of understanding of slaves' struggles in fighting slavery. As the writer explained in the genesis of the novel, when reflecting on the criticism towards Black slaves for their submissiveness and survival

strategies, she wanted to instill pride in their experiences. Butler aimed at helping people understand that their ancestor's struggles were necessary and significant forms of courage and resistance (Rowell, 1997, 51). Gambescia's translation appears more effective and accurate in forwarding Butler's intentions to the readership. The Italian reader can identify the mammy when referring to Sarah (1, 2) and the affectionate term *mamma* ("Mama") (3, 4, 5) when Alice addresses her mother. In the Urania first translation the term Mammy is reported as "mammy" in the sentences from the examples (2) and (3), but not in (1). This last utterance is rendered as *mamma* (mom), which, similarly to the 2020 edition, is likely to mislead the reader.

Another racially connoted stereotype featured in *Kindred* is that of Uncle Tom, or simply Tom, which represents the male counterpart to the Mammy (Crossley, 2003, 270). He is submissive to the White master, and similarly to the Mammy he does not rebel his condition and is content with it. This stereotype was born in the slavery antebellum era as a positive type of slave who could help defend the institution of slavery as a positive institution. Uncle Tom is a smiley man who works both in the house and in the fields as a cook, butler and waiter, always ready to serve his master in his needs. This description is matched in Harriet Beecher Stowe's slave narrative *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) in which Tom is a "gentle, humble, Christian slave" that does not accept the use of violence and prefers to be killed by his master rather than whipping an innocent slave (Pilgrim, 2015, 92). He follows the principles of the Christian religion, differently from his master who is a corrupted Christian (Pilgrim, 2015, 92-93). In Stowe's novel Tom dies as a martyr victim of a perverted institution, without ever attempting to run away and completely devoting himself to his master (Pilgrim, 2015, 95). Many cinematic productions of the Tom have been developed since the early 20th century, consistently portraying him as the submissive slave depicted by Stowe. In 1903 the Tom, a White actor in blackface, was the first Black American character to be featured in an American movie. In 1914, a Black actor first played the Tom, establishing it as a staple character who obsequiously adores his master (Pilgrim, 2015, 96-97). A reinterpretation of this figure takes place in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012), where Samuel L. Jackson plays a strong willed and cruel Tom, loyal to his White master and hateful towards his fellow Blacks. The Tom and Uncle Tom stereotypes are rejected by the African American community, who use the term to refer to someone who is excessively subservient to Whites, and accepts a low

status rather than striving for personal advancement. Another use and interpretation of the term follows Tarantino's depiction of Tom as a "groveling, conniving, unscrupulous opportunist who brutalizes black people to gain benefits and soothe his self-hatred" (Pilgrim, 2015, 105).

The Tom stereotypical figure is referenced in *Kindred* when the author discusses the mammy Sarah. Both the translations adhere to the original term, as shown in the following table in example (6).

TABLE 3 – Uncle Tom and Uncle Sam

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
6. The house-nigger, the handkerchief-head, the female **Uncle Tom**—the frightened powerless woman who had already lost all she could stand to lose, and who knew as little about the freedom of the North as she knew about the hereafter. (pag. 145)	6. La negra dello **zio Tom** – la donna spaventata e impotente che aveva già perso tutto quello che poteva sopportare di perdere, e che sapeva tanto poco della libertà del Nord quanto dell'aldilà. (pag. 179)	6. La negra di casa, la sguattera, **Zio Tom** in gonnella: una donna timorosa e impotente che aveva abdicato a tutto e per la quale le libertà del Nord restavano un mistero quanto l'aldilà. (pag. 195)
7. Getting sent out meant the minimum wage—minus **Uncle Sam**'s share—for as many hours as you were needed. (pag. 52)	7. Essere mandati a lavorare voleva dire un salario minimo – meno la percentuale dello **zio Sam** – per tutte le ore in cui c'era bisogno di te. (pag. 63)	7. Se ti procacciavano un lavoro, invece significava salario minimo – meno la fetta che si prendeva lo **Zio Tom** – e giusto il tempo che gli servivi. (pag. 68)

A discrepancy is noticeable between examples (6) and (7). Raimo translates "Uncle Sam" using the same stereotypical figure she employed to translate "Uncle Tom": *Zio Tom*. The two characters are not interchangeable, nor synonyms. Uncle Sam is an iconic White figure born in 1916, when the illustrator James Montgomery Flagg was in charge of creating the cover for the July 16 issue of *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, to help increment the soldiers in the U.S. army. Montgomery Flagg drew inspiration from a British recruiting poster featuring the secretary of war Lord Kitchener, who was portrayed with a finger pointed towards the viewer above the caption "Your Country Needs YOU". The artist decided to use himself as the face for his new poster, which featured the words "What Are You Doing for Preparedness?", that in the spring of

1917 evolved into the memorable slogan "I Want YOU". The iconic white-haired man is a "puzzling figure", who became so successful because "he is at once watchful and protective, personable and authoritative, individual and institutional", ascending to be regarded as the personification of the country (Capozzola, 2008, 3-5). Uncle Sam proved to be an effective device in recruiting soldiers for the national army, as more than 1.3 million men and many thousands of women voluntarily enrolled in the U.S. armed services after the diffusion of the poster (Capozzola, 2008, 7). The origin of Uncle Sam's name dates back to the 1812 War against Britain, when the meat packer Samuel Wilson would supply the army with rations stamped with the abbreviation U.S. (United States). Soldiers interpreted the acronym as representing the initials of the businessman, who was regarded as Uncle Sam. This link to the iconic nickname connected it to the United States, which was officially recognized by the Congress in 1961 as the "namesake of the national symbol"[4]. In *Kindred*, "Uncle Sam" is used to refer to the United States government. Dana reflects on her experience working at the warehouse for minimum wage, highlighting that the salary she receives is reduced by "Uncle Sam's share", in other words, the taxes every citizen has to pay to the government (Butler, 1979, 52). Gambescia translates the term with the Italian direct translation *zio Sam*, which is widely recognized in Italy as a symbol of the United States thanks to its iconic poster representation. Raimo, on the contrary, employs the term *Zio Tom* (Uncle Tom) to translate the popular White-bearded American uncle. This represents a mistake in the translation, as Uncle Tom is a Black stereotypical figure vastly different from the White man embodied by Uncle Sam. As a result, the reader of the 2020 SUR retranslation may not understand the reference to the U.S. government personification and taxes, losing the original meaning of the source text.

3.3 Italian Translation of Terms Specific to the Institution of Slavery

TABLE 4 – Trader

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
8. He said I ought to sell you to some **trader** heading for Georgia or	8. Ha detto che avrei dovuto venderti a qualche **trafficante** diretto in	8. Ha detto che mi conveniva venderti a qualche **mercante** diretto

[4] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Uncle Sam." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 27, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Uncle-Sam.

Louisiana before you ran away and I lost my investment. (pag. 80)	Georgia o Luisiana prima che tu scappi via e io perda il mio investimento. (pag. 97)	in Georgia o in Louisiana prima che scappassi e perdessi il mio investimento.
9. "Oh. Well, Daddy was afraid he'd run off, so he sold him to a **trader**." "Sold him … does he still live around here?" "No, the **trader** was headed south." (pag. 88)	9. "Oh. Beh, papà aveva paura che sarebbe scappato, così lo ha venduto a un **mercante** di schiavi". "Lo ha venduto… vive ancora da queste parti?". "No, il **mercante** era diretto a Sud." (pag. 108)	9. "Ah sì. Be', papà lo ha venduto a un **mercante** perché aveva paura che scappava". "Venduto... vive ancora qui vicino?" "No, il **mercante** era diretto a sud." (pag. 104)
10. "Sold him to a **trader**—fellow taking slaves overland to Mississippi." (pag. 148)	10. "Lo hanno venduto a un **mercante** – un tizio che portava schiavi via terra nel Mississippi." (pag. 182)	10. "L'hanno venduto a un **mercante**, un tizio che portava gli schiavi verso il Mississippi". (pag. 199)
11. I could hear one of the **traders** say, "You ought to sell that one too. Troublemaker!" (pag. 239)	11. Potei sentire uno dei **trafficanti** dire "Dovresti vendere anche quella. È una piantagrane! (pag.295)	11. Sentii uno dei **mercanti** dire: "Ma vendi pure quella! Porta rogne e basta!" (pag. 323)

A term specific to the slavery era is "trader", which refers to "A person engaged in trading or commerce; a person who buys and sells goods; a dealer."[5]. In this context, the object of trading were slaves, therefore, a trader is intended as a person who is involved in the slave trade. The Italian translations for this term are interesting. Both the translators employed the term *mercante*, which matches the English word in the source text. Gambescia, however, alternates between *mercante* and *trafficante*. The terms are synonyms and both carry a negative connotation when referring to the slave trade, however, the term *trafficante* has a stronger and worse nuance for Italian readers. This translation choice might reflect and attempt to emphasize the negative nature of slave trading, but it also introduces an underlying pattern that provides a deeper explanation. The word *trafficante* is used when Kevin or Dana are speaking, meanwhile the term *mercante* is used when other characters belonging to the antebellum South are talking (9), (10). When Dana reports on what was said by her 19th century fellows she uses the term *mercante*, respecting her companions' use of the word. This alternate use might occur because, during the slave era, being a slave trader was a legal activity, and a profession

[5] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "trader (n.)," July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1772984765.

like many others. On the other hand, for Dana and Kevin who come from modern California, being a slave trader is a despicable occupation, and this might explain why Gambescia used *trafficante* when they are speaking, highlighting their condemnation for slave trading as contemporary citizens.

TABLE 5 – "Field hands"

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
12. I'm not being treated any worse than any other house servant, Kevin, and I'm doing better than the **field hands**. (pag. 83)	12. "Non vengo trattata peggio di qualunque altro schiavo domestico, Kevin, e mi va meglio che agli **schiavi dei campi**" (pag. 101)	12. Non mi trattano peggio degli altri domestici, Kevin, e me la passo meglio dei **braccianti**. (pag. 109)
13. These were the children of the **field hands**, children too young to be of much use in the fields themselves. (pag. 99)	13. Erano i figli degli **schiavi agricoli**, bambini troppo piccoli per essere d'utilità nei campi. (pag. 121)	13. Erano i figli dei **braccianti**, ancora troppo piccoli per essere sfruttati nei campi. (pag. 130)
14. **Slaves** were walking down rows of corn, chopping the stalks down with golf-swing strokes of their knives. (pag 211)	14. Gli **schiavi** stavano camminando lungo filari di granturco, tagliando i fusti con colpi di coltello che sembravano lanci di golf. (pag. 261)	14. C'erano i **braccianti** che camminavano tra i filari di granturco, tagliavano le piante brandendo la falce come fosse una mazza da golf. (pag. 286)

Slaves were divided into two categories on the basis of the location of their employment. Field slaves, also defined as field hands (table 5), worked on the plantation, while house slaves, also defined as domestics, were employed inside the master's house. The separation into two distinct groups was not only determined by their different occupations, because it also served as a controlling technique (Stampp, 1956, 333). Additionally, the division of labor was influenced by the size of the plantation and the number of slaves. This, at times, led to a specialization of work, ranging from a general partitioning between house and field slaves, to more definite occupations. For example, field slaves were assigned duties such as ditching, driving wagons, and cultivating vegetable gardens, meanwhile house slaves took on roles as hostlers, butlers and cooks. (Stampp, 1956, 41-59). As Frederick Law Olmsted reported in his *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (1861),

on the one hand, house slaves dreaded to be employed in the fields, while, on the other hand, field slaves were familiar to a life distant from the Whites and despised being employed inside the master's house (quoted in Kolchin, 1993, 108). Although house slaves had a more intimate relationship with their masters and were subject to less physically onerous occupation compared to field slaves, runaways were common in both groups (Stampp, 1956, 110). The two categories of slaves equally despised their exploitation and the condition to which they were relegated. In *Legami di sangue* the figure of field slaves is translated as *schiavi dei campi* and *schiavi agricoli* which are literal translations of the term, as well as *braccianti*. The former renderings are used by Gambescia in the 2005 retranslation, and both effectively and appropriately translate the original term, helping the reader understand that Butler was referring to slaves employed in the fields. On the contrary, the translation as *braccianti* seems to be imprecise and misleading. The term "field hand", both in its singular and plural forms, occurs a total of twenty-four times in *Kindred*. In the 2020 retranslation by Raimo, it is consistently translated as *bracciante* (singular) or *braccianti* (plural), as shown in examples (12), (13), and (14). On Enciclopedia Treccani the term *bracciante* is defined as a wage worker who works mainly in the agricultural field. The word derives from *braccio* (arm), implying that this figure is employed in manual work often as a seasonal worker, such as for example, in harvesting or threshing. The most important aspect that is derived from this definition is that the term *bracciante* refers to a wage-earning figure. Additionally, in Italian, the word *bracciante* carries a negative connotation, because these workers are often exploited through long hours of labor, insufficient remuneration and the lack of legal contracts. The Internet is filled with articles denouncing the terrible conditions in which these laborers are condemned to work. Several episodes of brutal exploitation have been reported in the news, including the recent case of the Indian worker Satnam Singh, who was employed illegally as a *bracciante* in Latina, near Rome. After an incident with a harvesting machine on a field, Singh was abandoned by his employer on June 24, 2024, almost lifeless (Camilli, 2024). Unfortunately, this is not the first episode of such exploitation in Italy, as many workers often perish due to hard working conditions. This situation bears resemblance to slavery and could explain why Raimo chose to use this term to translate "field hands". Although the reader might understand that the *bracciante* worked in the fields, using this term might not be entirely accurate, as it implies that the

worker is paid, whereas slaves had no rights over their labor, receiving no compensation for their efforts.

In *Kindred*, the term "house servant" is used to identify those slaves who were employed in occupations related to the master's house, as opposed to field slaves. The term "house servants" is translated by Raimo as *domestici*, without specifying that these people are slaves. On the contrary, Gambescia used the terms *schiavi domestici* or *domestic*i, as can be seen in example (12). The noun *domestico* refers to a person who works in other people's house, carrying out the daily chores and the housework. It might be considered an occupation similar to that of house slaves, however, differing in terms of rights and remuneration. A housekeeper is a legally employed figure who takes care of the house, sometimes cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. Once again, the term *domestico* fits the intended meaning of the word, but it implies that the person employed in the house receives a salary and is regulated by a labor contract, which contrast with the reality of slaves. The issue with the term *domestico* may stem from its evolution over the centuries, leading readers to think of it as a regularly employed person. This term clashes with the actual meaning of *schiavo domestico*, which immediately highlights the difference between slaves employed in the fields (*schiavo dei campi*) and in the house.

TABLE 6 – Driver and overseer

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
15. Called the **driver**, he was a kind of black **overseer**. (pag. 96)	15. Veniva chiamato **intendente**, era una specie di **sorvegliante** nero. (pag. 118)	15. Veniva chiamato «il **mandriano**» ed era una specie di **sorvegliante** nero. (pag. 127)
16. I looked around for a white **overseer** and was surprised not to see one. (pag. 67)	16. Mi guardai intorno cercando un **sorvegliante** bianco e fui sorpresa di non vederne nessuno. (pag. 81)	16. Mi guardai intorno alla ricerca di un **sorvegliante** bianco e fui sorpresa di non trovarlo. (pag. 88)
17. Only the **overseer** drew simple, unconflicting emotions of hatred and fear when he appeared briefly. But then, it was part of the **overseer**'s job to be hated	17. Solo il **sorvegliante** suscitò emozioni semplici e non conflittuali di odio e paura quando fece una breve apparizione. Ma, del resto, era parte del lavoro del **sorvegliante**	17. Soltanto il **sorvegliante** suscitava sentimenti semplici e non contraddittori di puro odio e paura, nelle sue brevi apparizioni. Comunque era nella natura di quel lavoro essere odiati e temuti,

and feared while the master kept his hands clean. (pag. 229)	essere odiato e temuto mentre il padrone si manteneva le mani pulite. (pag. 284)	cosicché il padrone non si sporcasse le mani. (pag. 310)
18. So on the morning after the funeral, he sent the current **overseer**, a burly man named Evan Fowler, to get me from the cookhouse. (pag. 210)	18. Così il mattino dopo il funerale, mandò il nuovo **sorvegliante**, un uomo tarchiato di nome Evan Fowler, in cucina a prendermi. (pag. 260)	18. Così, la mattina dopo il funerale, mandò il **caposquadra** di allora, un uomo corpulento di nome Evan Fowler, a prelevarmi dalla cucina. (pag.285)

Example (15) includes two terms closely associated with the institution of slavery: driver and overseer. These figures were employed on large plantations where there was the need for a careful control and coercion of slaves. Additionally, masters were keen on preserving their self-image as paternalists, distancing themselves from the brutalities of slavery whenever possible, as shown in example (17) (Sandy, 2020, 5).

