

**“I have
only words
to play with!”**

Of shadowy folds and trouser snakes:
Translating erotic fiction

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Acknowledgements

The title of this thesis is a quote from Vladimir Nabokov's famous book Lolita and is uttered by protagonist Humbert Humbert when he is in prison and reminisces about his lover. He expresses with this utterance, according to Robert Alter in a review of The Delighted States (2010), "not only his own desperation in his prison cell but the ontological anxiety of every novelist" (12). This is a sentiment I think all authors share at times, but it goes for translators as well. And playing leads me to the subject of this thesis: erotic fiction. I was immediately intrigued by the idea of researching the nooks and crannies of erotic language, especially in combination with translation studies - which will always be my number one interest. There were a few moments that I questioned my subject choice, with semi-breakdowns as a result, but all things come to an end.

I owe some words of gratitude to some people who have had to put up with me when I was writing this thesis. First of all, a big thank you towards the teachers who have instructed me up until the point for the past couple of years. Thank you, Cees Koster, for being my supervisor and for some very enjoyable lectures throughout the master's programme. Thank you, Ton Naaijken, for equally enjoyable lectures and for being my secondary reader of this thesis. Thanks, family, friends and fellow students for helping me out when I was working and got confused. Thank you, significant other, for bearing with me more than anyone when I was *this* close to throwing the entire laptop out of the window. Frustrations and words of gratitude aside, the finished product which lies before you is the finally assignment for my MA translation studies, and despite that frustration, I am in the end quite satisfied with the result. It felt indeed like a climax of sorts: the end of half a decade of studying.

Introduction

“Sex is at the center of the body and the center of life.” (John Atkins, Sex in literature (1970))

Sex. The word alone provokes a range of emotions. It is a vital part of our lives (for most of us anyway), and yet somehow, it remains a bit of a taboo. This is also true for sex in written form. Although so-called ‘candlelight novels’ are now widely available in even drugstores and supermarkets and it is easy to find something involving scarcely clad ladies on television after ten p.m., it is not a subject that is widely discussed in the literature of the field. Even though stores like Waterstone’s and Selexyz have a few shelves reserved for erotic fiction and non-fiction works, those are usually at the top of the bookcase and customers might hide their treasure underneath their copy of Art Magazine or the new McEwan. Somehow, it is a subject that is always present, but hardly discussed in public. Obviously, sex is present in literature: as far back as the ancient Greeks, we can find evidence of pornography and erotic writing (I will make a distinction between the two later on in this thesis) and in the modern era, there is no shortage of such texts. Also, the subject has been discussed countless times, from different angles: psychological, sociological, medical, et cetera. Yet somehow, there is little substantial literature on the stylistic and aesthetic sides of it. As a translator, I was interested in analysing erotic scenes from the perspective of the language itself: can we determine that there are specific problems that arise when translating erotic literature? Are there certain stylistic aspects which return time and time again that should be taken into account? Can we say there is a sort of consensus on writing such texts (and translating them) and are there any rules? As a guideline, I have constructed the following research question:

**What are the stylistic characteristics of erotic fiction
and how do translators deal with them?**

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To try and answer this question, I will make a structural analysis of each selected fragment (more on the selection of those fragments later).

Literature that looks at the erotic from this specific angle seems to be scarce and as such, it was hard to find the proper resources for my thesis. Admittedly, some very good books on the history of the erotic in literature have been written, some of which will be used and referred to from time to time in this thesis. Also, Susan Sontag has written an excellent essay on the role of the pornographic in literature and why we should not just ignore it or laugh it off as the writing of someone with “a deplorable arrest in normal adult sexual development” (Sontag 1969, 37). However, literature that was relevant for the translational point-of-view was hard to find. And this is part of the reason why this thesis was written: to provide some additional research in a sub-field (the translation of erotic literature) that has not yet been researched very often or extensively.

It is impossible to make a profound analysis of all erotic literature, simply because there is too much of it and not nearly everything was published under correct names or transparent circumstances. This is one of the more vague areas of literature and as such hard to analyse. A number of texts from the last three centuries have been chosen for analysis, not because those eras are the most important (there are some very interesting and relevant erotic texts that are much older) but because I simply had to make a selection. Keeping the timeframe, it will be slightly easier to compare the different texts on common grounds and differences. Adding one or several texts from eras that are further apart or hard to relate to adds complications which might be too much to discuss in this thesis. But before I will take a closer look at the works I have selected for this thesis, I will explain the reasons for this research.

