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Translating *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* into Italian. Sex Taboos and Censorship in Translation

ABSTRACT

Erotic novels have historically challenged taboos, facing censorship dictated by cultural conventions like religion and law (Mudge 2017). This paper examines the Italian translations of John Cleland's *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-1749), translated around 38 times since 1918. Cleland's use of euphemisms and metaphors idealises sexual acts, distancing them from vulgar pornography (Hollander 1963; Spedding and Lambert 2011). Translating sexual content often reinforces societal norms but can also challenge them, with translators navigating censorship and ideological pressures (Santaemilia 2008). This study, framed within retranslation studies, analyses how Fanny Hill was translated in Italy in 1921, 1964, and 2010, revealing manipulations to align with contemporary societal standards. It highlights the evolving treatment of erotic content and the balance between textual fidelity and societal norms over fifty years.

KEYWORDS: Erotic novel; translation; metaphors; sex taboos; Fanny Hill.

1. Introduction

Erotic literature explores human sexuality, covering a range from explicit to subtle depictions. It intertwines desire, power dynamics, and intimate relationships, but faces societal taboos and censorship. Translating this genre is complex due to cultural and linguistic nuances, such as euphemisms and slang,

and societal norms. Translators must balance sensuality with cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, considering the target language and societal acceptance of sexuality.

One influential erotic novel is John Cleland's *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* published in 1748-1749. It is the first English prose pornography, employing explicit content and a literary style with elegant prose and playful euphemisms. It has been translated into various European languages, with about 38 retranslations in Italy alone. The Retranslation Hypothesis (Berman 1990; Chesterman 2004), suggests that new translations emerge as cultural and ideological circumstances change. Ideology, a key factor in translation practice, significantly influences the reception and adaptation of erotic literature, which, by its nature, is highly ideological.

Thus, this study aims to explore how retranslations adapt to new contexts while staying faithful to the source text.

2. Erotism and Sexuality

The concept of sexuality and sexual practices in the classical past would seem to be different from their modern conception, permeated by other cultural and social values. In particular, modern society seems to have a conflicting relationship with eroticism and pornography, despite being now even easier to access and consume thanks to the internet. If on the one hand there is an attempt to limit its diffusion and consumption through laws and regulations, on the other hand there are also online groups and communities that share pornographic material and support autoerotic practices.

This double attitude, in the modern era, is confirmed in the literary history of the erotic genre, whose descriptions of sex scenes have generated specific consumption and reading practices. Attitudes towards sexuality therefore influence the way individual works or erotic/pornographic products also on a deeper level. In the past, texts were amended from episodes or images linked to sexuality and sexual practices with a declared aestheticising intent, dictated by the conventions and moral convictions of the time, producing a criticism of sexuality disguised as literary criticism (Morales 2008, 39).

Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976) posits that the Western world has experienced a repressive relationship between power and sex over the past three centuries, beginning in the late 17th century due to the rise of capitalist and bourgeois society. Foucault argues that before the 18th century, sexuality discourse focused on the productive role of the married couple, regulated by canon and civil law. In the 18th and 19th centuries, sexual practices were considered "perversions", a debated concept between essentialists and social constructionists (Peakman 2009, 5-10). Foucault (1976, 34-49) argues that views about sexuality and perversion are rooted in control and power structures, represented in repressive legislation and as a result of violating established norms imposed by power structures. This system had significant effects on bourgeois society, which engaged in perversity but regulated its circumstances.

According to Watson (2017), the transition from eroticism to pornography, in its negative sense, occurred when the reproduction of obscene material was made simpler by the advent of the printing press, with the consequence of obtaining texts (and images) at low costs and with an affordable price. The erotic material became accessible to all social strata, with an effect judged as undesirable by the Church and the State, who sought to maintain control through moral reforms and legislative regulations.

Nevertheless, many of the erotic texts have circulated clandestinely and the way in which this literature was accepted depended a lot, as already expressed, on the ideology of the historical moment of a specific society.

2.1 Translating Erotica

Sexual cultures worldwide exhibit immense diversity, each characterised by unique linguistic features. Erotic literature reveals the complexities that emerge when disparate linguistic, disciplinary, and cultural contexts engage in critical discourse. These complexities include the translations and mistranslations that occur when bodies and desires are conceptualised as 'sex'. Erotic literature, both in its original and translated forms, is an important medium for providing new insights into how sexual ideas emerged in various contexts through a complex process of cultural negotiation. Translation has played a critical role in

shaping contemporary understanding of sexuality, allowing for the development of various national and transnational sexologies and their interrelationships (Bauer 2015, 1-2).