The overseer was a widespread figure in England from the late 16th century, when it was employed in managing the poor, by assisting them in finding an occupation and in providing care. In early modern English, the term "Overseer of the Poor" was a common title, recognized by the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1598. The overseer eventually became widespread in the British colonies of North America initially supervising indentured servants and later on overseeing slaves (Sandy, 2020, 20).

Overseers were typically White, however, in some instances they could be Black. In both cases, they were fundamental intermediaries between the slaveholders and the slaves, and they were often left in charge of managing the plantation. The overseer was an actual job, advertised in newspapers with an exhaustive list of qualities and details on the occupation and salary. Plantation owners searched for competent and accountable men, who were able to supervise slaves and manage the field work, and were "serious in [..] (their) determinations", ideally having previous experience in cultivation (Sandy, 2020, 64). Although being regarded as poor and unskilled people, overseers were often literate Whites, who took the chance to improve their life conditions and sustain themselves, with the hope to acquire a higher status. They often received shares of the field's production based on the harvest, in addition to a fixed wage. This system stimulated them to work diligently and punish slaves for inefficiency, or for the sake of violence (Sandy, 2020, 135). This created sentiments of hatred, fear and loathe towards overseers, who controlled and often brutally punished slaves (Sandy, 2020, 193). In some

instances, overseers were enslaved Black men, who became essential in managing internal issues and potential rebellions, even though it was preferred to employ Whites (Sandy, 2020, 47). A Black enslaved overseer was seen as a guarantee of better management of the slaves, as he belonged to their social class, and was often specialized in field work, typically resulting in higher harvests. Privileges and relative autonomy were crucial in persuading Blacks to accept the position of overseer, alongside with violent threats from their owners. George Washington was known to employ both White and enslaved overseers in his plantations, revealing a successful outcome from his strategy, which was subsequently adopted in many other plantations. While enslaved overseers did not enjoy the same privileges reserved to Whites, they were occasionally rewarded with small monetary payments for their services (Sandy, 2020, 226-228).

The driver was another position related to the management of slaves and the field work, similar to that of the overseer, but solely exercised by enslaved Blacks and subject to the control of overseers. They were mostly employed in the fields where they were expected to "set the pace and watch over the labour of the enslaved, but not accorded supervisory powers" (Sandy, 2020, 41). The responsibilities placed upon drivers were different from state to state as, for example, in South Carolina they often acted as more independent and autonomous managers and supervisors, compared to those in Virginia. Drivers were often regarded with the name of "foremen", because of their involvement in directing slaves' work in the field. However, this was not their only occupation, as they often managed the plantation and had more responsibilities compared to foremen (Sandy, 2020, 41-42). The role of drivers was created in the early 18th century in Virginia as an evolution of the foremen (Sandy, 2020, 32).

In *Kindred*, the slave Luke, Nigel's father, is referred to as a "driver" (15) who is responsible for the efficiency of slaves working in the fields. He is a strong-willed man who frequently challenges Tom Weylin, leading to his sale between Dana's third and fourth travels in the past. He is a close collaborator of the master, and despite his position of relative authority in the plantation, he loathes Whites and teaches his son to simultaneously withstand their violence and despise them (Butler, 1979, 96). Once Luke is no longer part of the Weylin's plantation Jake Edwards, Margaret's cousin, is hired to carry out Luke's duties as an overseer. Jake is a White man, and this guarantees him a higher position. He is despised and feared among the slaves for his ruthlessness,

performing “the same job Luke had managed to do without hurting anyone.” (Butler, 1979, 181).

In *Legami di sangue* the term “driver” is consistently translated by Gambescia as *sorvegliante*, which well-represents the role of surveillance and monitoring of the slaves. The term conveys the role of this person in actively controlling the slaves. It derives from the combination between the Latin preposition *super* (over, on) and *vigilare* (to monitoring, supervise) which implies being vigilant and attentive[6]. Therefore, it is a good translation that conveys the role of the overseer as a supervisor. In Italian, there is no direct equivalent for “overseer”, leading to various translations that only partially render the original meaning. Another translation of the term is proposed by Raimo (18), who uses the word *caposquadra* (foreman, team leader) in one instance. An analysis of the deviation from the consistent translation *sorvegliante* does not reveal a different meaning implied in the source text. The term *caposquadra* is a compound name composed of the words *capo* (lat. *caput*: chief) and *squadra* (team). The term *capo-* implies that the figure exercises control over those below them, in compliance with the overseers’ role of supervising and leading the slaves in the field, proving to be suitable for the rendering of the source word.

The second figure under analysis is that of the driver, which appears in the novel in reference to Luke only in one instance (15). The translations proposed in *Legami di sangue* by Gambescia and Raimo differ from each other. Gambescia chose to render the term “driver” with the Italian word *intendente*, meanwhile Raimo with *mandriano*. The term *intendente* derives from the Latin *intendĕre*, meaning to take care of something, and later evolved into the more common term *sovrintendente*[7] (synonym of supervisor and overseer). This term is typically used to indicate a person that manages public and administrative services. The use of this word as a translation for “driver”, which does not have an equivalent in Italian, is a clever choice. It references the original meaning of the term and differentiates the figure of the driver from that of the overseer.

Raimo, on the other hand, chose to translate “driver” with the term *mandriano*, which translates in English as herdsman, a person who farms a herd of animals (15). This translation deviates from the original meaning of the term “driver”, which does not imply

[6] Etimologia : sorvegliare;
[7] Intendènte - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

the management of animals, but rather of slave work in the fields. When readers approach this passage (15) they might understand that Luke is a figure working with herds rather than leading slaves, hence, completely differentiating the role of the driver, from that of the overseer, despite the fact that they are quite similar.

A third different translation is proposed by Urania, where "driver" is translated with the term "*il negriero*" (Butler, 1979, 91). This version employs a term which might literally translate the word "slaver" or "slave driver", bearing a strong negative connotation which "driver" does not hold. *Negriero* in Italian is defined in Enciclopedia Treccani as a person who dealt with the slave trade both across the ocean and on land, through the selling and auctions of slaves. Nowadays, it is used figuratively to indicate a harsh employer who mistreats employees, bearing a negative connotation. Luke, in *Kindred*, is not portrayed as a harsh driver who mistreats his fellow slaves, and the original meaning of the word does not imply that this figure should be brutal. It would be more accurate to use the term *negriero* to define a brutal overseer, rather than an enslaved Black driver who was itself subject to the violence of the master. Therefore, the best solution appears to be the translation of driver as *sorvegliante*, which was also employed by M. Giulia Fabi, the editor of the 2005 retranslation, in the Italian translation of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Written by Himself*. Moreover, the term *negriera* occurs in another instance of Gambescia's translation, referring to a "slave-trading voyage" (Butler, 1979, 87). This usage complies with the Italian definition provided by Enciclopedia Treccani.

One final term that I will examine in this paragraph relates to the layout of the master's household, in particular to the cookhouse. When translating a text about slavery, it is essential to have a foundational knowledge of the historical social and living dynamics, without focusing solely on stereotypes or distinctive figures.

TABLE 7 - Cookhouse

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
19. "You're to go **out to the cookhouse** and get some supper!" (pag. 70)	19. "Devi andartene **fuori in cucina** a mangiare qualcosa!" (pag. 85)	19. "Devi andare **in cucina** a prendere la cena!" (pag. 92)
20. "As though to assure me that I had said the right	20. "Come per assicurarmi che avevo detto la cosa	20. "Come a conferma che ci avevo azzeccato, la

thing, the girl gave me a look of pity, then took my hand and led me **out to the cookhouse**." (pag. 71)	giusta la ragazza mi guardò con compassione, poi mi prese la mano e mi condusse **fuori, alla cucina**." (pag. 86)	ragazza mi lanciò uno sguardo compassionevole, poi mi prese per mano e mi condusse **in cucina**." (pag. 93)
21. "Repelled, I went back downstairs and **out to the cookhouse**." (pag. 30)	21. "Disgustata, ridiscesi le scale e uscii per andare **in cucina**." (pag. 115)	21. "Tornai di sotto angosciata e andai **fuori, verso la cucina**." (pag. 124)
22. "I went downstairs and **out to the cookhouse** to give Nigel his reading lesson." (pag. 105)	22. "Scesi al piano di sotto e **uscii diretta in cucina** per fare a Nigel la sua lezione di lettura." (pag. 129)	22. "Scesi al piano di sotto e **uscii per andare in cucina** a fare lezione a Nigel." (pag. 137)

The examples in Table 7 show that the cookhouse was a separate structure located outside of the house. This space was not merely reserved to food preparation but also as a location where slaves used to meet and spend their time (Stewart-Abernathy, 2004, 56).

Kitchens were primarily separated from the main house to prevent the spreading of odors and heat, especially given the permanent high temperatures in the South. The detachment of the cookhouse also helped to avoid the diffusion of insects and flies, attracted by food, in the main house. Another pivotal reason derived from the aim of preventing the spread of fires, which could originate in the kitchen and damage the rest of the building. Leslie C. Stewart-Abernathy argues that these arguments were not sufficient to explain why cookhouses were detached from the master's mansion. Odors were diffused in old houses given the presence of chamber pots underneath beds, insects were constantly spread all around the house, and fire dangers were elevated in almost every room because of fireplaces. The actual reason behind kitchen detachment from the main house is often argued to be the need for "control and distance" between Whites and slaves (2004, 62-64). As explained in *Kindred*, Dana considered the cookhouse as a sanctuary where only Black people would gather, eat, and feel safe to talk and teach the children to read, a place that "Not even Kevin" had accessed (Butler, 1979, 106). She holds this view until she is unexpectedly caught by Weylin while teaching Nigel how to read. In *Kindred*, Butler further remarks on the detached location of the cookhouse explaining that Nigel builds a "covered passageway" to connect the two buildings (1979, 161).

In the 2005 edition by Le Lettere, the physical separation of the cookhouse is consistently highlighted, whereas in the 2020 edition by SUR, it is only partially addressed. In examples (19, 20), the adverb "out" is translated with the Italian adverb *fuori* by Gambescia, highlighting that Dana has to exit the house to reach the kitchen. On the contrary, Raimo uses the preposition of movement *in*, which does not indicate a clear movement to the outside, and the separation of the cookhouse building. In examples (21, 22), however, it is made evident by Raimo that Dana is walking out of the house to reach the cookhouse. This translation choice in the 2020 retranslation clarifies the historical practice of the cookhouse being detached from the main house.

3.4 The Insidious Translation of Racially Connoted Terms: Negro and Nigger

TABLE 8 – Nigger and Negro

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
23. "Just a strange **nigger**. She and Daddy both knew they hadn't seen you before." (pag. 25)	23. "Solamente una **sporca negra** sconosciuta. Sia lei che papà sapevano di non averti vista prima." (pag. 26)	23. "Boh, una **negra** sconosciuta. Lei e papà erano sicuri di non averti mai visto prima." (pag. 29)
24. "Try calling me **black** or **Negro** or even **colored**." (pag. 61)	24. "Cerca di chiamarmi **nera** o anche **di colore**." (pag. 73)	24. "Prova a chiamarmi **nera** o **di colore** o anche **afroamericana**." (pag. 79)
25. "A **nigger** teacher?" (pag. 74)	25."Un'insegnante **negra**?" (pag. 89)	25. "Una maestra **negra**?" (pag 97)
26. "She sure don't talk like no **nigger** I ever heard." (pag. 119)	26. "Di sicuro non parla come nessun **negro** che ho mai sentito." (pag. 146)	26."Poco ma sicuro non parla da **negra**." (Pag. 159)
27. "Lazy **niggers**!" (pag. 144)	27. "**Negri** pigri!" (pag. 177)	27."**Negri** scansafatiche!" (pag. 193)
28. She got so she'd rather have a **buck nigger** than me!" (pag. 123)	28. "E lei si è messa in testa che avrebbe preferito avere uno **sporco maschio negro** piuttosto che me!" (pag. 151)	28. "E lei preferiva farsela con un **negro** che con me" (pag. 164)

As Table 8 exemplifies, the words "nigger" and "Negro" occur quite often in *Kindred*. In particular, "Negro" is only present once, meanwhile "nigger" appears frequently, as shown in the selection of examples above.

Before analyzing how these terms have been translated, it is essential to understand their history, context and meaning. The appellations used to refer to African Americans varied and evolved during the centuries, reflecting the social changes that occurred in the United States. The first commonly used word in describing Blacks during the 17th century, was "African". This term was employed as a label to refer to both enslaved and free Blacks, whose roots were tied to the African continent. An example of the popular use of this term can be found in Equiano's Narrative, titled: *Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*. The term "African" was a unifying label that linked all Blacks to their ancestral roots, fostering a sense of common heritage and solidarity (Smitherman, 2000b, 44-45).

After the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Black people were not recognized as citizens of the United States' Constitution, which posed the problem of creating a label to define their identity. "African" began to lose significance over time. In fact, after almost two centuries from the first arrivals from Africa, the majority of slaves were born on American soil, weakening the strong ties they held with their continent of origin. Moreover, thanks to their participation in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and the War of 1812, they began to feel as part of the United States, since they were actively contributing to its development as a new-born nation. The term "colored", initially used by free Blacks to define themselves in the early 17th century, regained popularity as a designation for both enslaved and free African Americans. The label began to be implemented in the names of emerging societies, such as for example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909 and still active (Smitherman, 2000b, 45-46). The word "colored" became an umbrella term, including not only Blacks, but also those with lighter complexions, such as biracial people and those of mixed racial ancestry (Smith A, 1992, 497).

At the beginning of the 20th century new associations started to emerge, such as for example, the American Negro Academy (1897) and the National Negro Business League (1900), featuring the new obsolete term "Negro", which until the 1930s was written in lower case. The term "Colored" began to be seen as too broad and general in the identification of Black people, who, after the abolition of slavery and the participation in the First World War, had begun to claim their identity (Smith A, 1992, 498). As Smitherman explains, "The new language was needed to construct a new identity of

dignity, respect and full citizenship." and "Negro" ascended to be the preferred term in the 1920s, when a campaign for its capitalization was launched by the NAACP with over 700 letters sent to European and American publishers urging for a change (2000b, 47). It was unanimously agreed to capitalize "Negro", in order to acknowledge Black people's identity, similarly to how other nationalities were capitalized. (Smith, 1992, 499) W.E.B. DuBois was particularly active in the campaign for the capitalization. The founder of the Chicago *Conservator* newspaper, Ferdinand Lee Barnett, ascribed Whites' use of the lowercase "negro" to a deliberate disrespect aimed at perpetuating the inferior status of Black people. In response to the NAACP calls for the capitalization of "Negro", the Georgia *Messenger* newspaper stated their refusal of the idea, as it would "lead to social equality" (Grant & Bricker Grant, 1975, 436-439).

A new change arose in the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement began its advocacy for rights and equality, and "Negro" began to be criticized because of its ties with the enslaved past, as a label imposed by Whites (Smith A, 1992, 499). In 1966 the call for "Black Power" began the ideological shift in labeling African Americans, in order to reach full freedom and a strong self-identity. The term "Black" emerged as a logical counterpart to "White", creating a sense of equality. This label was promoted through slogans, such as, "Black is beautiful" and "Black pride". Etymologically also "Negro" referred to a color as it derived from the Spanish word for "black", however, it was racially connoted and tied to slavery (Smith A, 1992, 501).

The last shift, as of now, was generated by Ramona H. Edelin, president of the National Urban Coalition, who in December 1988 proposed the term "African American" as a substitute for "Black" (Smith A, 1992, 501). Geneva Smitherman had already envisaged "African American" as a possible identifying term for Black people in 1977, when, in the first edition of *Talking and Testifying*, she argued that it denoted double consciousness and cultural identity. The compound term is functional in highlighting Blacks' contribution to the making of America, and their cultural heritage from the African continent (Smitherman, 2000b, 48-50). The American scholar Dr. Manning Marable highlighted some important events which contributed to the shift toward a new label: the political Reagan/Bush administrations sustained by "programs of thinly veiled racism; the growth of urban youth violence, Black-on-Black homicides, high

unemployment and drug proliferation; and the fragmentation of many Black social institutions" (quoted in Smitherman, 2000b, 49).