Why?

One might wonder why someone wants to investigate such a subject from the point of view of literary and translational analysis. Susan Sontag deals with the relevance of pornography in literature in “The Pornographic Imagination” (1969). She divides pornography into three categories: “[P]ornography as an item in social history is treated quite separately from pornography as a psychological phenomenon [...] and [...] another pornography: a minor but interesting modality or convention within the arts” (Sontag, 36). Usually, pornography is looked at as a social phenomenon: you can buy pornography at petrol stations (which is something usually done by dirty old men, supposedly), you can watch every kind of porn imaginable on the internet and it is something with a hush-hush status. I am with Susan Sontag in wanting to study the phenomenon of pornography in its third form: as part of the arts. It is too easy to dismiss all pornography as just that: just porn. In the arts, however, the boundaries are never as clear-cut as that. Sontag takes Story of O by one Pauline Réage (1954) as an example:

Though the novel is clearly obscene by the usual standards, and more effective than many in arousing a reader sexually, sexual arousal doesn't appear to be the sole function of the situations portrayed. The narrative does have a definite beginning, middle and end. The elegance of the writing hardly gives the impression that its authored considered language a bothersome necessity. Further, the characters do possess emotions of a very intense kind [...] characters do have motives, though they are not psychiatrically or socially normal motives.

(Sontag, 40)

Seeing as this thesis only looks at works that are originally English (and the Dutch translations, obviously), Story of O is not suitable for analysis. However, it is still a good example of an erotic literary work. It is one of the most famous pornographic works of the
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twentieth century - and possibly of all times - as well. And there are many more examples: from De Sade to Anaïs Nin, from Lady Chatterly to Fanny Hill: many great works can be considered as both erotic *and* literary. The aim of this thesis is not only to acknowledge that erotic fiction can indeed be a part of literature, but also to try and pinpoint what characteristics are typical for this ‘niche’ of literature, focussing especially on the translational aspects of the issue. Hopefully, this will slightly improve the status of erotic literature and erotic fragments in literary books.

Methods of analysis

I have selected a number of texts that I feel are appropriate to analyse in the context of this thesis. As mentioned before, all fragments are taken from books written in the last four centuries. Although there are many interesting works of erotic literature that are older, the texts that have been selected are fairly recent so as to be able to analyse them more easily. To decide what exact fragments were to be used in this thesis, it was necessary to determine a list of checkpoints to use when looking at a text, to determine whether or not it meets the standard. We have just determined that not all pornography or erotic texts are just that, that they transcend simplicity into something more, something at least akin to literature - or that erotic fragments are part of a literary work without making that work a pornographic book per se.

According to A glossary of literary terms (2005) by M.H. Abrams, the term literature is used “to designate fictional and imaginative writings - poetry, prose fiction, and drama. [...] In an expanded use, it designates also any other writings [...] that are especially distinguished in form, expression, and emotional power” (Abrams 152-153). However, “literature is sometimes applied also, in a sense close to the Latin original, to all written works, whatever their kind or quality” (Abrams 153). For this thesis the latter definition is of little use, because

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it leaves the qualitative factors that should be used when evaluating the fragments selected for this thesis quite vague. ‘All written works’? That does not narrow it down at all. As for the first part of the definition, “fictional and imaginative writings”, this is to a certain degree useful. However, since there are autobiographies (i.e. non-imaginative, non-fictional texts) which could definitely qualify as literary, this definition is not usable for the analysis in this thesis - at least not in full.

In Sontag’s analysis, a number of more relevant characteristics can be found which should apply to a text if it is to be called literary, characteristics that I would like to use as a sort of guideline for the selection of my fragments. The characteristics she mentions come from “the conception of literature maintained by most English and American critics today” (Sontag 40), and although “today” means the late sixties in this text since the book was published in 1969, they still apply and are functional for my analysis. The characteristics she mentions are, in summary, the following:

- I. Sexual arousal is not the sole function of the text;
- II. The narrative has a definite beginning, middle and end;
- III. The writing is elegant and more than a bothersome necessity;
- IV. The characters go through very intense emotions and go through some kind of development;
- V. The characters have motives, a psychology and a well-rounded personality. (Sontag, 40)

These checkpoints can add up to the following, highly generalising, statement: literature is more complicated than pornography. The characters are not flat but well-rounded, they experience emotion and motive and as a reader, you can see the character develop. Whereas in pornography, sexual arousal is obviously the sole function; the narrative usually does have a half-hearted attempt at a beginning, after which it quickly progresses into the middle which keeps going on until they reach the often awkward end - if there is a proper ending at all. The

writing is usually far from elegant and sometimes even crude or overly euphemistic; the characters go through intense emotions, but limited to those associated with sexual pleasure and the focus is more on the physical experience than emotional and personal development. All in all, they are each other's opposites in many ways.