The field of translation studies lacks literature that focuses on a methodology for approaching erotic literature. Nevertheless, by defining clarity, reality, and inventiveness as a translator's "cardinal values", Pier-Pascale Boulanger (2009) established a framework for translators, providing a methodology designed specifically for translating erotic literature. Those three values are critical to ensuring that an erotic text can maintain the tension, rhythm, and suspension of desire.

By balancing linguistic fidelity with the task of capturing the sensuality and eroticism of the source text, translators can ensure that the translated work maintains its intended impact on readers, through their skill, cultural awareness, and a nuanced understanding of both the source and target languages. What seems to be a guideline in the study of the translation of erotica is the concept of norms. According to Gideon Toury's target-oriented approach (1995), we can identify three types of translational norms: initial, preliminary, and operational. Initial norms dictate whether to follow source or target culture norms, resulting in acceptable or inadequate translations. Preliminary norms govern translation policy and the acceptability of indirect translations. Operational norms govern the act of translation, influencing text structure and language choices. Toury acknowledged the sociocultural boundedness, instability, and extraction difficulty of norms, which are inherently unstable and change over time. As we have seen, ideas about what is admissible or not when talking about sex and sexuality vary with time and society, and norms always change accordingly. Thus, there is a link between norms, social values, power relations, and social structures (Hermans 2004) which shape discourse about sex. Within the translational process of erotic works, a crucial role is then played by various factors, including linguistic, ideological, poetics, and discourse aspects (Lefevere 1992,14), highlighting the interplay between the source text and its adaptation to the target audience's cultural and ideological norms.

Santaemilia (2008; 2015) conducted extensive studies on the erotic genre in translation, showing that the historical context surrounding the translation of *Fanny Hill* into Spanish was marked by societal changes, particularly the period

of 'destape' in Spain following Franco's death. The 'destape' era was characterised by a loosening of censorship and a more liberal attitude towards cultural expression, including a greater acceptance of erotic works (2015, 124). This shift in societal norms created a demand for a wider range of literary content, including translations of foreign erotic texts. His studies confirmed the complexity of translating a work like *Fanny Hill*, which delves into themes of sex and sexuality within an 18th-century English context, poses significant challenges for translators. The text's exploration of eroticism and its philosophical reflections on sex present nuances that may be difficult to capture accurately in translation. Translating such content goes beyond linguistic transfer; it involves navigating cultural differences, mediating between the original text and the target language's cultural norms, and grappling with the intricacies of conveying sensitive subject matter across linguistic boundaries. Thus, adaptation (Kaminski 2018) plays a crucial role in translating erotic literature because it allows translators to capture the subtleties of erotic language and imagery in the target language. Adaptation often requires finding equivalent expressions, metaphors, or euphemisms that effectively convey eroticism while preserving the tone and style of the original text and taking into account the preferences and expectations of the target audience (that is, aligning the content with the target cultural norms). Furthermore, adaptation allows translators to be creatively free to reimagine the erotic elements of the text.

2.2 Retranslation Studies

The term "retranslation" refers to either the act of translating a previously translated work into the same language or the resulting retranslated text. As stated, *Fanny Hill* has been translated into major European languages multiple times, with approximately 38 editions in Italy alone since the late 19th century. This exemplifies "active retranslation" practice (Pym 1998, 82), where retranslations from the same cultural and temporal context reflect disagreements over translation strategies, challenging the validity of previous versions (ibid., 83). Research traditionally focused on literary retranslations, generally viewed as positive, enriching interpretations of the source text.

However, views from the 1990s have been contested by recent studies, which highlight the complexity of retranslation, considering historical context, canonisation, norms, ideology, translator agency, and intertextuality (Susam-Sarajeva 2006; Deane-Cox 2014), emphasising "mobility, multiplicity and plurality" (Massardier-Kenney 2015, 82).