The racially connoted word "Nigger", found in *Kindred*, derived from the Northern English word "neger" which in turn derives from "Negro", from which it originated as a mispronunciation. The exact years in which it became a racial epithet are unknown, however, it is certain that it has been used with such meaning since the first half of the 19th century. (Kennedy, 1999-2000, 86). The primary use and significance of the term "Nigger" is based on who is using it and in which context it is being uttered. Smitherman identified eight meanings which can be positive, neutral or negative. "Nigger" can be used positively by Blacks to refer to a friend, to African Americans in general, to a male partner, to a fearless and unconventional Black; as a negative stereotype to refer both to African Americans and Whites; neutrally in Hip Hop and Black Culture to refer to a cool person. The scholar also highlights that "Nigger" is a term which is not used to "*call*" on somebody, but to "*address* another African American, as a *greeting* or to *refer* to a Brotha or Sista" which is a main difference from the derogatory use made by Whites during the slavery period and nowadays. Initially, "Nigger" was used as a neutral label to refer to Blacks, without a negative or offensive connotation, until the 19th century, in which it began to be recognized and employed as a racial slur (2021, 52-55). The term "nigga" derives from "Nigger" and has been popular among the Black community for over a century. Nowadays, it is surrounded by an aura of problematization due to its broad public use outside of the Black community. All of these terms are commonly referred to as "N-word" as they are reserved in use to African Americans. Randall L. Kennedy explains that their use by Blacks is fundamental in taking pride in one's cultural identity, dismissing those who believe they should be abandoned because of their link to slavery (1999-2000, 90).

In *Kindred*, the words "nigger" and "Negro" are uttered both by White and Black characters, to the astonishment of Dana, who comes from modern California. She is shocked as she hears Rufus calling her a "nigger" (23) for the first time, and it is from the frequent use of this word that she discovers she is in 19th century Maryland. Dana tries to teach the little child that "nigger" is a derogatory term, asking him to address her with alternatives such as "black", "Negro" and "colored" (24). Rufus does not understand why he should not refer to her with the label everybody around him uses, even Blacks

themselves. As abovementioned, “nigger” was a commonly used term which was not stigmatized in the antebellum South, and from examples (25 - 27) its widespread use among the Black community is evident. In example (25) Nigel questions Dana on her literacy and ability to talk in the same manner as Whites, and she explains that she learned from her mother who was a teacher. In response, Nigel utters the question: “A nigger teacher?”. Example (26) refers to the episode in which Dana saves Rufus from Isaac who punished him for having raped his wife, Alice. Isaac is sceptical about Dana, who seems educated from the way she talks, uttering the sentence “She sure don’t talk like no nigger I ever heard.” to which Alice answers that Dana comes from far away. The third Black character to use the term “nigger” is the cook Sarah, who complains about fellow slaves who she has to scold whenever they are not productive (27). All of these examples show that “nigger” was a popular and common word among slaves who did not use it with a negative connotation, but to refer to other people.

Both the retranslations employ the term “negro/a” to translate the three abovementioned examples featuring the word “nigger” uttered by a Black person. Raimo maintains this translation for all the occurrences of “nigger”, while, Gambescia employs the translation “sporca negra” to accentuate the negative racial connotation in two cases, both of which regard sentences uttered by Whites, in particular Rufus and his parents. This is done to highlight the sense of reproach and violence contained in the epithet. Scacchi argues that it is not accurate to always translate “nigger” as “sporco negro”, because in the 19th-century South it was often a neutral label, which regarded slaves as inhumane, but at the same time with a paternalistic nuance. It would not be historically accurate to believe that slaveholders defined their slaves as “sporchi negri” in front of other people, therefore, the translation changes based on the context (2012, 277). In this case, Gambescia employs the term when Rufus and his parents first encounter Dana, an unknown Black woman, that had appeared and vanished out of thin air and was trying to save their children, which is not clear to the Weylins until after Rufus is safe. This might justify the reason behind the strongly connoted racial translation, as Gambescia was attempting at rendering the bewilderment towards the episode, addressing the offense towards an unfamiliar Black person, not belonging to their plantation. The second example features the words “buck nigger” with reference to the fugitive slave Isaac, Alice’s husband. Rufus utters this epithet towards his rival in love after he has been beaten

by him, and is not ready to accept Alice's choice of leaving him. The "Black Buck" is a stereotypical character of slavery, which is sometimes defined also as "Brutal Black Buck" due to his strong willed behaviour, alongside with its refusal to bend to the Whites. An iconic representation of this figure can be found in the 1915 movie *The Birth of a Nation* by D.W. Griffith, where the Bucks are represented as physically strong, tall men, "oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh" (Bogle, 2001, 14). In the movie, the Black bucks are exasperated with evident animalization and bestiality pervading their actions, as they desire White women. Butler decides to use this same epithet to define Isaac through Rufus' words, with the aim to offensively refer to a man who physically complies to the stereotype, "conditioned by years of hard word", and able to beat Rufus easily thanks to his strength (1979, 117). A Italian equivalent for this term does not exist. However, as the English adjective "buck" is defined as "The male of several animals"[8], Gambescia decided to maintain a literal translation, using the word "maschio". This adjective in Italian, beside referring to the male gender, is employed with the meaning of virile: "Virile, che ha la vigoria fisica o morale che si considerano proprie del maschio: *aspetto m.*; *voce m.*; *m. figura*;"[9]. This particular definition of the term "maschio" appears similar to the original connotation of the "Black buck" as a strong and manly man, highlighting its physical strength, therefore, creating an accurate translation. Gambescia adds to "maschio" the adjective "sporco" once again, to highlight Rufus' hatred and contempt for Isaac, creating a more elaborate characterization of the insult.

"Negro" is used in *Kindred* as a proposed alternative to "nigger", the epithet which Rufus has employed since he was a child to refer to Dana and all Blacks in general. In the same sentence we find the labels "black" and "colored" which are presented as acceptable alternatives to refer to a Black person (24). *Kindred* is set in 1976 California, a period of time in which "colored", "Negro" and "black" were all acceptable, even though "black" was the preferred term. Butler seems to suggest the frequency of use of the three labels through their order in the sentence, from the most to the least common. "Black", in fact, as explained at the beginning of this paragraph, came into use from the 1960s, meaning that in 1976 it was already widespread. Meanwhile, "Negro", the second preferred term, had been popular until the implementation of "Black", merely a decade before. "Colored",

[8] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "buck (n.1)," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7741129197.

[9] Màschio - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

finally, was the most outdated, but still acceptable term, which preceded "Negro" before the 1920s.

The translations do not render the tricolon in its entirety. Gambescia reduced the three labels to two, maintaining the first and third, and eliminating "Negro". The translator's choice likely stems from the negative connotation the literal translation of this term holds in Italian. Some scholars and authors argue that "Negro" should be translated as *negro* in Italian, without concern for its negative connotation, as Italy does not have a history of slavery. They suggest that refusing the use of *negro* is an unnecessary adaption to American linguistic standards. As a matter of fact, *negro* is nowadays mostly used as an insult in Italian, rather than in its original etymological meaning of "black" and this led to a commonly accepted eradication of its use (Scacchi, 2012, 274). The immediate equivalent for translating "Negro" becomes *nero*, which is a literal translation of the word's original meaning, derived from the Spanish and Latin term for "black". This explains why Gambescia reported only two out of three labels, as both "Negro" and "black" would be translated into Italian resorting to the same word, *nera*.

On the other hand, Raimo chose to maintain the tricolon, with a variation in its composition. The first term, "black", translates to *nera*, and "colored" to *di colore*. However, "Negro" is not matched by *afroamericana*. Raimo may have followed the same reasoning as Gambescia, using *nera* for both "black" and "Negro", or choosing to omit "Negro" in the target text. Additionally, Raimo opted for the introduction of a third term, *afroamericana* (African American), an epithet popular nowadays, but not for a 1976 Californian woman. It existed as a term, but it was not common yet in the U.S., as the preferred word to define African Americans in 1976 was "Black". The reader, by contrast, might find this term appropriate, as Raimo's translation was released in 2020, a time in which *afroamericana* is popular and not considered obsolete, holding the same level of acceptance as nera and *di colore*.

3.5 Translation Discrepancies: How Word Choices Alter Meanings in *Legami di Sangue*

In this paragraph, I will analyze the different translations of important and pivotal terms found in *Kindred*. The primary translation I will examine is that of the sentence

featured in the title of this dissertation: “You don’t talk right or dress right or act right.” (Butler, 1979, 30).

TABLE 9 – Title

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
29. “You don’t talk **right** or dress **right** or act **right**.” (pag. 30)	29. “Tu non parli **nel modo giusto** né ti vesti **nel modo giusto** né ti comporti **nel modo giusto**.” (pag. 33)	29. “Si vede **da come** parli, **da come** ti vesti e **da come** ti comporti.” (pag. 36)

I was especially fascinated by this sentence when I first began my comparative analysis for its different Italian translations. This statement is uttered by Rufus in the second chapter, “The Fire”, as he is getting to know Dana after she extinguished a fire in his house. Rufus observes that Dana is dissimilar from any other Black person he has ever known. When he first saw her, while drowning in the river, he noticed she was wearing “pants like a man”, which led him to believe she was actually a man (Butler, 1979, 22). On their second encounter she is wearing jeans again, an uncommon item of clothing for a woman of the 19th century who, on the contrary, would be wearing a long dress and her hair tied up. Unsure of Dana’s status, he asks her if she is a slave: “You’re not a slave, are you?” (Butler, 1979, 30). As Dana explains she is a free woman, Rufus observes that he did not think she was a slave because of the way she talks, dresses and behaves (29). Dana dressed like a man, talked similarly to a White educated person from the North, and is not submissive towards Rufus. As a matter of fact, she addresses him with the affectionate nickname “Rufe”, rather than as “Master Rufus”, like any other Black does.

Gambescia’s translation is particularly effective in capturing Butler’s intention behind the sentence. The adverb “right” is used in an interesting way, referring to a “correct manner” in which slaves were expected to talk, dress and behave. Gambescia maintains this nuance in her translation through the adverb “nel modo giusto”, repeated three times to accompany the three verbs. Raimo, on the contrary, does not translate the sentence literally. Her translation suggests that Dana is not a slave based on how she talks, dresses and behaves. This does not convey the subtle meaning of a “correct” manner of speaking, dressing and behaving specifically reserved to slaves. Moreover, with Raimo’s translation, the reader might assume that Dana does not talk, dress and behave like a slave

merely because she is a modern 20th century woman. In *Kindred*, both Whites and Blacks frequently compare Dana to a White person, remarking the concept of a "correct" manner of behaviour expected from slaves. For example, Nigel asks Dana: "Why you try to talk like white folks?", defining her way of speaking "More like white folks than some white folks.". Isaac, on their first encounter, comments on her language: "She sure don't talk like no nigger I ever heard. Talks like she been mighty close with the white folks—for a long time." (Butler, 1979, 74, 119). She is defined as a "Reading-nigger. *White-nigger*!" by Alice, highlighting Dana's unusual mastering of literacy for a Black person. Alice also explicitly condemns her for her behaviour: "You always try to act so white. White nigger, turning against your own people!" (Butler, 1979, 160). Margaret Weylin describes Dana's voice as indistinguishable from that of a White person, observing that if she closes her eyes while listening to her speak, she can forget Dana is Black. It is evident that the protagonist is very different from other Black people from the antebellum South. This results from her ignorance of the norms and expected behavior for Blacks, as well as from her modern origins as a 1976 woman who was granted the same rights as any White person. Therefore, Dana knows how to read, and she reads better than Tom Weylin, the master of the plantation, does, and she also talks in perfect Standard English, without resorting to AAVE, like some of the slaves do (Butler, 1979, 102). Dana is not submissive, she is not scared to challenge Weylin or Margaret, being often yelled at for talking back when she is not supposed to. It is also important to highlight that Dana is not a traitor to the Black community, despite the frequent accusations that she is too similar to Whites. In 19th-century Maryland, the aspects of her personality and behavior that are condemned are those concerning the freedom she enjoys in the present. Both Butler's text and Gambescia's versions make clear that there was a substantial and significant division between Whites and Blacks in the past, with distinct expectations of behavior for each group.

TABLE 10 – To think

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
30. "You **think** you're white!" (pag. 164)	30. "Tu **pensi** di essere bianca!" (pag. 202)	30. "Tu ti **senti** una bianca!»" (pag. 36)

Table 10 shows one of the most frequent accusations made against Dana. Butler's choice to use the verb "think" is matched in the literal translation by Gambescia with *pensi*. By contrast, Raimo employs the term *senti* (to feel), which is quite different from the original meaning of "think", leading to a distortion in the sentence's meaning. In Butler, Dana is accused of thinking about herself as a White person due to her manner of speaking and behaving. Whereas, in Raimo's translation Dana is accused of "feeling" White, which implies a shift in her Black identity. This is not consistent with *Kindred*, as Dana never uses the label "White" to define herself, nor does she ever feel like a White person, frequently remarking her identity as a Black woman. It is unrealistic to imply that Dana would "feel" White, because despite being blamed for her particular behaving, she would not be compared to a White person due to the strong exclusivity and privilege associated with the White identity. The "one drop rule" principle illustrates that any person with Black ancestry was considered Black regardless of their phenotype, therefore, it is unlikely for Dana to be actually considered as a White person (Scacchi, 2012, 267).

Regarding slaves' expected behavior, it is also interesting to examine how they were introduced to religion as a means of maintaining control on their lives and their thoughts.

TABLE 11 – "Safe" Bible verses

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
31. The couple dispensed candy and "**safe**" Bible verses ("Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters …"). The kids got candy for repeating the verses. (pag. 183)	31. La coppia dispensava caramelle e versetti "**adatti**" della Bibbia. ("Servi, obbedite ai vostri padroni..."). I ragazzini ricevevano le caramelle se ripetevano i versi. (pag. 226)	31. I due dispensavano caramelle e versetti «**tranquilli**» della Bibbia («Servi, siate ubbidienti ai vostri padroni...»). Se i bambini ripetevano i versetti, si beccavano le caramelle. (pag. 36)

In this section of the novel portrayed in Table 11, Dana is waiting to be reunited with her husband Kevin, after he spent five years in the past. She is doing the laundry with Alice as they both notice a white-bearded man on a horse approaching the house fence. Dana associates the figure with that of the Methodist minister, who used to read "safe" Bible verses to the children gathering around him whenever he visited the Weylins' house. The word "safe" is used to highlight the nature of the verses conveyed to slaves,

which were carefully selected and adapted for the audience. The Bible was used as a tool to reinforce slaves' sense of inferiority and to promote their subjugation. Christianity was employed in maintaining slaves submissive, devoted to hard work, respectful of their masters and satisfied with their condition (Blassingame, 1979, 82-84). Ministers resorted to a selection of verses to avoid the insurgence of ideas of freedom among the slaves. The preferred sections of the Bible were the books of Psalms, John, Matthew, Luke, Ephesians and Proverbs, from which special catechisms were crafted. These vademecum featured questions and an answer retrieved from the Bible. An example concerns the question: "What command has God given to Servants concerning obedience to their Masters?", and its answer from Ephesians 6:5: "Servants be obedient to them that are your Masters, according to the flesh" (Blassingame, 1979, 86-87).

In the 2005 edition by Le Lettere, Gambescia translates "safe" with *adatti*, whereas, in the 2020 SUR edition, Raimo used the term *tranquilli*. The term *adatti* accurately refers to the use of suitable verses, carefully picked out to serve a specific purpose. On the other hand, the term *tranquilli*, revokes a sense of calmness, suggesting that the children were too impressionable and that the Bible verses needed to avoid shocking reactions, for example, through violent narratives. *Tranquilli* fails to portray the manipulation of the Bible to convince slaves of the rightness of their condition.

TABLE 12 – To tolerate

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
32. "But if he survived here, it would be because he managed to **tolerate** the life here." (pag. 77)	32. "Ma se fosse sopravvissuto lì, sarebbe stato perché era in grado di **tollerare** quella vita." (pag. 94)	32. "Sopravvivere a quella realtà significava imparare ad **accettarla**." (pag. 101)

Slaves were not the only ones who had to accept a condition imposed on them. In *Kindred*, Dana and Kevin also need to adapt and tolerate a new life. In example (32) Dana reflects on the impact that slavery will have on her White husband. She worries that he may comply to White supremacists' principles of hatred towards Black people, knowing that he will need to "tolerate" life in the antebellum South. Gambescia resorted to the term *tollerare* to render the meaning of "tolerate". This verb comes from the Latin *tolerare*,

meaning "sostenere, reggere, sopportare un peso"[10]. Therefore, in this context, the term refers to the difficult condition of enduring slavery, which is "tolerated". On the other hand, the verb employed by Raimo, *accettare*, derives from the Latin *acceptare*, that means "accettare, ricevere, accogliere"[11] implying, in this context, an active endorsement of slavery. The two translations are very different. Gambescia with the term *tollerare* maintains *Kindred*'s original meaning of a forced coexistence with slavery, which does not imply a compliance and acceptance of its values. By contrast, Raimo's choice to use the verb *accettare* suggests an active and conscious acceptance of the institution of slavery, differently from what actually happens to Kevin in the novel. As a matter of fact, the White man commits to the illegal help of fugitive slaves, without accepting the horrors and inequalities of slavery.