Part of the distinction between pornography and erotic literature can be accounted for by narratology, as well. Literary critic Steven Marcus's following remark on pornography from *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (1966) has been quoted extensively: "Most works of literature have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Most works of pornography do not. A typical piece of pornographic fiction will usually have some kind of crude excuse for a beginning. but, having once begun, it goes on and on and ends nowhere" (Marcus 779). The fact that pornography usually lacks proper structure can be attributed to the intention of the text: it is not meant to be a well-written piece of literature but it serves mainly the arousal of the reader, annihilating the need for a structure of any kind. However, when looking at erotic literature, the reader looks for more than gratification of his physical needs; the psychological needs, the need for a well-written text, should be satisfied as well.

Sontag's statements form a general consensus on what is literature and as such can be used to determine what is erotic literature as well. Of course, the third item seems biased: who decides when writing is 'elegant'? This is extremely personal, at least to a certain degree. The second half of the definition seems more clear: the text should not be more than a bothersome necessity. This may seem like a vague statement, but when we look at non-literary pornography, such as candlelight novels, it becomes a little clearer. One of the differences between literature and 'just a text' is style. In a 'good' book, the author has thought extensively about the way his words should be put on paper: what synonyms to use, active or passive sentences, rhyme, alliteration... So many aspects of a text can and should be

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deliberated, it is impossible to simply name them all here. But they form the difference, at least in part, between literary and non-literary. This can make a huge difference in erotic fiction as well and it can change a text from simple porn into a literary work. The thing about erotic fiction, however, is that ‘elegant writing’ seems to be read by some authors as ‘as many euphemisms as possible in an attempt to make the act of sex sound poetic.’ This seems to be the case in candlelight novels (and is one of many reasons they are not considered literature): calling a cock a cock is obviously not the most literary way to go - nor the most romantic way, either - but calling it a one-eyed trouser snake, rod of pleasure or, as a friend pointed out to me, ‘Winky-Blinky the one-eyed sergeant’ surely cannot be the way to go either. The point is, there is a fine line between overdoing it and ‘underdoing’ it. Once again, Aristotle was right when he said that the middle way is usually the best. Trying to make your language too embellished usually only distracts the reader from what is being said, but not caring about language at all does not add to the literary quality of the work. However, this is and always will remain a difficult thing to determine, which is why Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short’s Style in Fiction (2007) will be used as a guideline for the analysis of the stylistic aspects of selected fragments. As for Sontag’s statements on what literature should be, her criteria will be used as a general guideline to analyse the literary quality of the selected fragments.

Literature, however, is only one half of the definition of ‘erotic literature’; like in a circle diagram, the relevant part is the part where the two circles (in this case, ‘erotic’ and ‘literary’) overlap. And although it is very difficult to answer the question of what literature is, it is even more difficult to determine what ‘erotic’ is, exactly. Is it the same as pornographic, are they two different phenomena altogether or do they overlap at some point? For this, I would like to refer to John Atkins. He is the author of Sex in literature (1970), in which he analyses, surprisingly, sex in literature. He starts with an analysis of the difference between erotic and pornographic:

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It is usual to state, when dealing with this subject, that *erotic* does not mean either *obscene* or *pornographic*. [...] Obscene [...] is a horror word: it is always offensive (i) to modesty or decency, expressing or suggesting lewd thoughts, and (ii) to the senses or the mind; disgusting, pertaining to, or of the nature or *pornography* - which, upon seeing, turns out to be the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art. [...] There is no more agreement about the term *pornography*. Literally it means a ‘description of harlotry’. It is frequently equated with sexual stimulation. But, as writers never tire of pointing out, what stimulates one person will not stimulate another.” (Atkins, 9-10)

In addition, there are these two definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary:

- pornography /pɔːˈnɒɡrəfi/; noun: printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement.
- erotic /ɪˈrɒtɪk/; adjective; relating to or tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement.