Progress-based views, such as the retranslation hypothesis from the 1990s (Chesterman 2000), suggest that retranslations aim to improve and get closer to the source text. Antoine Berman (1990, 1) argued that translation is inherently incomplete, striving for completion through retranslations. First translations are often thought to be driven by cultural and editorial concerns, tending to naturalise foreign texts for readability (Gambier 1994, 414), while subsequent translations appear to focus more on the source text's style and uniqueness. However, case studies have challenged the retranslation hypothesis, showing that first translations are not always domesticating and subsequent ones not necessarily more foreignizing (Koskinen and Paloposki 2004).

Another aspect concerns the ageing of translations: while originals remain timeless, translations may age, necessitating new versions. Yet, not all translations age at the same rate, and the need for retranslation varies (Hanna 2016, 129). Ageing involves not only language changes but also evolving translational and cultural norms (van Poucke 2017, 92). Factors such as genre, cultural, and ideological shifts influence the ageing process. Thus, no direct link exists between time passage and the need for retranslation (Gürçağlar 2009, 486).

Contrary to the linear progression model of the retranslation hypothesis, later research depicts retranslation as a field of continuous struggle for interpretative control between individuals and institutions. Retranslations aware of prior versions establish their uniqueness by differentiating from previous ones (Venuti 2013, 96).

Changing social contexts and evolving translation norms are major factors influencing retranslation choices (Brownlie 2006, 150), and this explanation seems in line with the fundamental translation principles concerning the erotic genres. Other reasons include unawareness of existing translations, leading to simultaneous new versions, so, retranslations may also aim to introduce new interpretations or address different readerships, as we will see with *Fanny Hill*.

3. English Erotic Literature in the 18th century: Cleland's *Fanny Hill*

3.1 The Literary Background

The English 18th century begins with "libertine literature" and concludes with the emergence of formal "pornography" (Alexandrian 2004, 161) while the rapid rise of the novel serves as a catalyst for the genre's development. During this time, erotica gradually separated from its diverse origins and established itself as a distinct category of sexually explicit artistic representation.

At the end of the 17th century, libertine literature in England appeared as 'whore dialogues', irreverent satire, and scandal fiction. Despite varying greatly in tone and subject, whore dialogues typically feature conversations between an experienced older woman and a younger, inexperienced maid. These dialogues, tracing their lineage to Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (1536), were imported into England via France (Mudge 2006, 416).

However, the market for libertine literature in early 18th-century England also included bawdy street ballads, sensational medical manuals, obscene travelogues, trial proceedings, and criminal biographies. These works shared a satirical, rationalist, and anti-ecclesiastical tone, often mocking pious ideals through explicit content. The novel's rise to prominence, marked by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), gradually displaced libertine literature, which had thrived on educated irreverence and wit. John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-1749), or *Fanny Hill*, exemplified this transition, marking a pivotal moment in English erotica as the novel began to dominate the genre.

Edmund Curll, an unscrupulous bookseller, was a key figure in the early 18th-century "curious book" trade (Foxon 1965, 14-15). From 1705 to 1745, Curll's shop offered an array of bawdy works, becoming emblematic of the period's literary landscape, because it also offered criminal biographies and trial accounts, reflecting the era's fascination with sensational and explicit content.

The range of erotica available on the market was then extensive in content and price. It is clear that a much wider readership of erotic and pornographic literature existed and included the lower classes (Peakman 2012, 37).

The transformation of erotic literature continued with the rise of the novel, and cynics such as Henry Fielding and John Cleland responded to Richardson's didactic approach with their own contributions, ultimately influencing the genre's evolution.

By the end of the 18th century, the novel had become the preferred medium for exploring sexual passion, and British erotica flourished in various forms. This period marked the maturation of the erotic imagination, setting the stage for the modern pornography industry.

3.2 Social Background in 18th-Century England

The redefinition of sex in 18th-century England was driven by several factors, including rising wages, proto-industrialisation, urbanisation, and changes in rural employment (Hitchcock 1996). These economic and social shifts encouraged earlier courtship, marriage, and sexual activity among young people. The transition from a period of greater openness for women to one where they were increasingly controlled by patriarchal ideology significantly influenced this redefinition. The mid-century emergence of romantic friendship also played a role, as heterosexuality became more phallo-centric, necessitating new categories to accommodate lesbian relationships. By the late 18th century, a penetrative and male-orgasm-focused sexual culture had developed, reflecting the diminished role of female sexuality and women's restricted societal roles.