TABLE 13- To survive

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
33. I liked to listen to them talk sometimes and fight my way through their accents to find out more about how they **survived** lives of slavery. (pag. 94)	33. Mi piaceva ascoltarli a volte mentre parlavano e farmi largo a fatica attraverso i loro accenti per scoprire di più su come **sopravvivevano** alla vita di schiavitù. (pag. 115)	33. A volte mi piaceva stare ad ascoltarli e districare gli accenti per saperne di più su come **gestivano** la loro vita da schiavi. (pag. 124)

Slaves' life conditions were miserable and very hard, as shown in example (33), from Table 13. The scholar John W. Blassingame argues that slaves endured terrible cruelties, with their only hope being to survive and make the best of their difficult lives, often without much hope for a better future (1979, 309). The verbs used to translate "survived" are: *sopravvivevano* in Gambescia's version, and *gestivano* in Raimo's. The term *gestire* (to manage) derives from the Latin noun *gestus* (gesture, act), which implies the ability to do something[12]. In this particular case, it refers to the possibility of slaves to do something for their lives. However, as both Butler and Blassingame indicate, slaves could do little more than survive for most of their lives. On the contrary, Gambescia's translation of "survived" appears more suitable for the intended meaning of the sentence.

[10] DIZIONARIO LATINO OLIVETTI - Latino-Italiano (dizionario-latino.com)
[11] DIZIONARIO LATINO OLIVETTI - Latino-Italiano (dizionario-latino.com)
[12] Etimologia : gestire;

The etymology of *sopravvivere* does not fully capture the term's deeper meaning, as it literally means to outlive someone. This represents only one of the possible meanings of the term, which has historically acquired various meanings over time. In fact, Enciclopedia Treccani includes in its meanings the following: "Restare in vita dopo che si sono verificati determinati avvenimenti. [..] Mantenersi in vita con difficoltà, a stento."[13] This connotation of the term suggests its suitability in this context, as slaves continued to survive, despite what they had to endure on a daily-basis. Their lives were carried out in a "sharper, stronger reality", that left little room for joys and pleasure (34) (Butler, 1979, 191).

TABLE 14 – "A sharper, stronger reality"

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
34. "Rufus's time was a **sharper**, **stronger** reality" (pag. 191)	34. "L'epoca di Rufus era una realtà più **aspra** e più **forte**." (pag. 235)	34. "L'epoca di Rufus aveva una sua realtà più **nitida**, più **potente**." (pag. 257)

Gambescia remains consistent in negatively characterizing the antebellum South era, using the adjective *aspra* (harsh) to translate the term "sharper" (34). In Enciclopedia Treccani the term *aspro* is defined, in its figurative meaning, as "Rigido, duro, grave a sopportarsi"[14]. This definition complies with both the verbs *tollerare* (32) and *sopravvivere* (33), as they both refer to a harsh, *aspra*, past reality. By contrast, Raimo uses the adjective *nitida* (clear) to translate the term "sharper", which holds a double connotation. On the one hand, *nitido* is a positive adjective, etymologically deriving from the Latin *nitĭdus*, from which in turn derives the verb *nitēre* (to shine)[15]. This connotation suggests a positive depiction of the antebellum reality, in contrast with the actual living conditions of slaves. On the other hand, *nitido* may be interpreted as "clear", holding a negative connotation and referring to a reality where social roles were sharply established and defined, leaving little opportunity to dream of a better future.

[13] Sopravvìvere - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani
[14] Aspro¹ - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani
[15] Nìtido - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

TABLE 15 – To realize

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
35. It hadn't occurred to me that she didn't **realize** she was a slave. (pag. 156)	35. Non mi era venuto in mente che non **si rendesse conto** di essere una schiava. (pag. 192)	35. Non avevo pensato al fatto che **avesse rimosso** di essere una schiava. (pag. 210)

The character of Alice effectively illustrates the harsh and terrible reality and life of a Black woman in the 19th century. Freeborn, she preserves her status until she is bought by Rufus, after her attempted to escape with her husband, Isaac. Even during her life as a free woman, she could not live as she pleased, because she is married to a slave man, with whom she cannot legally share a life. Moreover, Alice is subject to molestations from Rufus, who does not accept her rejection, leading to rape and separation from the husband. She loathes her condition of enslavement, never accepting Rufus as her partner. After becoming a slave, she lives in permanent fear, blackmailed by her master. She stands as a poignant example of 19th-century "harsh" reality.

Example (35) refers to the moment in which Alice discovers she is enslaved in the Weylin plantation, after being bought by Rufus as she was on the runaway with her husband. The trauma and injuries derived from her capture create in her a memory loss and physical injuries. She slowly regains her physical strength and memory, but she does not realize how much her life has changed at the Weylin's plantation, until Dana reveals it to her. Butler used the verb "realize" to describe Alice's ignorance of her status, because due to the trauma and memory loss, she had not understood that she had become a slave. Gambescia translated this verb with the term *rendersi conto*, which means to consciously understand that something is happening. This translation choice appears effective in rendering the term "realize" employed in the source text. Raimo, on the other hand, resorts to the verb *rimuovere*, which modifies the substantial meaning of the sentence. In fact, the verb *rimuovere* implies the knowledge of something and the subsequent loss of such knowledge. However, Alice never held the knowledge of her status as an enslaved woman, because she did not have the chance to ever realize it due to the immediate trauma and memory loss she suffered.

Another interesting translation relating to a life-changing situation occurred as a consequence of slavery is found in the following example (36).

TABLE 16 – “Comfort and security”

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
36. And I lost about a year of my life and much of the **comfort** and **security** I had not valued until it was gone. (pag. 9)	36. E ho perso quasi un anno della mia vita e molto della **serenità** e **sicurezza** a cui non avevo dato valore fino a quando non le ebbi perse. (pag. 7)	36. E ho perso circa un anno di vita e molto del **benessere** e della **tranquillità** a cui non avevo dato alcun valore fino a quel momento. (pag. 7)

Table 16 reports the first lines of *Kindred*’s prologue, in which Butler describes how Dana is feeling after her final return in the 20th century, from the past. She has lost an arm, but her loss was not only physical, as she also lost “comfort and security”, along with a year of her life. The choice of words is a particularly interesting as Butler likely intended to highlight the fundamental change occurring in Dana’s life after she understands the suffering endured by her enslaved ancestors. This shift creates a strong and profound permanent trauma for Dana. Her loss of “comfort” refers to the horrors she experienced and the negative impact they will have in her life, similarly to the permanent scar caused by her missing left arm. “Comfort” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as: “A state of physical and material well-being, with freedom from pain and trouble, and satisfaction of bodily needs; the condition of being comfortable”[16]. This definition explains that a person enjoying comfort is free from worries and lives a calm and enjoyable life. This concept can be effectively translated in Italian with the terms *serenità* and *benessere* as Gambescia and Raimo have respectively done. These translations reflect Dana’s disrupted state of ignorance about the past. The second term, “security”, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as: “Freedom from care, anxiety or apprehension; absence of worry or anxiety; confidence in one's safety or well-being.”[17]. In translating this term, Gambescia employed the adjective *sicurezza*, whereas, Raimo *tranquillità*. The latter is defined in Enciclopedia Treccani as: “La condizione di chi o di ciò che è tranquillo; stato di calma, di quiete fisica o spirituale. [..] In senso morale e

[16] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “comfort (n.),” June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1203068253.

[17] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “security (n.),” December 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1169723014.

spirituale, pace, serenità dell'animo non turbato da timori, preoccupazioni, rimorsi"[18]. This means that someone who is *tranquillo* feels calm because he lacks of worries and fears. On the other hand, *sicurezza* is defined in Enciclopedia Treccani as follows: "Il fatto di essere sicuro, come condizione che rende e fa sentire di essere esente da pericoli, o che dà la possibilità di prevenire, eliminare o rendere meno gravi danni, rischi, difficoltà, evenienze spiacevoli."[19]. From their meanings it is evident that both *tranquillità* and *sicurezza* are acceptable translations for the term "security", however, they are not both equally accurate. In fact, *tranquillità* only pertains to the absence of fears and worries, but not to the lack of actual threats. Life in the antebellum South for a Black woman was especially dangerous. Dana is not only traumatized by the experience of the 19th century institution of slavery *per se*, but also by the constant danger she faced during and after her time travels. In the antebellum South she was in permanent risk of being raped, killed and sold, threats which she had never experienced before her journeys through the past. As a consequence, she feels unsafe in 1976, and in her house, from which she was repeatedly "kidnapped" as a result of the time travels. Her sense of security and safety is constantly threatened in the very place where she should feel the safest, contributing to the lasting trauma throughout her entire life.

TABLE 17 – "To be drawn back"

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
37. "Look, if you're **drawn back** there again, what can you do but try to survive? You're not going to just let them kill you." (pag. 48)	37. "Ascolta, se vieni di nuovo **trascinata** là, cosa puoi fare se non cercare di sopravvivere? Non avrai intenzione di lasciare semplicemente che ti uccidano?" (pag. 56)	37. "Senti, se **ci tornerai** di nuovo, che altro puoi fare se non cercare di sopravvivere? Non ti lascerai certo ammazzare come se niente fosse." (pag. 61)

Table 17 exemplifies the constant fear to which Dana is condemned, because she does not have the power to control her time travels. Kevin urges her to take precautions to protect herself in the eventuality that she is drawn back to the past, preparing a bag of items which might help her. The use of the verb "drawn back" connects to the lack of

[18] Tranquillità - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani
[19] Sicurézza - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

safety and security in Dana's life (36). The sentence "if you are drawn back there again" is passive, meaning that Dana does not actively control the time travels in the past, as Rufus calls her whenever he needs her in a life-threatening situation. Gambescia's translation effectively conveys this meaning, by using the passive form of the verb *trascinare*, highlighting that Dana is not in charge of the time travel. Raimo's translation, on the contrary, employs the active verb form t*ornerai*, suggesting that Dana is able to go back in time as she pleases, without making clear that it is a passive action over which she has no control.

3.6 Addressing Temporal Shifts: Translation Approaches to the Narrative Time in *Legami di sangue*

Kindred is set both in the past and in the present and it is narrated in first person by Dana, the protagonist of the novel. Dana always refers to the time in which she is in with the present, as "here" and "now". 1976 California is her home, and while she is there she refers to 19th century Maryland as a faraway time, distant from her, and vice versa while she is in the past she talks about the antebellum South as her current location of being.

TABLE 18 – Time and place

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
38. What would happen to me if I didn't go back automatically this time? What if I was stranded **here**—wherever **here** was? I had no money, no idea how to get home. (pag. 20)	38. Cosa mi sarebbe accaduto se questa volta non fossi tornata indietro automaticamente? E se fossi rimasta bloccata **qui** – ovunque **questo** posto si trovasse? (pag. 21)	38. Che cosa sarebbe successo se stavolta non fossi tornata in automatico? Se fossi rimasta bloccata **lì**? E chissà dov'era «**lì**». (pag. 23)
39. Was that why I was **here**? (pag. 29)	39. Era questa la ragione per cui mi trovavo **qui**? (pag. 35)	39. Era questo il motivo per cui ero **lì**? (pag. 35)
40. And like me, she was fine-boned, probably not as strong as she needed to be to survive in **this** era. (pag. 38)	40. E come me aveva un'ossatura sottile, e probabilmente non era così forte come avrebbe avuto bisogno di essere per sopravvivere in **quest**'epoca (pag. 43)	40. Aveva anche un'ossatura sottile simile alla mia, probabilmente era meno forte di quanto le sarebbe servito per sopravvivere in **quell**'epoca. (pag. 47)

41. Perhaps tomorrow night, I could go on behaving like the runaway **this** woman thought I was. (pag. 39)	41. Forse domani notte avrei potuto continuare a comportarmi come la fuggiasca che **questa** donna credeva io fossi. (pag. 44)	41. Qualche ora di pace, poi magari l'indomani sarei tornata a essere una fuggiasca, come diceva **quella** donna. (pag. 48)
42. But **now** I wanted only Sarah and Carrie. (pag. 94)	42. Ma **ora** volevo solamente Sarah e Carrie. (pag. 115)	42. Ma in **quel** momento volevo solo Sarah e Carrie. (pag. 124)
43. I hadn't realized how much I'd worried, even **now**, that I might not be "still me" as far as he was concerned. (pag. 192)	43. Non mi ero resa conto di quanto fossi stata preoccupata, anche **ora**, che potessi non essere "ancora io" ai suoi occhi. (pag. 237)	43. Non mi ero resa conto di quanto temessi, perfino **allora**, di non essere più "io" ai suoi occhi. (pag. 259)
44. But **here**, we had a common enemy to unite us. (pag. 236)	44. Ma **qui** avevamo un nemico comune che ci teneva unite. (pag. 291)	44. Ma **lì**, avevamo un nemico comune a tenerci unite. (pag. 319)

Table 18 exemplifies the translators' different approaches on the theme of time and place in the past and present. Gambescia follows Butler's use of pronouns and adverbs to identify the environment and the time in which Dana finds herself. In other words, when Dana is in the past and she is referring to that specific time and place she refers to it with the adverb of location *qui* (here) which indicates proximity (38, 39, 44). Additionally, she employs time adverb *ora* (now) to refer to the moment in which she is currently located, generating coherence between the two space dimensions in which the story develops. On the contrary, Raimo consistently translates time and place adverbs with Italian adverbs suggesting a large distance between the speaker and the environment referenced. For example, she uses the place adverb *lì* (opposed to *qui*; which means "there") and the time adverb *allora* (then), creating a sharp distinction between the past and the present, even when Dana is in the past. Gambescia maintains Butler's strategy of discussing time and place, creating coherence between the episodes set in the past and those in the present, following Dana's first-hand narration of the story. Therefore, Dana appears to belong equally both to the past and the present. During the novel, she adapts to the 19th century, creating a web of relationships that make her feel at home, besides being far away from the 20th century. Both Butler's and Gambescia's wording highlight the strong links between past and present, and the immediacy through which Dana experiences both periods. This generates a harmonious embedding of the time shifts.

3.7 Localization vs Foreignization: Translating Measurements and Proper Names

Kindred contains nation-specific elements, such as measurements in the U.S. customary system and English proper names. Foreignization and localization strategies are used when translating these items, in the adaptation to a foreign audience. Preserving a certain measurements' indicator which is typical of the United States, but not of Italy, implies the use of foreignization. On the contrary, the conversion of a detail peculiar to the U.S. into an Italian intelligible form is defined as localization. I will not explain in detail the difference between the two translation strategies, as it has already been done in chapter one (see 1.2 "Foreignization and Localization as Opposed Translation Strategies"), but I will report some examples showing how they operate in the translations.

TABLE 19 – Localization vs foreignization of measurements

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
45. I was kneeling in the living room of my own house again several **feet** from where I had fallen minutes before. (pag. 14)	45. Stavo nuovamente inginocchiata nel soggiorno di casa mia a vari **piedi** di distanza da dove ero caduta qualche minuto prima. (pag. 13)	45. Mi trovai di nuovo in ginocchio nel salotto di casa mia, a pochi **metri** di distanza da dove ero caduta qualche minuto prima. (pag. 23)
46. Somewhere **two or three thousand miles** from home. (pag. 21)	46. Da qualche parte **due o tremila miglia** lontana da casa. (pag. 21)	46. Ovvero a **tre-quattromila chilometri** da dove vivevo. (pag. 24)
47. She moved to within a few **yards** of where I lay in the bushes near the edge of the clearing. (pag. 35)	47. Lei si diresse a poche **yarde** da dove stavo nascosta io nella boscaglia vicino al margine della radura. (pag. 40)	47. Arrivò a meno di qualche **metro** da dove stavo acquattato io nei cespugli, sul limitare della radura. (pag. 44)
48. Suddenly, I was facing a young white man, broad-faced, dark-haired, stocky, and about **half-a-foot** taller than I was. (pag. 41)	48. All'improvviso, mi trovai di fronte un giovane bianco, dalla faccia larga, coi capelli scuri, robusto, e di circa **mezzo piede** più alto di me. (pag. 47)	48. Mi ritrovai di fronte a un giovane bianco con la faccia larga e i capelli scuri, massiccio e **una spanna** più alto di me. (pag. 51)
49. He was muscular, well-built, but no taller than my own **five-eight** so that I found myself looking	49. Era muscoloso, ben piantato, ma **non più alto di me**, cosicché mi ritrovai a guardarlo direttamente in	49. Era muscoloso, ben fatto, ma non più alto del mio **metro e settantadue**, quindi mi trovai a fissarlo direttamente negli occhi,

directly into the strange eyes. (Pag. 54)	quei suoi strani occhi. (pag. 64)	quegli occhi strani. (pag. 70)
50. She was **three or four inches** shorter than I was and proportionately smaller. (pag. 91)	50. Era **tre o quattro pollici** più bassa di me e proporzionalmente più minuta. (pag. 113)	50. Misurava **quattro, cinque centimetri** meno di me ed era più minuta. (pag. 122)
51. **Five-three**, she was. About **a hundred pounds**. (pag. 111)	51. **Un metro e sessanta**. Circa **cento libbre**. (pag. 135)	51. Era **un metro e sessanta** per **quarantacinque chili**, mia madre. (pag. 147)

As is evident from the examples of Table 19, Gambescia prefers foreignization, while Raimo localization. The former tends to maintain the units of measurements in the U.S customary system, without converting foot, feet, miles, yards and inches into centimeters, meters, kilometers, and kilograms. This makes the understanding of the measurements slightly difficult for an Italian reader, as Italy follows the metric system. Raimo does the opposite, as she localizes all the units of measurements, making them clear and understandable to the Italian readership. In some cases, (48, 49) both the translators find alternative strategies to avoid the use of the numeric measurements. For example, Gambescia does not literally translate "but no taller than my own five-eight inches" (48) in Italian, rewording it as "ma non più alto di me". Raimo as well employs this method, as shown in example (49), where she translates "half-a-foot" with an approximate unit of measures, the span, which is useful when referring to small numbers, as in this instance. Gambescia occasionally integrates both foreignization and localization in the same sentence (51), localizing the height measure, without employing the same strategy in translation the weight, which she maintains in pounds. As shown by Table 19, it is crucial to accurately check conversion values when localizing measurements to avoid inaccuracies. For example, in (50), Raimo incorrectly localized inches in centimeters, as "three or four inches" correspond to seven to ten centimeters, since 1 inch corresponds to 2,54 centimeters.