As you can see, in the official definitions the difference lies partly in how *explicit* the image is (or in the case of this thesis, the text), but very influential as well is the *intention* of the writer. Whereas pornography is written with the intention of arousing the reader, this is not automatically the case with erotic texts or erotic fragments in literary works. It may just as well be the result or part of the intention, but it is not the sole intention. So, not all erotic texts are pornography. Is all pornography erotic, though? If we look at the definition as it is used in the Oxford English Dictionary, the answer would be yes; after all, all pornography is ‘relating to or tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement’ - in other words, porn can turn you on. However, we have arrived at the tricky aspect of defining the erotic: taste. What arouses one person is not guaranteed to arouse another and vice versa. What some people find attractive, others find repulsive.

Of course, there is a general consensus of society regarding what is considered erotic, but the fact remains that not everyone is aroused by the same thing. Take for instance fetishes. There are as many sexual preferences as there are people, and some of those preferences are bound to fall outside of the general consensus. The shoe-fetish is one of the more well-known fetishes, but a few clicks on the world wide web can introduce the curious reader to a world of, well, curiosities. Obviously, there is a world of (sexual) preference out there and not everything fits everyone.

John Atkins uses his personal definition of erotic as a starting point for his book, and that definition is the following:

I intend to treat the idea of eroticism in the very broadest fashion. [...] To confine my study to the positive and the harmonious would be to ignore a large portion of a very complex field of behaviour. [...] I have decided not to be too much concerned with erotic purpose, erotic effect or erotic stimulation. [...] I wish to think of erotic literature as writing about sexual activity and the erogenous zones. [...] I take my stand on the bald statement that whatever bears a relation to sex, in any form, is erotic in essence. (Atkins 11-12)

Looking at erotic literature as writing about sexual activity makes it possible to bypass the matter of taste to a large degree. This way, the writer does not have to worry about sexiness or taste, but can analyse it at a textual and not a psychological level.

Translation

After analysing all the fragments with the help of Sontag's essay on pornography, I will proceed with the actual goal of this thesis: looking at the stylistic aspects of all fragments and, more importantly, what aspects and problems come to the foreground when translating them into Dutch. If there is not much literature on erotic fiction in general, there is even less

documentation on the translation of such fiction and the aspects a translator should take into account. Writing a 'good' sex scene is seen as something very difficult - depending on your standards of course, but in this case, we are talking about literary erotica, not 'simple porn' - so, in extension, translating such scenes properly should prove to be a difficult task as well. When you perceive a translator as almost an author in his own right and the translation of a book a work that stands - or should be able to stand - on its own two figurative feet, it is only logical that the translator should have some knowledge on writing erotic scenes in the source language. Of course, one can argue that this should not be too different from writing a regular, non-erotic scene - but that can be a difficult task as well. Translation, so we have learned in our classes, is not the simple one-on-one transposition of one word into another, because the cases in which one word can simply always be substituted by one other word in the source language are rare.

So what task awaits the translator, then? What knowledge is presupposed when it comes to translating erotica? Are there even rules for this kind of translation, or should the translator just feel his way around? This is what this thesis will focus on. It is unlikely that there is a fixed set of rules that applies to all erotic literature - like there is no fixed set of rules for literature in general, either - but hopefully, we can find some characteristics of erotic fiction that apply to the general idea of writing erotica and which in turn can be used to look at the translations of the chosen fragments.

In the previous paragraphs we have established the set of 'rules' written down by Susan Sontag as a sort of guideline to determine the literary qualities of the fragments used in this thesis. However, it is also convenient to have some sort of schedule to use when analysing the fragments regarding their style, grammar, linguistic aspects, et cetera - and to apply the things learnt to the translation as well. For this, I will use Mick Short and Geoffrey Leech's Style in fiction (2007). Short and Leech present the reader of their book with a *Inge van Balgooij - 3113981*

number of ways to look at prose and to analyse a fragment of a text. (Of course, they do much more in their book, but this is the part that is most interesting and applicable to this thesis.) In chapter three, “A method of analysis and some examples”, they provide the reader with a checklist to be used when analysing a text: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, context and cohesion. All of these categories are then divided into smaller categories and groups. This list can be used to literally tally the words in the relevant fragment: count the number of abstract nouns, psychological adjectives, conjuncts et cetera. This ‘checklist’ will be used to analyse the fragments I have chosen for this thesis. Other chapters in the book will also be used, for instance those on style, conversation, rhetoric et cetera, to further complete my analysis, and compare the English fragments with each other: are there characteristics that return every time, and if so, can we say that those characteristics are typical for erotic fiction?