Erotic novels of the period often featured women as the main protagonists, whether they were high-society ladies, students, or nuns. Women were typically the objects of male desire and were often depicted as passive, except in instances of flagellation where they played the role of mistresses.

Female prostitutes could potentially be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society through institutions like the Magdalen Hospital or Lock Asylum. Male sodomites, however, faced severe social stigma and permanent exclusion (Trumbach 1991, 196). This differentiation in treatment underscored the gendered nature of societal and legal responses to sexual behaviour.

Women's roles in 18th-century England were largely domestic, shaped by social, economic, and cultural factors (Le Gates 1976). Upper-class women managed households and oversaw social events, while lower-class women

contributed to the family's economic well-being through domestic production. Despite these constraints, some women engaged in social activism and reform movements, advocating for women's rights and challenging traditional gender roles (Hunt 2014).

Prostitution thrived in 18th-century Britain, but the period also saw efforts to reform and suppress it. By 1750, reformers focused on rehabilitating "penitent" prostitutes rather than eradicating the practice (Mudge 2000, 47-48).

Despite significant efforts and resources, these campaigns to combat prostitution faced financial constraints and fierce retaliation from brothel keepers, hindering the effective suppression of bawdy houses (Dabhoiwala 2007, 301). Nonetheless, these efforts reflect a broader cultural shift towards order, regulation, and the suppression of perceived immorality in 18th-century England.

3.3 John Cleland's Memoirs of Woman of Pleasure

Cleland's book consists of two letters from Fanny Hill to an unknown woman, addressed as "Madam", in which Fanny writes about her life and events (a similar structure to Pamela by Richardson). After her parents' deaths, Fanny moves to London from a small village, and accidentally, she is hired as a maid by Mrs. Brown, a woman who reveals herself to be a brothel madam. It is there that she discovers pleasure, by experiencing mutual masturbation with an older girl in the house, Phoebe. From that event onwards, Fanny discovers diverse typologies of sex through voyeuristic experiences and sexual encounters, until she meets Charles, with whom she falls in love. The two become lovers and escape from the brothel to live together lawfully.

Upon meeting him, Fanny discovers that Charles's father was the man who had originally paid a large sum to take her virginity, whom she had fought off. Charles mysteriously disappears; he has been sent by his father to the South Seas to win a fortune. In the second letter, Fanny works for Mrs. Cole in a brothel in Covent Garden. It is in this second letter that we find a homosexual scene between two young men. Eventually, Charles comes back to England, and the two marry.

This is roughly the plot of the novel, where casual and fatalistic events occur and are interposed with different sexual scenes, described by Cleland through very elegant prose and a heavy employ of metaphors and metonymies, in order to avoid (uselessly in reality) censorship by elevating the description of sex practices to a sort of artistic work of art. Metonymy, as a literary device, allows for the substitution of one word or phrase with another that is closely associated with it. In the case of terms like "mount-pleasant" and "mossy tuft" being used in relation to Fanny's mons pubis, Speddig and Lambert (2011) suggest that Cleland employed these metonymic expressions to symbolise and convey deeper meanings related to sexuality, desire, and femininity

Fanny's character had an impact on popular culture and literature marked by the continuous presence and adaptation of the book in various forms of media over time. She has been featured in comic books, men magazines, sexology manuals, and even portrayed in cinema globally. Additionally, adaptations of *Fanny Hill* have included portrayals alongside other famous characters like Lady Chatterley and the Red Baron, showcasing her enduring relevance and versatility in different contexts (Nace 2015, 137).

A study on the reception of *Fanny Hill* in Spain (Buendia 2002) reveals that the delay in the reception of the novel in Spain was partly due to censorship by both ecclesiastical and civil authorities during the 19th century. To attract readers, translators employed cultural adaptation techniques, such as adjusting references, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances. Paratextual elements, such as introductions, prefaces, and appendices, also played a crucial role in elevating the novel from its pornographic nature.

The historical context surrounding the translation of *Fanny Hill* into Spanish was marked by societal changes, particularly the period of 'destape' in Spain following Franco's death. The 'destape' era was characterised by a loosening of censorship and a more liberal attitude towards cultural expression, including a greater acceptance of erotic works. This shift in societal norms created a demand for a wider range of literary content, including translations of foreign erotic texts like *Fanny Hill* (Santaemilia 2005, 124).