TABLE 20 – Localization vs foreignization of proper names

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
52. "Where do you think I went, **Rufe**?" (pag. 23)	52. "Dove pensi che sia andata, **Rufe**" (pag. 24)	52. "Secondo te dove sono andata, **Rufi**?"(pag. 24)

53. "Where **Elisha** breathed into the dead boy's mouth, and the boy came back to life." (pag. 24)	53. "Dove **Elisha** soffiò nella bocca del ragazzo morto, e il ragazzo tornò in vita." (pag. 26)	53. "Dove **Elia** soffia nella bocca del bambino morto e il bambino morto torna in vita." (pag. 29)
54. "I wanted Daddy to give me **Nero** — a horse I liked." (pag. 25)	54. "Volevo che papà mi desse **Nerone** – un cavallo che mi piaceva." (pag. 27)	54. "Speravo che papà mi dava **Nero**, un cavallo che mi piaceva." (pag. 30)
55. I might not have believed them, but I had the example of **Isaac** and Alice before me. (pag. 170)	55. Avrei potuto non crederci, ma avevo l'esempio di **Isaac** e Alice davanti a me. (pag. 209)	55. Ma avevo comunque davanti agli occhi l'esempio di Alice e **Nigel**. (pag. 228)
56. "Her medicine. She doesn't need it so much for pain anymore, **Aunt May** says." (pag. 217)	56. "La sua medicina. Non ne ha più così tanto bisogno per il dolore, dice **zia May**." (pag. 268)	56. "È la medicina che prende. Adesso non le serve più tanto per il dolore, dice **zia Mary**. Ma ne ha bisogno lo stesso." (pag. 293)

The localization and foreignization of proper names featured in *Kindred* is depicted in Table 20. Example (52) concerns the diminutive of Rufus' name, which in the source text is "Rufe". "Rufus" derives from the Latin *rūfus,* meaning "red" or "red-haired", and was used in Ancient Rome as a cognomen. This physical characteristic, the red hair, likely influenced Butler in the choice of this name for Dana's ancestor. Additionally, since Margaret Weylin is portrayed as a religious woman, Rufus might also allude to the Biblical figure of Simon of Cyrene's son, who carried Jesus' cross[20]. The nickname for Rufus is "Rufe" in the English text, and it is maintained with the same spelling in Gambescia's translation, whereas, in Raimo it is localized, in the form *Rufi*. However, the name "Rufus" is not common in Italy, therefore, a proper nickname typical of the Italian tradition does not exist, suggesting that both versions are acceptable.

Example (53) features the proper name Elisha. Rufus explains to Dana that his mother believed the Black who had saved him from drowning had performed a miracle, similar to that of the prophet Elisha in the Second Book of Kings. In translating the proper name, Gambescia maintains the English form "Elisha", which is actually the Hebrew original spelling of the name. Raimo, on the other hand, translated the form localizing it into *Elia*. The name *Elia* pertains to a different Biblical prophet, as the correct Italian

[20] Rufus - Encyclopedia of The Bible - Bible Gateway

translation for "Elisha" would be *Eliseo*[21]. Elisha was a disciple of Elijah (*Elia)*, meaning that the two figures are distinct and different from each other. As it is narrated in the novel, Elisha performs a miracle by bringing back to life a young boy, the son of a barren woman from Shunem. Therefore, Elisha and *Elia* are not the same person, and it is incorrect to use the same name to refer to both of them.

Example (54) features the name of a horse, Nero, which Rufus desperately wants as a pet, but his father sells. Gambescia localizes the name with the Italian translation *Nerone*, as it refers to the historical figure of a Roman emperor. On the contrary, Raimo does not localize the name and retains it as "Nero", which the Italian readership may not recognize as a reference to the name of the Roman emperor. However, since it is typical to name animals after colors, the horse's name "Nero", meaning "Black" in English, does not sound unusual to an Italian reader.

In example (55) Raimo alters the name "Isaac", without providing a localization or a foreignization. The proper name of Alice's husband is substituted in Italian with the name of the slave Nigel. This alteration likely represents a mistake or a free adaption of the characters mentioned in the scene where Dana plots her escape from the Weylin plantation. She reflects on the risks of running away, recalling the experience of Alice and her husband, Isaac, who were captured and brutally punished. In Raimo's translation, the substitution of "Isaac" with "Nigel" can be interpreted as a reference to Nigel's failed attempt at escaping, which is briefly mentioned in the novel.

In example (56), the proper name "Aunt May" is translated by Raimo as "Aunt Mary". Aunt May is an old slave employed as a nanny for small children, whereas Aunt Mary is Rufus' Baltimore aunt. The online dictionary "Behind the Name" explains that the name "May" derives from the month of May, which in turn originated from the Roman goddess name Maia[22]. In addition, it is sometimes used as a diminutive of Mary, which might explain why Raimo chose this translation. However, the presence of another character in *Kindred* with the same name, Aunt Mary, generates confusion in the reader that may not be able to distinguish between the two women.

[21] Eliseo - Enciclopedia - Treccani
[22] Meaning, origin and history of the name May - Behind the Name

3.8 Examining Stylistic Choices in the Two Retranslations of *Kindred*

In addition to the examination of the language used by the translators of *Legami di sangue*, it is also essential to compare and analyze their stylistic choices. In the 2020 SUR retranslation, Raimo uses a register and choice of words that bring the translation closer to 21st century colloquial language. By contrast, Gambescia's version preserves a style more similar and faithful to that of the original. Raimo employs a range of informal and colloquial terms which do not match with the style of *Kindred*, despite Butler's use of a simple language with a fluid syntax. I will present several examples below, highlighting the differences between the original, Gambescia and Raimo's versions.

TABLE 21 – Colloquial language

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
57. The **trouble** began long before June 9, 1976, when I became aware of it, but June 9 is the day I remember. (pag. 12)	57. Il **guaio** ebbe inizio molto prima del giugno 1976, quando ne divenni consapevole, ma il 9 giugno è il giorno che ricordo. (pag. 10)	57. Il **casino** era cominciato molto prima del 9 giugno 1976, quando me ne resi conto, ma il 9 giugno è la data di cui mi ricordo. (pag. 11)
58. "**Hell**, why'd I come out here?" (pag. 12)	58. "**Maledizione**, perché sono venuto qui?" (pag. 11)	58. "**Che cavolo**, ma perché sono venuto qui?" (pag. 12)
59. "You don't know what could happen." (pag. 17)	59. "Non puoi sapere cosa potrebbe succedere." (pag. 17)	59. "**Che ne sai**?" (pag. 18)
60. "Who the **hell** do you think you are, anyway? (pag. 36)	60. "Chi **diavolo** credi di essere, ad ogni modo?" (pag. 41)	60. "Ma chi **cazzo** ti credi di essere" (pag. 44)
61. "No. Look, all he did was **hit me a few times**." (pag. 44)	61. "No. Ascolta, tutto quello che ha fatto è stato **colpirmi qualche volta**." (pag. 51)	61. "No, guarda, mi ha solo dato **un paio di cazzotti**." (pag. 56)
62. "What **lies** did you tell Weylin about us?" (pag. 79)	62. "Quali **bugie** hai raccontato a Weylin su di noi?" (pag. 96)	62. "Che **balle** hai raccontato a Weylin su di noi?" (pag. 104)
63. "I have no money because I **drank** with the wrong people a few days ago and was robbed." (pag. 79)	63. "Non ho denaro perché **ho bevuto** con le persone sbagliate qualche giorno fa e sono stato derubato." (pag. 96-97)	63. "Non ho soldi perché alcuni giorni fa mi sono **sbronzato** con le persone sbagliate e mi hanno derubato." (pag. 104)
64. "You talk like a **damn** book." (pag. 125)	64. "Parli come un **dannato** libro." (pag. 153)	64. "Parli come **un cazzo** di libro stampato" (167)

65. "I keep thinking I might wake up and find him **cold** like the others." (pag. 210)	65. "Continuo a pensare che potrei svegliarmi e trovarlo **freddo** come gli altri." (pag. 259)	65. "Ho sempre paura che un giorno mi sveglio e lo ritrovo **freddo stecchito** come gli altri." (pag. 284)
66. I hugged her and got away from her quickly so that she wouldn't see that I was **close to tears**. (pag. 224)	66. La abbracciai e mi allontana velocemente in modo che non vedesse che **stavo per piangere**. (pag. 277)	66. La abbracciai e poi mi ritrassi in fretta perché non volevo che si accorgesse che **stavo per sbottare a piangere**. (pag. 303)

As shown in example (57) the first chapter of the novel begins with the noun "trouble" which is translated by Gambescia as *guaio*, and by Raimo as *casino*, a colloquial word which does not match the original style. The examples from Table 21, show a straight differentiation between Butler and Gambescia's style and Raimo's. The latter uses several colloquial and informal words to translate terms that, in the source text, are not necessarily from the colloquial and informal register. Some of these terms are cursing words, such as for those in (60), and (64), being translated differently in the two retranslations. Gambescia uses the term *diavolo* and *dannato* which convey the meaning of "hell" and "damn" respectively, meanwhile, Raimo uses the curse word *cazzo*, that is more vulgar. The translations of (60, 64) maintain the use of curse words also in the original, however, they are taken to the limit, with especially vulgar forms. Gambescia, on the contrary, maintains the style of the original by using curse words which are less vulgar, and more neutral. These examples show that Raimo intended to give the translation a modern cut, through the use of a colloquial language closer to that of the 21st century. On the contrary, Gambescia remained more faithful to the source text avoiding excessive adaptations to please the reader.

TABLE 22 – Formal language

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
67. Then there was the unforgettable gun, long and **deadly**. (pag. 16)	67. Poi c'era l'indimenticabile fucile, lungo e **mortale**. (pag. 15)	67. E poi ecco apparire l'indimenticabile fucile, lungo e **funesto**. (pag. 17)
68. A jug went around and I tasted it, choked, and drew more **laughter**. Surprisingly	68. Fecero passare una brocca e io bevvi un po', mi sentii soffocare, e provocai altre **risate**. Risate	68. Girava tra tutti un boccale, diedi un sorso, mi strozzai, il che suscitò altra **ilarità**. (pag. 310)

companionable laughter. (pag. 229)	sorprendentemente socievoli. (pag. 283)	
69. I noticed, now, that he was watching the **big muscular** man who had tried to get me to dance. (pag. 230)	69. Notai, ora, che stava guardando l'uomo **grosso e muscoloso** che aveva cercato di farmi ballare. (pag. 284)	69. Mi accorsi allora che stava guardando l'uomo **nerboruto** che mi aveva invitata a ballare. (pag. 311)

All of the terms in bold from Raimo's translation, in Table 22, show a polished language, sometimes even formal, which contrasts with those in Table 21. *Funesto*, *ilarità* and *nerboruto* are formal terms which are not part of the colloquial register, clashing with the prevalent style adopted in the 2020 retranslation. The adjective *nerboruto* is not typically used in Italian everyday language, and has been used by literary figures, such as Boccaccio and Alessandro Manzoni[23]. Similarly, *funesto* is a term belonging to the poetic language, used in the renowned translation of the *Iliad* by Vincenzo Monti in the 18th century, and by Giacomo Leopardi and Vittorio Alfieri in their works from the same century[24]. Lastly, *ilarità* is another poetic and formal term which has been used by Alessandro Manzoni in his literary works[25].

Another peculiar aspect evident in Raimo's translation, is the style employed in rendering the speech of slaves and Whites living in the 19th century (Table 23). The most evident use of the colloquial language is found in Rufus, especially when he is a child (70, 71). In Raimo's translation Rufus is depicted as speaking ungrammatically and without adhering to the *consecutio temporum* of verb tenses.

TABLE 23 – Colloquial language

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
70. "I thought you **were** a man." (pag. 22)	70. "Ho pensato che **fossi** un uomo." (pag. 23)	70. "Pensavo che **eri** un uomo." (pag. 26)
71. "I thought the house **would burn down** and it **would be** my fault. I thought I would die." (pag. 25)	71. "Pensavo che la casa **sarebbe bruciata** e che **sarebbe stata** colpa mia." (pag. 27)	71. "Pensavo che **andava** a fuoco tutta la casa e che **era** colpa mia." (pag. 30)

[23] Nerboruto - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani
[24] Funèsto - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani
[25] Ilarità - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

72. "You want her to **read** to you?" (102)	72."Vuoi che lei **legga** per te?" (pag. 125)	72. "Vuoi che lei ti **legge** un libro?" (134)
73. "Didn't know it **was** you." (pag. 105)	73. "Non sapevo che **eri** tu." (pag. 129)	73. "Non sapevo che **eri** tu." (pag. 139)
74. "Marse Tom say he **might buy** you." (pag. 95)	74. "Padron Tom dice che **potrebbe comprarti**." (pag. 116)	74. "Padron Tom ha detto che **forse ti compra**." (pag. 125)
75. "I hoped you would **go on** helping him." (pag. 201)	75. "Ho sperato che avresti **continuato** ad aiutarlo." (pag. 248)	75. "Ma io ci speravo, che **continuavi** a venirgli in soccorso." (pag. 271)
76. "I think you'**ve got** something to say to me." (pag. 244)	76. "Penso che tu **abbia** qualcosa da dirmi." (pag. 301)	76. "Penso che **vuoi** dirmi qualcosa." (pag. 330)

In examples (70, 71) Raimo adapts the style of language to that of a little kid, through the use of the indicative mood, instead of the subjunctive. In Butler's and Gambescia's versions, Rufus' utterances are not modified on the basis of his age. Example (73) features Nigel's words translated similarly to Rufus' (70, 71) in both Raimo's and Gambescia's versions. This choice does not change the substantial meaning of the sentences, as it reflects the language of a child who struggles to use the correct verb tenses, such as, for example, the subjunctive mood after a verb like *pensare*. Rufus and Nigel are not the only characters in the novel who do not employ proper grammar rules, especially in Raimo's translation. Tom Weylin is characterized as speaking badly in examples (72) and (75), where once again the subjunctive mood is substituted by the indicative. In example (74), Sarah is speaking with Dana and she uses AAVE. The third person singular verb "say" lacks the inflection and the auxiliary "will" is omitted. Gambescia does not create a translation which reflects the use of AAVE in example (74), meanwhile Raimo does through the use of the present form "ti compra" instead of the future "ti comprerà". Raimo provides a suitable rendering of AAVE, which is not ungrammatical, but as a sentence adhering to the rules of colloquial language. This approach aligns with Cavagnoli's recommendation to avoid mocking Black English (2010, 280).

In Raimo's translation, Dana is also depicted speaking in colloquial language (76), which is unusual noted that throughout the novel she is praised for her exceptional speaking skills that mirror those of a highly educated White person. In the source text,

Butler used the verb "got to" (76) which is not excessively colloquial, but is rendered in the indicative mood, rather than in the correct subjunctive mood.

TABLE 24 – African American Vernacular English

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
77. "Marse Tom already **don't like you**. You **talk** too educated and you come from a free state." (pag. 74)	77. "A padron Tom già non **piaci**. **Parli** troppo istruita e vieni da uno stato libero." (pag. 90)	77. "già non **gli piaci** a padron Tom, **parli** troppo bene e vieni da uno stato libero." (pag. 97)
78. "He **don't want no** niggers 'round here talking better than him, putting freedom ideas in our heads." (pag. 74)	78. "Non vuole che da queste parti **ci sono** negri che parlano meglio di lui e ci mettono in testa idee di libertà." (pag. 90)	78. "**Mica ce li vuole** qua i negri che parlano meglio di lui, o che ci ficcano in testa idee di libertà." (pag. 97)
79. "**Like we so dumb** we need some stranger to make us think about freedom." (pag. 74)	79. "**Come se siamo così stupidi** da ver bisogno di una forestiera per pensare alla libertà." (pag. 90)	79. "**Manco fossimo così stupidi** che ci serve una sconosciuta per farci pensare alla libertà." (pag. 97)
80. "People think she **ain't got** good sense." (pag. 76)	80. "La gente pensa che **non ci sta** con la testa." (pag. 92)	80. "La gente pensa che **è** stupida." (pag. 99)
81. "You know I **don't say no more** to her than **I can help**." (pag. 94)	81. "Sai che **non le dico niente di più** di quello che **non posso evitare**." (pag. 115)	81. "Lo sai che **non ci parlo** se **non sono costretta**." (pag. 124)
82. "**I ain't goin' to** take the blame for what they **don't do**. Are you?" (pag. 145)	82. "**Non mi prenderò** la colpa per quello che **non fanno**. Tu si?" (pag. 178)	82. "Io **non me la prendo** la colpa al posto loro, **non so tu**." (pag. 193)

Another peculiar aspect crucial in the retranslations' analysis is the rendering of African American Vernacular English in Italian. Several translation strategies were proposed and discussed in the first chapter (see 1.4.5 "Translating AAVE into Italian") and will be used here to examine the Italian translations of *Kindred*. All the examples provided in Table 24 show that the utterances have not been translated with any dialect or any form of infantilization or exoticization, which would completely destroy the meaning and ridicule the language. As Cavagnoli suggests in *Il proprio e l'estraneo nella traduzione letteraria di lingua inglese*, the best option is to resort to the spoken language to create an effect similar to the one originally intended in the source text. As shown in

example (77), Butler employs the non-standard use of "don't" for the third person singular, instead of the standard form "doesn't", followed by omission of the copula in "You talk too educated" ("You are talking too educated"), and the use of the adjective "educated" in a position where an adverb would be preferred in Standard English. Gambescia renders through the colloquial language the section "Parli troppo istruita", where she omits the adverb "in modo troppo istruito" which would be required in standard Italian. Raimo, on the other hand, focuses on the first section of the sentence, translating it with the doubling of the personal pronoun of first person *mi* with "a me mi", which is used exclusively in the oral language (Cavagnoli, 2010, 82).

In example (78) the source text features the double negation "don't want no" in which also the use of "don't" instead of the third person "doesn't" can be noticed. The first letter of the preposition "around" is omitted, creating a more informal speech pattern with "'round". Additionally, the phrase "Talking better than him" modifies the standard formation of the comparative in which the extended form "than he does" is rendered as "than him". In Italian, not all of these peculiarities of AAVE can be rendered effectively. Gambescia resorts to the use of the indicative mood, instead of the subjunctive, after the conjunction *che*, creating a sentence closer to the oral language. Raimo, on the other hand, relies on the same strategy in the second part of the sentence with "che ci ficcano" using the verb *ficcare*, which has an informal and colloquial use in Italian, rather than the more standard *mettere*. In addition to that, Raimo employs the adverb *Mica* which is frequent in the oral language to reinforce a negation[26]. This is accompanied by the combination of pronouns *ce li*, which stands for the more formal *ci* and *li*, referring to "them", creating a sentence typical of the oral language.

In example (79) the strategies used are very similar to that of (78), where in the source text there is the omission of the copula, which is matched in the use of the indicative mood *se siamo*, instead of the subjunctive *se fossimo*, by Gambescia. Raimo, on the other hand, resorts to the use of *Manco*, a colloquial adverb used in the sense "not even" at the beginning of the sentence, to render the use of AAVE.

Example (80) features the use of the *Ain't* negation, instead of "doesn't have" and the colloquial expression "good sense" to describe someone's ability to make conscious judgments and make decisions. Gambescia employs an informal tone in the translation

[26] Mica¹ - Significato ed etimologia - Vocabolario - Treccani

with the idiomatic phrase “non ci sta con la testa” which is typical of the spoken language, meanwhile Raimo uses the indicative mood *è* instead of the subjunctive *sia*.

In example (81), the double negation “don’t say no more” is matched in Gambescia through the triple use of negatives: “non le dico”, “niente”, “non posso evitare”. Raimo, by contrast, resorts to the informal language through the pronoun *ci* in “non ci parlo” which would be “non le parlo” in formal Italian.

The last example of the table (82), features the use of the *Ain’t* negation, the contraction of the present continuous verb “going” into “goin”, and the double negative “for what they don’t do”, which is not very explicit but still retrievable. In Gambescia there is not a particular rendering of the informal tone in this sentence, because of the use of the future tense which is typically formal. By contrast, in Raimo the colloquial tone is matched with “Non me la prendo la colpa” with the doubling of the object of the sentence, reproduced in the first *la* (which is not an article) and in the noun *la colpa*.

Another peculiar aspect of the translations is punctuation. Although it might appear irrelevant, authors’ choices are always pondered and aim at transmitting a precise message, even through the use of punctuation (Cavagnoli, 2010, 118-119). As illustrated in most of the examples featured in this chapter, Gambescia typically preserved the sentence structure used by Butler. She often retains the same word order, enhancing the same terms, and using punctuation in a manner consistent with the source text. In example (77) Butler uses a full stop and Gambescia respects this sentence layout, matching the punctuation, meanwhile, Raimo links the two sentences with a comma. The same operation can be seen in example (60) where Butler places the adverb “anyway” at the end of the sentence, separated by a comma, and Gambescia matches this choice with “ad ogni modo” in the final position preceded by a comma. On the contrary, Raimo omits the adverb. In example (56) Butler uses “Her medicine” as an independent phrase, which is matched by Gambescia, who translates “La sua medicina”, but not by Raimo who inserts a verb, creating a longer sentence “È la medicina che prende.”.

A particular use of punctuation present in both retranslations is that of the dash, which is used in English to interrupt the sentence giving the semblance of the oral language instead of a colon or a comma, to set off an appositive containing a series of elements separated by commas and to indicate additional elements which could also be

inserted in parentheses (Vitto, 2006, 292-294). Here is an example of the use of the dash both in the original and in the translations:

TABLE 25 – The dash

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
83. On my last day with him, though, as on a few others, Margaret came in to listen—and to fidget and to fiddle with Rufus's hair and to pet him while I was reading. (pag. 103)	83. Durante il mio ultimo giorno con lui, tuttavia, come in altre occasioni, Margaret entrò per ascoltare – e per giocherellare e gingillarsi con i capelli di Rufus e per coccolarlo mentre leggevo. (125-126)	83. In quel mio ultimo giorno, però, come anche altre volte, entrò Margaret ad assistere – e a giocherellare nervosamente con i capelli di Rufus, accarezzandolo mentre leggevo. (pag. 135)

In English, the dash is used to create a pause in the sentence and to give also a list of actions. This particular placement and use of the dash is preserved in both the Italian translation (83), generally more consistently in Gambescia. In Table 25, I selected an example in which the dash it retained by both the translators. As defined by *Accademia della Crusca*, Italian most prominent linguistic academy, the dash can be long or short and its use varies. The long dash is used in Italian instead of quotation marks to introduce direct speech, or instead of parentheses and commas introducing a parenthetical element or a list. The short dash, on the other hand, is used to signal a link between words, compound words, and the prefix and the words to which it refers. In the sentence shown by the example (83), the dash is long and it is used with the effect of creating a pause and introducing a list of actions deriving from the principal verb *ascoltare*. This use of the dash is consistent all through the novel both in English and in the translations, more notably in Gambescia.

Another aspect of the form which is matched consistently by Gambescia, but not by Raimo, is the use of italics to emphasize a specific term in the sentence (Table 26). Gambescia retains Butler's enhancement of certain words and reproduces the italics, meanwhile Raimo often chooses to avoid it, using it for other words.

TABLE 26 – Italics

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
84. It hadn't just **seemed** longer to me. (pag. 44)	84. A me non era semplicemente **sembrato** molto di più. (pag. 51)	84. A me non era solo ***sembrato*** di più. (pag. 56)
85. "***That woman!***" (pag. 85)	85. "***Quella donna!***" (pag. 103)	85. "**Che razza di donna**" (pag. 111)
86. Abandoned in 1819, Kevin ***was*** dead. (pag. 113)	86. Abbandonato nel 1819, Kevin ***era*** morto. (pag. 138)	86. Abbandonato nel 1819, per forza morto (pag. 150)

As shown in Table 26, the words emphasized by Butler are not highlighted with italics in Raimo's translation, leading to a different perception of what the author intended to emphasize.

One last element of the style, which actually concerns the form of the text, is that of the elimination and addition of sentences and words. This is common in Raimo's translation, rather than in Gambescia, and it frequently concerns the elision of adjectives, nouns, entire sections of text, or the addition of sentences such as, for example, in (50). This might have been done to create a smoother text, however, depriving the reader of parts specifically made by Butler for the novel.

TABLE 27 – Omitted and added sentences and words

Kindred (1979)	*Legami di sangue* (2005), Gambescia	*Legami di sangue* (2020), Raimo
87. When my dizziness cleared away, I found myself sitting on a **small** bed sheltered by **a kind of** abbreviated dark green canopy. (pag. 19)	87. Quando il senso di vertigine scomparve, mi ritrovai seduta su un lett**ino** coperto da **qualcosa che sembrava** un piccolo baldacchino di colore verde scuro. (125-126)	87. Quando mi passò il capogiro, mi ritrovai seduta su un letto coperto da un baldacchino corto, verde scuro. (pag. 22)
88. Dangerous as they could be **to me**, somehow, they did not seem as threatening as the dark shadowy woods with its strange sounds, its unknowns. (pag. 35)	88. Per quanto potessero essere pericolosi **per me**, in qualche modo non sembravano così minacciosi quanto il bosco scuro e indistinto con i suoi suoni strani, le sue incognite. (pag. 39)	88. Per quanto potessero essere pericolosi, mi parevano meno minacciosi del bosco scuro e tetro con i suoi rumori inquietanti, i suoi misteri. (pag. 43)

89. "I hate to think of you playing the part of a slave at all." "**We knew I'd have to do it.**" **He said nothing**. (pag. 79)	89. "Odio pensare al fatto stesso che devi recitare la parte della schiava". "**Sapevamo che avrei dovuto farlo**". **Non disse nulla**. (pag. 96)	89. "Anche solo immaginarti a recitare il ruolo della schiava." (pag. 103)
90. "You like children though, don't you?" he asked. "**You like my boy**." "Yes, sir, I do." (pag. 91)	90. "Eppure i bambini ti piacciono, non è vero?" chiese. "**Ti piace mio figlio**". "Si, signore, mi piace." (pag. 110-111)	90. "Però ti piacciono i bambini, no?" "Sissignore." (pag. 119)
91. I hid behind a tree once when two white men **rode** past. (pag. 126)	91. Mi nascosi dietro un albero quando passarono due bianchi **a cavallo.** (pag. 155)	91. Mi nascosi dietro un albero quando vidi passare due bianchi. (pag. 169)
92. He pushed me close to a **whale**-oil lamp. (pag. 130)	92. Mi spinse vicino ad una lampada a olio **di balena**. (pag. 159)	92. Mi spinse vicino ad una lampada ad olio. (pag. 174)
93. "Are you going to have me beaten for not talking to you?". **He muttered something I didn't quite hear.** **"What?"** Silence. (pag. 215)	93. "Mi farai picchiare perché non parlo con te?". **Mormorò qualcosa che non riuscii a sentire.** **"Cosa?"** Silenzio. (pag. 266)	93. "Mi farai frustare perché non ti parlo?" Silenzio. (pag. 291)

As shown in the Table 27, Raimo sometimes omits adjectives employed by Butler in describing or specifying actions and concepts. Those include, for example, details such as the size of the bed (87), or the source of the oil in the lamp (92). In other cases, Raimo omits important sections, crucial to the meaning of the text. For example, in (88), Dana is reflecting upon the dangers of meeting a White man as a Black woman without a permit, as she is trying to reach Alice's mother cabin. Butler emphasized this aspect with the personal pronoun "to me" which Raimo omits, changing the substantial meaning of the sentence. In fact, armed men, patrollers in this episode, were certainly dangerous *per se*, but in this case, Butler is explaining that they were dangerous for Dana especially, highlighting the difficult condition in which Black women had to live in the antebellum South, constantly risking molestation. In examples (89), (90) and (93) there is an extensive omission of sentences. Although the final meaning remains clear in Raimo's translation, this translation choice deprives the reader from experiencing the text crafted by Butler in its entirety.

3.9 Final Insights on *Kindred*'s Retranslations

In the beginning of this chapter I had asked myself what was the reason behind the retranslation of *Kindred*. Was it aging? The creation of a more accurate translation? Or economic reasons?

As I had already assumed, aging was almost certainly not the reason behind the 2005 and 2020 retranslations, because of their proximity with the first translation published in 1994. The need for a more accurate translation was nonetheless a central hypothesis, which I tried to consider during the analysis, leading to the following considerations. *Kindred* was first translated in the context of science fiction, which undoubtedly influenced the translation and the branding of the book. Despite the fact that I did not analyze Paola Andreaus' translation in depth, the cover and its belonging to the Urania series suggest its strong link to science-fiction. The first retranslation edited by M. Giulia Fabi, an expert in the field, was made to create a more accurate and faithful literary product, compared to Urania's first edition. Through the analysis I ascertained the precision and faithfulness to the source text, and the accuracy in translating several terms typical to the institution of slavery, such as for example, "Mammy", "Uncle Tom", "overseer", "driver" and "buck nigger", which are historical terms that do not have a matching equivalent in Italian. Therefore, if not for the first retranslation and its accurate lexical choices, it would be impossible for the Italian readership to access them and understand their historical meaning. In comparing Gambescia's translation of these terms to that made by Raimo, it is quite evident that the core of the meaning was mostly preserved in Gambescia, unlike in Raimo, who tended to create a translation more focused on the narrative, rather than on the specificity of the terms. In some instances, it is difficult to grasp the meaning of some figures and stereotypes, because of how they were translated. Some examples are "driver" translated as *mandriano*, "Uncle Sam" translated as *Zio Tom*, "house slave" translated as *domestico*, and "field hands" translated as *bracciante*. The terms employed by Raimo exist in Italian, but they do not reflect the meaning of the original English terms. Additionally, the translation of certain verbs and adjectives, which are crucial for understanding historical dynamics and the core meaning intended by the author, is more accurately preserved in Gambescia. The translator tried to reflect even seemingly minor choices that could impact the substantial meaning of the novel if omitted or poorly translated. Some examples are the translation of the verbs

"tolerate" referred to slavery, the meaning of the sentence quoted in the title of this dissertation on slaves' behavior, and the use of Bible "safe" verses to build a fake reality for slaves, which are more faithful to the original meaning in Gambescia. By this, I do not mean that the translator must completely adhere to the author's lexical choices, but rather that it is necessary to try and preserve the essence of the novel's message. As remarked by Susan Bassnett, the mere knowledge of a language is not enough to perform a good translation. This is evident in the accurate word choices made in Gambescia's translation, which resulted in a precise and faithful rendering of terms and concepts specific to slavery (2002, 16). Raimo, on the other hand, was more accurate in the localization of measurements, for example, that would otherwise be unintelligible to the Italian public, and in the rendering of children's way of speaking, in particular Rufus. Additionally, in the translation of AAVE, Raimo is consistently more focused on employing the colloquial register to highlight the presence of a different language, and not to lose the richness it instills in the source text. As Raimo herself stated in her 2021 interview on *Legami di sangue*, in the translation process she was more keen on rendering the story as a whole, as a novel. This is perceptible in the smoothness of the written text, which could be approached also by a 15-year-old, as she stated. Gambescia's translation is also smooth, but it is likely to be more suitable for readers interested in gaining a profound knowledge and understanding of slavery through a neo-slave-narrative, rather than just a novel. Upon first reading both translations, I had the impression that Raimo's version was more fictionalized and romanticized compared to Gambescia. The 2005 translation, in contrast, is more faithful to the source text, creating a stronger connection with Butler and her original language.