4. *Fanny Hill* in Italy

For the present work, three translations of the book will be analysed, and they are:

(a) 1921: *Memorie di Fanny Hill, Ragazza di Piacere*, Collana: I Classici dell'Amore, translated by Mario Vinciguerra, Milano: L'editrice del Libro Raro (Corbaccio);

(b) 1964: *Fanny Hill, Le Memorie di una Ragazza di Piacere*, Collana: I Classici Proibiti, translated by Mariangela Angeli, Roma: Editori Associati;

(c) 2010: *Fanny Hill, Memorie di una donna di piacere*, Collana: Classici dell'Eros, translated by Franco Garnero, Milano: ES.

As stated in the postface of translation (c), tracking the source text of *Fanny Hill* is rather complicated and uncertain due to the fact that erotic books circulated clandestinely under no real authors' names or places of publication. Several hundred editions of *Fanny Hill* were published, and some of them had additions (obscene episodes) or deletions (Sabor 2010, 251). Some texts were published after Cleland's death, so they are not considered reliable.

For each text, we will analyse paratextual elements such as covers, illustrations (if any), and prefaces, as well as the translation strategies adopted with the scope of highlighting the aim for retranslating this book and the intended target readership. The analysis will be conducted on the first letter.

4.1 The Target Culture and Society

The first two translations, respectively from 1921 and 1964, were produced in specific historical and cultural moments in Italy. Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, in Italy, pornographic books printed on popular paper and illustrated with obscene photographs and engravings were published as a reaction to a century of intransigent moralism, and with the beginning of the crisis of values. They were botched anthologies with pieces by Aretino and ancient dialect poets.

At the beginning of the century, Paris, the capital of eroticism, attracted writers such as Henry Miller, Hemingway, and Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944).

In 1910, the year in which he published his first futurist manifesto, Marinetti also published *Mafarka il Futurista* (1910), the erotic and grotesque adventures of a young African king with an eleven-metre-long member who seduces young virgins. In general terms, the futurists saw the relationship between the two sexes as a collision, a clash; men and women were called to establish new relationships in constant confrontation and struggle (Bertolotti 2015, 183).

In the 1920s, after the First World War and the renewed love for life, erotic stories presented ambivalent female figures (wives and lovers as heroines of free love). Guido da Verona (1881-1939) was the most famous Italian erotic author of those years, and his novels were successful because they told stories of passion in a romantic but sinful way, allowing readers from the small and medium bourgeoisie to fantasise about abandoning themselves to pleasure even if they were aware that they were sinful. At the height of the fascist regime, Da Verona published a humorous erotic parody of *I Promessi Sposi* (1929). In the same years, *Gli Indifferenti* (1929) by Alberto Moravia was published, telling the sexual relationships of a ruined bourgeois family in a lucid and disenchanted way.

It is in this historical and cultural moment that the 1921 edition of *Fanny Hill* (a) emerged. The erotic literature of the time seems to confirm the figure of an upright woman as the moral fulcrum of society (of man) and that of the immoral and criminal woman, the prostitute, with a specific function and charm. In fact, the recognition of the legitimacy of desire also led to reaffirming the redeeming function of the prostitute in the belief that a satisfying sexual life was a question of bodily health and morality.

During the sixties, the years in which the translation (b) was published, eroticism came from the American youth movements, in the wake of the famous *Kinsey Report*, in which it was revealed that female sexual drive is similar to that of man.

The female consumer depicted in Italian television advertising in the late 1950s was an equally conservative figure (Morris 2006, 10). The economic miracle gave rise to a new society where tradition and modernity coexisted and new ideas challenged old. It was a time of gloomy, immobile housewives who were devoted to their families and homes. Additionally, it was the generation that the feminists of the 1970s rebelled against – the mothers of the feminists.

But during this time, the gender hierarchy was essentially unaltered (Wilson 2010, 113).

What seems to be interesting is the fact that throughout those periods, the role of the prostitute within Italian society remained unchanged despite *Merlin's Law* that, in 1958, established the closure of all the brothels that the fascist regimes had maintained open. Prostitutes continued to hold their social function of helping married men (and all the men in general) to keep their sexual desires at bay, ensuring that the pillar of the family, the married woman, could fulfil her role. The widespread belief was that a formally happy family was the pillar of a good society, and prostitutes were tolerated while at the same time maintaining their aura of mysterious transgression (Hipkins 2016, 26-30).