Considering the title of the first chapter of this dissertation: "The Complexity of Translation: *tradurre* or *tradire*?" I believe that both Gambescia and Raimo have attempted at translating the source text without distorting Butler's aim and intended meaning. However, each translation has specific aspects which affect its accuracy and closeness to the source text depending on the translation strategies adopted, or of the translator's final aim. Gambescia appears to be the most compliant and faithful to the original, while Raimo often takes liberties resulting in a text that is more "romanticized".

Conclusion

This study aimed at comparatively analyzing the Italian retranslations of the novel and neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, by Octavia E. Butler. This main goal was reached by careful consideration of the translation strategies employed, particularly focusing on retranslation, translation of African American Vernacular English, and of the genesis and development of the neo-slave narrative genre. Different approaches emerged in the 2005 edition by Le Lettere, and the 2020 edition by SUR, highlighting a stronger adherence to the source text in the first retranslation by Gambescia, compared to the second by Raimo.

The approach adopted was a detailed comparative analysis of all the aspects peculiar to the source text: linguistic, syntactic and socio-cultural. As I performed a first read and analysis of the retranslations I noticed an apparent correspondence between the source and the target texts. However, a deeper analysis was necessary to understand the actual meaning of words. The seeming correspondence between two terms in the dictionary is not the final confirmation of correctness, but the first step towards a profound analysis of the socio-cultural context in which the term is placed both in English and in Italian. This was an essential and unavoidable exercise, crucial to the understanding of the faithfulness towards the source text. Having no access to the original text, the target reader will accept as true what is presented in the target text, therefore, being denied the access to the true and authentic meaning intended by the author in the case of an inaccurate translation. My analysis was conducted by these principles, alongside with the employment of the theories presented in the first two chapters on translation, retranslation and the neo-slave narrative genre. The pivotal research question to which I tried to answer was whether a better and deeper knowledge of the source's culture, in addition to the mastering of more than a language, is guarantee of a better and more accurate translation in linguistic and contextual terms.

The neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, in Italian *Legami di sangue*, was crafted by Butler to create a new consciousness and understanding of the slavery period and of the consequences brought about after its formal abolition in 1865 with the 13th amendment.

The substantial and profound spirit and message of the novel are more carefully reproduced in Gambescia's retranslation, thanks to the attentive rendering of racial stereotypes, figures specific to the institution of slavery and terms functional to the transmission of 19th century harsh reality. As argued in the first chapter, translation is a

challenging task, in which a trained figure transports meaning from one language to another, more specifically from a source to a target language. However, the mere knowledge of multiple languages is not enough to perform a good translation, because it is important to hold a consistent familiarity with the context and culture of the source text (Bassnett, 2002, 16).

Gambescia's 2005 version is keen on reproducing *Kindred*'s profound message, through a careful translation of the Mammy and Uncle Tom figures, using a literal widespread translation for the latter, as *Zio Tom*, and maintaining the original form for the term "Mammy". Raimo, on the other hand, uses the word *Mami*, retrieved from the 1949 Italian dubbing of the movie *Gone with the Wind*, without consistency, as she also employs it in the translation of the word "mama" used to address Alice's mother. Although translating the term "Uncle Tom" correctly, Raimo fails to translate the figure of "Uncle Sam" by employing once again the translation *Zio Tom*. These word choices fail to render the meaning of the source text, invalidating the stereotypical figures which are not properly employed in the translation or recognized by the readership. An analogous issue is found in the translation of several terms specific to the institution of slavery: trader, "field hands", house servant, driver and overseer. These terms are not entirely wrong in Raimo's translation, but mainly imprecise and not historically accurate in conveying the original meaning of the words. In Gambescia's translation, those terms are accurately rendered through experimental solutions which denote a deep historic research, likely aided by the editing of the expert in Anglo-American Literature M. Giulia Fabi. These examples help sustain the hypothesis that a profound knowledge of the source culture and language can lead to a more accurate translation, as described in the first chapter. This is not only evident in the rendering of the terms specific to the institution of slavery, but also in verbs and adjectives functional to presenting the antebellum plantation's reality. For example, as in the translation of the sentence quoted in the title for what concerns the adverb "right" accompanying the tricolon of verbs. Additionally, the higher accuracy of Gambescia's translation is clear in the rendering of the verbs in the following sentences: "You think you're white!" and "But if he survived here, it would be because he managed to tolerate the life here." and in the adjectives "safe Bible verses" and "Rufus's time was a sharper, stronger reality". Those may appear as trivialities,

however, they prove to be important terms in the rendering of the novel's intended meaning.

Raimo was more accurate and precise in translating words concerning measurements through the use of localization. Additionally, she is consistent in rendering sentences uttered by little children or segments of AAVE through colloquial language. As the translator Franca Cavagnoli argues, it is fundamental to render African American Vernacular English as a language, through the use of colloquial forms, without mocking or ridiculing Black people's language. Gambescia adopts this strategy as well, however, without complete consistency in the rendering of all the forms of AAVE, as sometimes they are not distinguishable from utterances in Standard English. These two tendencies are labeled as *riscrittura appropriata* as the peculiarities are maintained in the target texts, and *riscrittura appropriante* when they are erased and replaced with Standard English (Cavagnoli, 2012, 39).

Concerning retranslation, on the one hand, the 2005 edition was surely crafted to restore the text's profound meaning and detach it from the label of science-fiction given by the first translation in 1994. On the other hand, the 2020 edition is likely to be related to a revival of Butler's popularity in Italy and to economic reasons. This last motive is attributable to the novel's marketing as an "adventure novel" by Raimo. The translator attempted at simplifying the text, removing sentences and redundant adjectives and smoothing both the language and the syntax, which are all characteristic of Butler's style and retained in Gambescia's translation. Additionally, Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis is not validated through the analysis of the three existing translations of *Kindred*. As a matter of fact, Gambescia's translation may be seen as complying to the Hypothesis, restoring the original meaning of the text and creating a more accurate version, but this cannot be said of the subsequent translation by Raimo, as it has been demonstrated by the substantial changes and imprecisions of terminology which occurred in it.

Through the comparative analysis of the two retranslations, I was able to notice differences and analogies with the source text in both the translations. However, it is important to highlight that the first retranslation by Gambescia, edited by the expert M. Giulia Fabi, is the most accurate and faithful in reproducing the author's message and aim of the novel, confirming my initial hypothesis and research question. Butler's aim to

instill in the reader a renovated consciousness for what concerns slavery as an institution of the past which also bears consequences to the present, is clearer in Gambescia's translation, rather than in Raimo's. In reading the first retranslation it is evident that the genre is not merely that of a novel, but also a neo-slave narrative, through the multiple similarities with the firsthand narration of the protagonist, Dana. This crucial aspect is overlooked by Raimo, who created a text highly adapted for a 21st century readership and detached from its historicity as a testimony of slave life. As declared by Raimo herself in a 2020 interview for Radio Ondarossa, the novel can be read as "un libro di avventura [..], avventuroso e pieno di tensione". This declaration, in my opinion, is the sign of deviation from the neo-slave narrative message aimed by Butler, not because the source text is solely an historical novel, but because it is not only a fiction novel. The compendium between the two genres is better reproduced in Gambescia's translation, rather than in Raimo's, in which one genre is highly prevalent on the other. The readership may prefer the reading of the second retranslation, as it flows smoother thanks to the omission of some adjectives or sentences, and the use of a colloquial language closer to the way of speaking employed in the 21st century. However, this renders *Legami di sangue* similar to a romanticized novel, which anybody can approach for an easy and pleasant read. This does not imply that the first retranslation or the source text is difficult and hard to read, but that it is historically accurate and precise in presenting the slavery institution and reality, addressing an interested readership who can follow the storyline smoothly, but also gain a profound knowledge and understanding. It was interesting to analyze the influence of a deep knowledge in the creation of an accurate translation, and it would be appealing to extend this research to other literary translation, in order to understand whether it is a steady and repetitive case in translations concerning neo-slave narrative, but also any other topic.

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Riassunto

Tradurre può apparire un'attività semplice che può essere intrapresa da chiunque conosca più di una lingua, senza possedere altre particolari competenze o conoscenze. Lo studio svolto all'interno della presente tesi mira a sfatare tale mito, dimostrando che soltanto un traduttore esperto, che possegga conoscenze puntuali ed approfondite sul contesto e la cultura del testo di partenza e di arrivo, è in grado di produrre una traduzione accurata e quanto più fedele all'originale. L'analisi comparativa di due traduzioni, o meglio ritraduzioni, del romanzo *Kindred* scritto dall'autrice afroamericana Octavia E. Butler e pubblicato nel 1979, offrono spunti di riflessione al fine di approfondire la tematica oggetto di studio. Il confronto tra le due traduzioni italiane dell'opera è introdotto solamente in seguito ad un'analisi approfondita su alcune tecniche di traduzione, sull'African American Vernacular English (AAVE) e sul genere delle neo-slave narrative. Tali elementi sono imprescindibili al fine di poter comprendere il contesto culturale in cui si inserisce il romanzo, e le modalità con cui tradurre la lingua parlata dagli afroamericani. Lo schema di lavoro utilizzato nella redazione della presente tesi è applicato anche nell'analisi comparativa delle ritraduzioni, al fine di comprendere i motivi che hanno portato ad una o ad un'altra traduzione di una stessa parola o frase, in modo da non affidarsi solamente alla definizione di un vocabolario. Infatti, il dizionario deve servire come primo elemento per approcciarsi alla comprensione e analisi della terminologia, e non come stadio finale di essa, creando un input per la riflessione attraverso fonti storiche e critiche che offrano soluzioni accurate e comprovate. Ciò non implica che il traduttore debba avere come obiettivo una riproduzione papale e meccanica del testo di partenza che miri ad una totale fedeltà, ma che è necessario possedere conoscenze e strumenti adeguati al fine di interpretare al meglio lo spirito del testo e il significato previsto per esso dall'autore.

Il primo capitolo si focalizza sulla presentazione dei concetti di equivalenza e intraducibilità, pertinenti all'ambito di studio dei Translation Studies, che hanno subito importanti rivalutazioni a partire dalla rivoluzione verificatasi all'interno del movimento negli anni sessanta del ventesimo secolo. L'analisi di questi due aspetti della traduzione è fondamentale per dimostrare che il traduttore non può produrre un testo di arrivo identico al testo di partenza, poiché vi sono elementi che non possono essere riprodotti pedissequamente, generando una variazione inevitabile nella traduzione. L'equivalenza

fu inizialmente teorizzata dal linguista Roman Jakobson, il quale afferma che è impossibile avere una totale equivalenza tra il testo di partenza e quello d'arrivo (Bassnett, 2002, 23). Le quattro tipologie principali di equivalenza (linguistica, paradigmatica, stilistica e testuale) individuate dallo studioso Anton Popovič, dovrebbero essere rispettate in toto nella traduzione, ma ciò è impossibile, portando il traduttore a svolgere un lavoro di interpretazione il più adeguata possibile, mantenendo il nucleo del testo invariato (Bassnett, 2002, 33). Un elemento cruciale che contribuisce a rendere impossibile la corrispondenza perfetta tra un originale ed una traduzione è il concetto di intraducibilità, teorizzato da Ian Catford (Bassnett, 2002, 39). Lo studioso declina l'intraducibilità in linguistica e culturale, illustrando che vi sono elementi afferenti ad entrambi gli ambiti che non trovano corrispondenza tra due lingue e culture differenti e generando l'impossibilità di tradurli senza adattarli e modificarli. Le difficoltà poste dai due elementi sopra citati richiedono abilità consolidate nel traduttore, il quale grazie ad una conoscenza profonda delle culture di base e di arrivo può risolvere tali sfide. Il contributo attivo del traduttore è ravvisabile anche nell'uso delle tecniche di traduzione dello straniamento (foreignization) o addomesticamento (domestication), rispettivamente concernenti l'avvicinamento del lettore al testo originale o viceversa, teorizzate dal linguista Friedrich Schleiermacher all'inizio dell'800. La scelta di utilizzare l'una o l'altra tecnica implica una maggior o minore preservazione del testo d'origine, e il traduttore Lawrence Venuti opta nei suoi scritti per lo straniamento così da avvicinare il lettore all'autore mantenendo le peculiarità proprie del testo di partenza, in modo da arricchire il lettore e non privarlo di elementi fondamentali (Venuti, 2004, 148). La scelta fra le due strategie di traduzione, definite come "riscrittura appropriante" (domestication) e "riscrittura appropriata" (foreignization) da Franca Cavagnoli, è molto spesso legata alle esigenze dettate dalle case editrici che mirano a traduzioni semplici e fluide che possano attirare il lettore per la loro scorrevolezza (2012, 39). Queste ultime garantiscono un elevato numero di vendite a discapito della fedeltà all'originale. Le case editrici spesso guidano anche la scelta riguardante quali opere tradurre o ritradurre, basandosi su ragioni economiche come, ad esempio, la scadenza dei diritti d'autore o l'utilizzo di riedizioni che facciano risparmiare sul processo di produzione. È necessario affermare che la ritraduzione è un fenomeno diffuso sin dal medioevo, in base a diverse ragioni che hanno condotto testi minori, ma anche testi come la Bibbia, ad essere ritradotti più volte. Lo

studioso Antoine Berman formula la cosiddetta "ipotesi della ritraduzione" nel 1990, con l'obiettivo di spiegare i motivi che portano alla pubblicazione di ritraduzioni, tra i quali figurano l'invecchiamento e il miglioramento delle traduzioni passate. Berman sostiene che le ritraduzioni siano sempre migliori delle prime o precedenti traduzioni, e sebbene la sua teorizzazione sia stata parzialmente screditata in quanto non tutte le ritraduzioni seguono tale modello, rimane un importante apporto all'area di studio. Lo studioso Anthony Pym contribuì all'analisi delle ritraduzioni distinguendo tra ritraduzioni attive e passive. Le prime sono prodotte nello stesso momento e ubicazione storici, riferendosi dunque agli stessi valori socio-culturali, come accade per le ritraduzioni di *Kindred*. Le ritraduzioni passive, al contrario, sono prodotte in momenti e luoghi storici differenti e comportano un'assenza di influenze tra le une e le altre (Pym, 2014, 82).

Un altro elemento fondamentale nell'analisi del contesto traduttivo è lo studio delle difficoltà che emergono nella traduzione dell'AAVE, lingua nata durante lo schiavismo statunitense e sviluppatasi fino a diventare diffusa tra tutti gli afroamericani e utilizzata anche nel presente. Il dibattito sulle origini è ampio e non ancora risolto, e si declina in tre principali ipotesi: Anglicista, Creolista e Neo-Anglicista. La prima fa riferimento ad un'origine avvenuta a partire dal contatto con i dialetti inglesi; la seconda concerne una genesi a partire da un creolo che si è successivamente sviluppato in un pidgin sino a diventare una vera e propria lingua; mentre la terza rappresenta un'evoluzione della prima con la differenza che la lingua si è sviluppata nei secoli distaccandosi sempre di più dai dialetti britannici in relazione al processo di acquisizione linguistica. Il dibattito sulle origini è affiancato dalla diatriba concernente lo status di AAVE come vera e propria lingua, che fatica ad essere riconosciuta come tale in un contesto di forte razzismo e discriminazione, che la compara all'inglese standard, considerato la forma massima di espressione e correttezza della lingua inglese. Tali considerazioni sono supportate dal forte status che lega l'oralità a questa lingua, la quale si è sviluppata in un contesto in cui l'alfabetizzazione era preclusa ai neri, come raccontato nelle slave narrative. Le peculiarità linguistiche e la forte influenza dell'oralità rendono la traduzione in italiano dell'AAVE particolarmente impegnativa. Cavagnoli suggerisce di utilizzare forme colloquiali proprie della lingua italiana al fine di rendere il Black English senza ridicolizzarlo, attraverso forme agrammaticali che non seguono le regole della sintassi o della grammatica italiana (2010, 81). Infatti, l'AAVE è una vera e propria lingua costituita

da regole come ogni altra, e dunque non si basa sul caso, e proprio per queste motivazioni deve essere resa con dignità e accuratezza, senza ricorrere a forme dialettali o inventate. La traduzione dell'AAVE porta con sé anche dibattiti concernenti la traduzione di autori afroamericani, come è accaduto per il caso mediatico sulla traduzione della poesia "The Hill We Climb" redatta dalla scrittrice e attivista afroamericana Amanda Gorman e recitata in occasione dell'insediamento alla Casa Bianca del presidente degli Stati Uniti Joe Biden, il 20 gennaio 2021. La disputa ha origine nella preclusione dei traduttori neri nell'avere il diritto di tradurre la poesia. Ciò, tuttavia, non riguarda un diritto dato dal colore della pelle, ma dalla mancanza di inclusione di minoranze o particolari etnie nel panorama traduttologico, in cui si prediligono traduttori rinomati spesso bianchi. Questo caso pone anche il problema di possedere un'adeguata conoscenza della cultura e del contesto afferenti al testo di partenza, che ci riporta alla domanda di ricerca su cui si basa questo lavoro di tesi.

In seguito ad una presentazione generale per quanto riguarda la traduzione e la ritraduzione, è necessario analizzare il genere letterario alla base del romanzo che verrà esaminato nell'ultima sezione della tesi. Il secondo capitolo, quindi, tratta dello sviluppo delle slave narrative e delle neo-slave narrative. Il genere letterario delle slave narrative ha origine nei racconti degli schiavi che riuscivano a fuggire dalle piantagioni o dal luogo in cui erano trattenuti, creando un resoconto in prima persona della loro esperienza di sfruttamento e subordinazione durante il periodo di schiavitù. Tale tipologia di racconti non ha sempre goduto di uno status letterario, in quanto nemmeno la schiavitù è stata riconosciuta come un crimine contro l'umanità fino al ventunesimo secolo. Negli Stati Uniti vi è la tendenza a minimizzare ciò che è accaduto dalla colonizzazione al 1865, anno in cui con il tredicesimo emendamento è stata legalmente abolita la schiavitù. Tuttavia, di fatto, l'istituzione schiavista si è trasformata in segregazione razziale, una pratica diffusa fino agli anni sessanta del secolo scorso, i cui effetti ancora permangono nella società americana, analogamente a quelli della schiavitù. Il governo statunitense ha rilasciato varie dichiarazioni di scuse informali a partire dagli ultimi anni del novecento, fino a giungere nel 2008 e 2009 a rettifiche ufficiali di riconoscimento e apologia per la schiavitù da parte della Camera dei rappresentanti e del Senato. Il complesso processo di riconoscimento della schiavitù va di pari passo con la validazione delle slave narrative. Grazie alla rivoluzione storiografica "dal basso verso l'alto" avvenuta negli anni sessanta

del novecento, in cui si riconsidera l'esperienza della schiavitù come innegabile nella storia degli Stati Uniti d'America, le testimonianze scritte degli schiavi assurgono a vero e proprio testamento di ciò che è accaduto. Ciò è funzionale al disvelamento delle esperienze di schiavitù e va verso un'interpretazione più veritiera e accurata in prima persona di ciò che è accaduto, creando una voce anche per coloro ai quali era stata preclusa. Chi altri se non i protagonisti potevano rivelare ciò che era successo veramente, rimuovendo il filtro imposto dai padroni schiavisti bianchi, i quali miravano a presentare l'istituzione schiavista come paternalistica e necessaria a garantire una vita dignitosa per coloro i quali erano considerati non-umani.

Le tematiche affrontate nelle slave narrative hanno subito variazioni e sviluppi nel corso dei decenni, venendo influenzate principalmente dal contesto e dal movimento abolizionista. Le narrazioni più antiche, risalenti alla fine del diciottesimo secolo, erano fortemente condizionate dalla religione, apparendo simili nello stile a quello di sermoni e passi della Bibbia, che talvolta richiamavano direttamente. La presenza del tema religioso era dovuta alla mediazione esercitata da gruppi evangelici che fungevano da editori e molto spesso modificavano i testi o invitavano all'uso della religione. Quest'ultima era evidente soprattutto in episodi di conversione o salvazione narrati all'interno dei racconti, e all'influenza positiva che la religione cristiana esercitava nella vita degli schiavi, come accade per il pioniere delle slave narrative Olaudah Equiano, il quale è raffigurato con la Bibbia aperta sulla copertina della sua opera. L'influenza dei gruppi evangelici cedette presto il posto a quella proveniente da movimenti abolizionisti a partire dal 1830-1840, per i quali le testimonianze degli schiavi fuggiti erano essenziali al fine di dimostrare le terribili condizioni della schiavitù. In conseguenza a ciò, le tematiche principali si focalizzarono sulla necessità di abolire la schiavitù denunciandone le pratiche brutali e disumanizzanti di sfruttamento. In contrapposizione alle testimonianze e alla propaganda proveniente dal movimento abolizionista vi erano racconti prodotti da gruppi a favore dell'istituzione schiavista, i quali miravano a presentarla come necessaria e benefica per gli schiavi non civilizzati, al fine di garantirne la perpetuazione e combattere l'abolizionismo sempre più emergente. Gli schiavisti erano metaforicamente considerati come padri e gli schiavi come i loro figli da educare secondo i valori americani. Le slave narrative dimostravano, al contrario, le brutalità dell'istituzione schiavista e l'umanità di coloro i quali erano ridotti in schiavitù. Le

testimonianze degli schiavi riportavano episodi di corruzione morale dei padroni, i quali erano loro stessi in contrasto con i valori della società americana. Attraverso ciò, gli abolizionisti dimostravano la negatività di un'istituzione che corrodeva la società statunitense internamente. È frequente rinvenire la dicitura "Written by Himself" nei titoli dei racconti degli schiavi, al fine di dimostrare la loro abilità nello scrivere e raccontare la loro esperienza, confutando le ipotesi di coloro i quali sostenevano la falsità delle narrative e l'accettazione passiva della schiavitù. Tra le slave narrative più rinomate e conosciute vi sono la *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*, del 1845, scritta da Frederick Douglass, e *Incidents in the Life a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, di Harriet Jacobs, in cui sono rinvenibili sostanziali differenze legate al genere degli autori. Infatti, le narrative scritte da uomini tendevano a focalizzarsi sul desiderio di acquisire la libertà e l'alfabetizzazione, mentre quelle redatte da donne, sulle relazioni personali e la famiglia. Ciò è dovuto all'impossibilità per le donne di raggiungere la libertà e uno status di dignità attraverso l'alfabetizzazione, al contrario degli uomini, i quali secondo gli standard americani dovevano provare il loro valore attraverso la parola e il lavoro. Per le donne era necessario instaurare relazioni familiari e personali che attestassero la loro "femminilità" come governanti della casa e dei figli, allo strenuo dello stile di vita delle donne bianche.

La rivoluzione storiografica del 1960 fu accompagnata anche dal movimento per i diritti civili, da cui emerse un'esigenza crescente verso la creazione di testi scritti da autori neri, che adottassero una nuova prospettiva sulla schiavitù. Da qui, nasce il genere delle neo-slave narrative, apparentemente confinato al passato per il suo legame con le slave narrative, ma fondamentale per contribuire alla revisione dell'esperienza schiavista che non si è mai veramente esaurita. La studiosa Angelyn Mitchell preferisce il termine “liberatory narratives” nel riferirsi alle neo-slave narrative, in relazione alla centralità che occupa la ricerca della libertà, parola che viene inserita anche nella denominazione al posto di neo-slave. L’obiettivo principale di tali romanzi è di evidenziare la lotta per la libertà, rigettando una condizione di subalternità che gli schiavi non sentono come parte della loro identità, ma come imposta su di loro. L’attenzione viene posta talora anche sull’analisi profonda che viene condotta sull’interiorità del protagonista che ha un’esperienza diretta della schiavitù, cercando di trasmettere un messaggio al lettore contemporaneo. Tra le liberatory e neo-slave narrative si colloca anche l’opera letteraria

al centro di questa tesi: *Kindred* di Octavia Estelle Butler. L'autrice è principalmente nota per opere di fantascienza, tuttavia, con *Legami di sangue* si discosta da questo genere, dando vita ad una vera e propria neo-slave narrative. Non a caso, l'infanzia ed uno studio approfondito dei propri antenati hanno portato Butler ad assumere una conoscenza completa per quanto riguarda le esperienze e il retaggio della schiavitù, che l'hanno condotta a creare un'opera letteraria. La scrittrice spiega in un'intervista con Charles H. Rowell, nel 1997, che dopo aver avuto un'interazione con un suo collega all'università, aveva compreso che non tutti erano giunti alla consapevolezza di ciò che la schiavitù aveva comportato per le persone nere negli Stati Uniti. In particolare, il ragazzo afroamericano riteneva che i suoi genitori, e i suoi antenati prima di loro, fossero nella condizione in cui erano poiché avevano accettato passivamente la sottomissione, considerando il loro comportamento come motivo di vergogna e rabbia. Butler, al contrario, riteneva che le sofferenze sopportate durante la schiavitù e durante la segregazione non fossero che una resistenza silenziosa al fine di perseverare la propria vita e quella dei propri figli. Per questo motivo, *Kindred* è costruito su un viaggio nel tempo di una donna afroamericana, Dana, proveniente dalla California del 1976, che si trova a vivere nel Maryland schiavista durante il diciannovesimo secolo. Dana, similmente al collega universitario di Butler, non possiede una consapevolezza storica che le faccia comprendere ciò che le persone ridotte in schiavitù avevano dovuto sopportare, ma alla fine del romanzo la acquisirà, riconoscendo anche le evidenti influenze dell'istituzione schiavista che persistono nel presente. La protagonista si confronta con Rufus, il suo antenato schiavista bianco, che deve mantenere in vita per assicurare la sopravvivenza della propria stirpe. Inoltre, Dana ha il compito di assicurare la nascita della nonna Hagar, convincendo Alice, una donna inizialmente libera ma ridotta in schiavitù da Rufus, a concedersi a ripetute violenze. Alla fine dell'ultimo viaggio nel tempo Dana sarà una donna cambiata, non solo dal punto di vista fisico avendo perso il braccio sinistro che rimane ancorato al passato, ma anche psicologicamente a causa dei traumi che la accompagneranno per il resto della sua vita, creando in lei un'accurata coscienza storica. Dana impara a riconoscere le dinamiche della piantagione e le forme di resistenza passiva della schiava domestica Sarah, la quale condanna, all'inizio del racconto, a causa della sua subalternità alla famiglia Weylin, per poi scoprire che persegue una forma di sopravvivenza per sé e la figlia Carrie.

In seguito all'analisi del contesto storico e culturale che ha portato alla nascita della neo-slave narrative *Kindred*, il terzo capitolo è riservato al confronto tra le sue due ritraduzioni in italiano, con titolo *Legami di sangue*. Dall'analisi delle case editrici, in cui è inserita anche la prima traduzione della neo-slave narrative pubblicata nel 1994 da Urania, Mondadori, e tradotta da Paola Andreaus, emergono differenti obiettivi di pubblicazione. La prima traduzione aveva come scopo l'introduzione del romanzo in un ambiente fantascientifico, in relazione al genere solitamente prediletto da Butler, di cui, tuttavia, non fa parte *Kindred*. La seconda traduzione, ad opera di Silvia Gambescia per Le Lettere, ha come obiettivo il distacco dall'etichetta fuorviante di romanzo di fantascienza, attraverso l'introduzione nel contesto delle neo-slave narrative. Infatti, tale edizione è stata curata dalla docente di letteratura anglo-americana M. Giulia Fabi, la quale è garante di accuratezza e puntualità nella resa di termini propri della schiavitù statunitense per i quali non vi sono equivalenti in italiano. La terza traduzione, redatta da Veronica Raimo per SUR, ha come scopo un rilancio sul mercato di Butler, in un racconto che viene presentato sotto una nuova chiave di lettura rivolta all'aspetto fantastico e di avventura.

Una selezione di termini specifici all'istituzione schiavista sono riportati in tabelle comparative con l'obiettivo di evidenziare le principali differenze e analogie tra le due traduzioni, rispondendo anche alla domanda di ricerca posta all'inizio dello studio. Un primo esempio è costituito dall'analisi delle figure stereotipate della *Mammy* e *Uncle Tom*, i quali sono diffusi nei media statunitensi sin dal periodo schiavista, e anche in Italia attraverso film come, ad esempio, *Via col Vento* (1939) o *Django Unchained* (2012). Il confronto tra le due traduzioni rivela un'aderenza più forte per l'originale da parte di Gambescia, la quale traduce *Mammy* mantenendolo nella forma originale, e *Uncle Tom* con la traduzione letterale "Zio Tom". In Raimo, tuttavia, si rinviene una traduzione poco chiara per il primo termine che è reso con l'appellativo "mami" utilizzato nel doppiaggio del film *Via col vento*, e che viene adoperato anche nella resa del sostantivo vezzeggiativo "mama", creando inconsistenza e confusione nel lettore che si approccia al testo. Ciò genera difficoltà nella distinzione tra i due personaggi per cui è usato il medesimo nome, come accade anche per lo stereotipo di Zio Tom, che è impiegato non solo nella traduzione di *Uncle Tom*, ma anche per quella di *Uncle Sam*. La maggior precisione di Gambescia è rinvenibile anche nelle traduzioni di termini specifici all'istituzione

schiavista, come, ad esempio: "trader", "overseer" e "driver". Le traduzioni di Raimo non si presentano necessariamente come sbagliate, ma nella maggior parte dei casi come poco accurate nella resa di termini investiti di un preciso significato, trasmettendo al lettore una versione scorretta di ciò che è presentato nel testo di partenza. Un esempio deriva dalla traduzione di "field hands" come "braccianti", in cui Raimo rende l'idea degli schiavi impiegati nei campi, ma ne stravolge il significato profondo a causa del termine che utilizza. Infatti, i braccianti, seppur lavorando molto spesso in condizioni di sfruttamento, rappresentano una categoria di lavoratori salariati, del tutto lontani dagli schiavi, i quali non erano riconosciuti come essere umani o ricompensati per il loro lavoro. Un altro aspetto peculiare interessante nell'analisi è stato l'uso della forma dispregiativa, e non, "negro" nella traduzione di *nigger* e *negro*, in cui entrambe le versioni hanno rispettato il canone linguistico e storico previsto per la traduzione, che riflette sia l'uso neutro dei termini che talvolta il loro impiego offensivo.

Le differenze non sono solo linguistiche, o riservate a sostantivi specifici della schiavitù. Infatti, riguardano anche scelte verbali o aggettivali che modificano il significato di alcune sezioni del testo e che sono state analizzate ricorrendo all'etimologia profonda dei termini e al significato che possiedono in italiano e in inglese, in modo da evidenziare quali forme rispettino di più l'originale. Un esempio è dato dalla frase citata nel titolo della tesi, che viene tradotta da Gambescia in modo quasi letterale sottolineando la peculiarità del comportamento, del modo di parlare e di vestire che dovevano assumere gli schiavi. Tale elemento non è evidenziato nella traduzione di Raimo che appare riferita ad una differenza intrinseca che distingue Dana dagli schiavi dell'800 a causa della propria estraneità dall'epoca del Sud prebellico. L'analisi coinvolge anche l'impiego delle strategie della localizzazione o straniamento, utilizzate in modi differenti nelle due traduzioni, con una prevalenza della localizzazione per quanto riguarda le misurazioni in Raimo e i nomi propri in Gambescia. Per quanto riguarda le scelte stilistiche ed il registro impiegato, le due traduzioni differiscono nuovamente. Gambescia rimane fedele al testo di partenza, riportando meticolosamente elementi della forma come, ad esempio, il carattere corsivo nell'enfasi di alcuni termini, o per quanto riguarda il registro e lo stile, il linguaggio neutro di Butler. Al contrario, Raimo sceglie di impiegare il corsivo soprattutto per termini non enfatizzati nell'originale e di utilizzare un registro molto spesso colloquiale nei dialoghi tra i personaggi, avvicinandosi al colloquialismo del

ventunesimo secolo con termini molto informali. Il registro colloquiale è utilizzato anche nella resa dell'AAVE da entrambe le traduttrici, con una preponderanza da parte di Raimo che è più attenta a distinguere l'inglese standard dal linguaggio parlato degli schiavi. Oltre a ciò, Raimo è più lontana dall'originale in quanto rimuove sezioni di testo e ne aggiunge altre, privando il lettore di tutte le caratteristiche stilistiche peculiari impiegate da Butler in *Kindred*.

In conclusione, per quanto riguarda la domanda di ricerca posta all'inizio della tesi, è evidente che una conoscenza più approfondita della cultura di partenza, oltre a quella della lingua, sia garanzia di una traduzione più accurata dell'originale, non solo in termini linguistici ma anche di contenuto. Infatti, il messaggio e le intenzioni di Butler sono più correttamente trasposte nella traduzione di Gambescia, la quale trasmette al lettore le brutalità della schiavitù e la difficoltà dei personaggi nel vivere in un ambiente degradante, molto diverso dal presente. Il pubblico riesce a comprendere che *Legami di sangue* è molto di più che un romanzo, acquisendo una nuova conoscenza sulla realtà della schiavitù similmente a quella che Dana possiede al termine della narrazione. Ciò, contrariamente, non è allo stesso modo evidente e immediato nella traduzione di Raimo, in cui la narrazione scorre più fluida e si avvicina maggiormente ad un racconto romanzato che pone in secondo piano la componente della neo-slave narrative e l'adesione al testo di partenza.