4.2 Translation Analysis: Paratextual and Linguistic Elements

Starting from the paratextual elements, it is interesting to notice the layout of each translation in the study, considering the cover, the book size, prefaces, and illustrations as indicative of the way in which the book was intended to be presented.

The first translation (a), dating back to 1921, was translated by a male translator, Mario Vinciguerra. It is a booklet, rather anonymous, with a white cover on which the name of the author and the title can be read in green. Since there are no illustrations, we can get a hint about the real content of the book from the reference given by the word "donna di piacere". We may assume that the book could be left on a table with no suspicion of its nature, probably imagining it to be a sort of real memoir or report. As for the preface, the translation is presented as an instalment of a series called *I Classici dell'Amore* (Love Classics), from which a reader would not immediately label the novel as erotic or pornographic. Furthermore, it is said to be part of this collection, which is published on fine paper and in numbered copies. In the preface, the editor supports the idea that *Fanny Hill* is a classic, which had arrived in those days in a non-definite form (highlighting the difficulties of having a faithful source text), thus presenting the text as a rarity for a sort of elite readership.

The second translation (b), published in 1964, is presented in an elegant box and hard cover in red and black fabric with no illustration. It is part of a

series called *I Classici Proibiti* (the Prohibited Classics), adding a nuance of transgression to the layout. In the preface, the editor states that the main purpose of the publication is to present a classic novel cleaned from obscene illustrations (in fact, inside we can find a new set depicting men always clothed and Fanny always naked) in order to do justice to a text that had suffered a sort of stigma.

The same philological purpose can also be traced in the translation (c) from 2010, by Franco Garnero, which is part of a series clearly labelled as *Classici dell'Eros* (Eros Classics). The preface explains the problem of receiving a complete source text, which had been manipulated somehow, clearly stating that the intended readership is made up of passionate and cultivated readers. The cover, framed in black, shows a 18th century painted girl at the forefront, setting the book in its historical context.

As previously described, Cleland wanted to avoid being censored, so his style is rich in euphemisms and void of vulgar or obscene words; nevertheless, he describes sexual scenes in detail. For the linguistic analysis, the focus is on three main lexical fields: the description of women's bodies, men's bodies, and sexual intercourses.

Woman's Bodies			
Source Text	**(a) 1921**	**(b) 1964**	**(c) 2010**
29: […]My breasts, if it is not too bold a figure to call so two hard, firm, rising hillocks, that just began to shew themselves, or signify anything to the touch, employed and amused her hands awhile, till, slipping down lower, over a	20: […] Il mio seno nascente, sodo e liscio, irritando sempre più i desideri della mia compagna, per un momento, le procurò un vivo piacere; finalmente essa mise la mano sulla impercettibile fessura, sulla	44 […] Le mie mammelle – se così potevano essere chiamate due dure, ferme, nascenti collinette, che incominciavano appena a farsi vedere, o significare qualcosa al tatto – tennero occupate e divertirono per un po' le sue mani,	24: […] I miei seni, se non è troppo immodesto chiamare così due dure, sode e rampanti collinette che avevano appena cominciato a mostrarsi o significare qualche cosa al tatto, attrassero e divertirono le sue mani per un po',

smooth track, she could just feel the soft silky down that had but a few months before put forth and garnished the mount-pleasant of those parts, and promised to spread a grateful shelter over the sweet seat of the most exquisite sensation, and which had been, till that instant, the seat of the most insensible innocence. Her fingers played and strove to twine in the young tendrils of that moss, which nature has contrived at once for use and ornament.	peluria serica spuntata da qualche mese e che avrebbe ombreggiato un giorno la sede delle più deliziose sensazioni, ora le sed della più insensibile innocenza. Le sue dita, giocando su quella peluria, si divertivano a fare delle treccioline; […]	finché scivolando un po' più in basso per un liscio tratto, ella poté appena sentire il soffice setoso cespuglietto che solo pochi mesi prima era spuntato a nascondere il nido del piacere, e prometteva di rivelarsi amabile rifugio alle più squisite sensazioni.	fino a che, scivolando giù in basso e seguendo un levigato percorso, esse poterono proprio sentire il soffice e setoso cespuglietto che era spuntato solo pochi mesi prima a guarnire il monticello dei piaceri, promettendo di espandere un grato riparo sopra la dolce sede delle sensazioni più squisite che era stata, fino a quel momento, la sede della più inconsapevole innocenza. Le sue dita giocarono intrecciando i giovani germogli di quel cespuglio che la natura ha concepito per l'uso e ornamento.
67: […] Whilst they were in the heat of the action, guided by nature only, I stole my hand up my	29: […] Mentre I due erano nel calore della lotta, io, facendo scivolare la mano sotto la camicia,	62: […] i cui [dell'azione] suoni e la cui vista mi fecero fremere sino in fondo all'anima, e versarono lava	42: […] Mentre erano nel pieno dell'azione, guidata solo dalla natura, infilai una mano sotto le sottane e

petticoats, and with fingers on fire, seized and yet more inflamed that centre of all my senses: my heart palpitated, as if it would force its way through my bosom: I breathed with pain; I twisted my thighs, squeezed and compressed the lips of that virgin slit, […]	misi in fiamme il centro della mia sensibilità […]	infuocata in ogni vena del mio corpo. […]	con dita infuocate afferrai e dunque infiammai ancora di più il centro di tutti i miei sensi; il cuore palpitava come se volesse aprirsi un varco nel mio seno; respirando a fatica accavallai le gambe, strizzai e schiacciai le labbra di quella vergine feritoia […]

Comparing the three translations, we will notice that (a) and (b) are, in many instances, shorter than (c), which is something unusual considering that Italian needs more prepositional phrases than English and that English words are very often mono or bi-syllabic. Hence, we can assume that some material has been deleted, not only when describing female anatomical parts but also in the other categories of analysis. The choice to translate breast with a medical term (b) can be a way to propose a less sexualised description in favour of a more poetic one. In fact, her lover's fingers do not play with her pubic hair, which in the same translation (b) is described as just grown. Translation (c) does not present deletion, and the descriptions are in the same style and quality as the source text.

Men's bodies			
Source Text	**(a) 1921**	**(b) 1964**	**(c) 2010**
74: […] Then his grand movement, which seemed to rise out of a	32: […] Il suo fratellino si slanciava pomposamente	82: […]	49: […] E infine il suo grande arnese, che sembrava

thicket of curling hair, that spread from the root all over his thighs and belly up to the navel, stood stiff and upright, but of a size to frighten me, by sympathy for the small tender part which was the object of its fury, […]	da un cespuglio di peli. Le sue dimensioni mi fecero tremare per quella piccola cosa che doveva riceverne i bruschi assalti.		sorgere da spessi ricci tutto intorno alle cosce e al ventre su fino all'ombelico, stava rigido e eretto e aveva dimensioni tali da farmi temere per la piccola, tenera parte che era l'oggetto della sua furia
188-189: […] those [buttons] of his waistband and fore-flap flew open at a touch, when out IT started; and now, disengaged from the shirt, I saw, with wonder and surprise, what? not the play thing of a boy, not the weapon of a man, but a Maypole, of so enormous a standard, that had proportions been observed, it must	59: Quelli [i bottoni] della cintura e della toppa mollarono facilmente, ed eccolo in libertà! Per bacco! Non era affatto un giocherello da ragazzi, e neanche delle proporzioni comuni di un adulto. Era un affare di proporzioni enormi, che poteva appartenere ad	123: […] Il mio giovane amico, sovraeccitato dai miei gesti […]	101: Quelli [i bottoni] del panciotto e della patta si aprirono al minimo tocco e l'affare venne fuori; e ora, liberato della camicia, vidi con meraviglia e sorpresa, che? Non un giocattolo di un ragazzo, non l'arma di un uomo, ma un palo di dimensioni così enormi che, se le

have belonged to a young giant.	un gigante.		proporzioni fossero state rispettate, avrebbe dovuto appartenere a un giovane gigante.

When it comes to describing a man's body and, in particular, his penis, translation (b) shows entire deletions: in many instances, the penis is not described and entire parts are missing. We may assume that readers might have felt somehow offended by the comparisons that Cleland used with it. In the second instance, in fact, the penis is described as big as a Maypole, and in all the translations, the cultural reference (the English tradition of Maypole dancing) is lost, and the translator in (b) is somehow obliged to describe the penis by simply writing about its big dimensions. Translation (a), on the other hand, seems to use a sort of military or barracks talk, calling the penis "little brother" or "hero", reflecting the Italian culture of that period**.**

Sexual Intercourses			
Source Text	**(a) 1921**	**(b) 1964**	**(c) 2010**
82: […] He looked upon his weapon himself with some pleasure, and guiding it with his hand to the inviting; slit, drew aside the lips, and lodged it (after some thrusts, which Polly seemed even to assist) about halfway; but there it stuck, I suppose from its growing	32 […] Egli si avviò da sé stesso, e, dopo alcune spinte, l'amabile Polly fece sfuggire un profondo sospiro che non pareva affatto cagionato dal dolore. L'eroe spinge, lei risponde in cadenza ai suoi movimenti: ma ben presto i	66: […] Finalmente, la passione diventò troppo violenta per rispettare qualsivoglia ordine o misura; i loro movimenti si fecero più febbrili, i loro baci troppo ardenti e audaci perché natura umana potesse sopportarne più a lungo la furia.	49-50: […] Il giovane guardava con un certo piacere la propria arma e, guidandola con la mano verso l'invitante fessura, la portò tra le labbra e la conficcò (dopo qualche colpo che Polly sembrò addirittura assecondare) circa

thickness: he draws it again, and just wetting it with spittle, re-enters, and with ease sheathed it now up to the hilt, […]	trasporti reciproci aumentano a tal punto, che oltrepassano ogni misura. […]		metà, ma qui si fermò, suppongo, per il suo crescente spessore. La estrasse di nuovo e, inumidendola un poco con la saliva, rientrò e con facilità sprofondò fino all'elsa, […]
106: […] Being now too high wound up to bear a delay, he unbuttoned, and drawing out the engine of love assaults, drove it currently, as at a ready made breach... Then! then! for the first time, did I feel that stiff horn-hard gristle, battering against the tender part;	39: […] Sfoderò l'arma usata in simili combattimenti, e la spinse di tutta forza, credendo di camminare su di una via già battuta. […]	77: […] Troppo eccitato per un ulteriore indugio, egli si sbottonò e tirato fuori lo strumento per le amorose tenzoni lo guidò direttamente in quella che lui credeva una breccia già aperta…! Oh! Allora! Per la prima volta sentii quel rigido membro, duro come un corno, urtare contro la tenera parte; […]	61: […] Poiché era troppo eccitato per sopportare un rinvio, si sbottonò ed estrasse lo strumento per gli assalti d'amore guidandolo con estrema prontezza, come se la breccia fosse già stata aperta. Ecco! Ecco! Per la prima volta sentii quella rigida cartilagine dura come un corno battere contro la tenera parte, […]

Sexual practices in Cleland are not particularly inventive, but the description of the intercourses is similar to a classical painting or a sculptural group. Nevertheless, in translation (b), all references to bodies, anatomical parts, or

even positions are deleted in favour of a brief description of what the reader may presume happens. Probably, the translation was aimed at a female audience – bourgeois housewives who wanted to peep into the realms of transgression without being blatantly pornographic. In translation (a), sexual intercourses are described by emphasising sex as a sort of clash or fight between man and woman, according to Futuristic principles. The woman has a clear subordinate position because she follows her partner's movements accordingly.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the translations reveals distinct shifts in focus, language, and audience, reflecting broader cultural and societal changes over time. Adaptation for all three translations appears to be the principal translation technique since the changed norms and values of each historical, societal, and cultural context shaped the target texts aiming at different target readerships.

The 1921 text (a) predominantly centres on the female body, utilising military and fraternal language such as "fratellino" and "eroe", with minimal descriptions of male genitalia in favour of a male-oriented narrative approach.

On the other hand, translation (b) 1964 shows a shift towards emphasising female emotions and sexual experiences, eschewing crude descriptions in favour of more refined and less sexualised terminology. The narrative avoids references to self-pleasuring, detailed depictions of male genitalia, and explicit sexual intercourse, reflecting an attempt towards soft porn aimed at a female audience, as evidenced by the changes in illustrations.

The 2010 translation (c) presents a more philologically accurate and overtly sexualised lexicon and tropes, suggesting a more explicit portrayal of sexuality, showing the increasing openness towards sexual content in contemporary literature.

Finally, retranslations of *Fanny Hill* appear to originate in an attempt to present the book to a different type of intended readership, for which the retranslation has been adapted according to the norms of the period.

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