Finally, I will move on to the translations of the fragments and try to determine where the differences and correspondences between the two versions lie. For example, has the translator taken the stylistic characteristics of the original into account? Of course, as said, this is not a matter of one-on-one-comparison: it borders on the impossible to always translate 52 abstract nouns in the original with exactly 52 abstract nouns in the translation, if only because languages are not suitable to compare in such an exact side-by-side manner. The texts will be compared per category, so as to see where the difficulties lie and what should be taken into account when translation erotic literature. These will be loosely based on Short and Leech’s categories as they are illustrated in chapter three of their book. These are the following categories:

A: Lexical, i.e. word categories and their use/function;

B: Grammatical, i.e. sentence complexity, clauses, phrases et cetera;

C: Figures of speech, i.e. phonological patterns, tropes et cetera (Note: I often refer to the stylistic traits in this category as “alliteration and assonance” or something along those lines, not because I feel like those are the only stylistic traits in this category that exist, but because alliteration, consonance and assonance are very striking and will be analysed mostly in my thesis);

D: Context and cohesion, i.e. the way sentences are connected, external relations of a text et cetera.

I will not discuss every aspect from every section, since some are more relevant to the topic of erotic fiction than others. However, they offer a convenient guideline that I will use to look at the typical stylistic characteristics of the English original texts and the Dutch translations, and to try and illustrate what choices the translator has made and what results those choices have for the translation.

Chapter 1: The history of erotic literature

“The erotic impulse has been a lively and vital force in literature since the beginning of recorded history.” (Michael Perkins, The secret record (1976))

As mentioned before, it is impossible to provide the reader with a complete account of all erotic literature. Even when restricting oneself to publications with a known author and proper documentation, there is enough material to write several theses - and most certainly too much material to fit into one. Besides, other authors have gone before me and done a much better job at collecting and organizing the vast amount of available and often anonymously published information. One book that has done a great job at collecting and organizing this information is A history of erotic literature (1982) by Patrick Kearney. He restricts himself to works from the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century, yet still fills almost two hundred pages with an overview of erotic works. I will use his book as a reference for this chapter, together with two other great books that I would gladly recommend to anyone who is interested in an overview of erotic literature: The secret record (1976) by Michael Perkins and the aforementioned Sex in literature (1970) by John Atkins.

Because there is so much material that qualifies as erotic fiction, it is necessary to narrow it down a little bit. To do so, this thesis will avoid or narrow down the history from other continents (no matter how influential and important the Kama Sutra was and it) and focus mainly on the history of Dutch and English erotica. I will try to provide the reader with general sense of the evolution of erotic literature throughout the ages and provide some examples. Also, there are obviously numerous cave paintings, illustrations and works of art from prehistoric times, the twenty-first century and all years in between; however, even though those are equally interesting, Once again, to narrow everything down, this thesis will

focus on written works only. Suffice to say that enough fertility images, phallic symbols and ceramics with procreating humans exist to fill a few museums.

One of the earliest occurrences of erotica in the Western world are the Milesian tales, which originate from Aristides of Miletus. Unfortunately, not much of the Greek originals have been preserved: only parts of a Latin translation remain. A Milesian tale is a short story or fable with love, adventure and eroticism. “The golden ass” by Apuleius is a good example and was directly influenced by Aristides’ work. Other stories that are associated with eroticism are stories about the Greek god Dionysus, the god of wine but also of madness and ecstasy. He is associated with indulgence and hedonism - and sex. He finds his way into literature via for instance “The Bacchae” (the Roman name of Dionysus is Bacchus), a tragedy by Euripides, and “Lysistrata” by Aristophanes. We find this god in a great number of works by, including but not limited to, Juvenal, Catullus, Martial, Ovid, et cetera.

The first lesbian poetry also stems from ancient Greece, mainly from a woman named Sappho. She was born on the island of Lesbos, which later lent its name to the sexual orientation. A lot of her poetry was lost, but the pieces that remain have ensured her reputation until today. Her name is also given to the Sapphic stanza which, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, “consisted of three quantitative lines that scanned - ~ - - - ~ ~ - ~ - ~, followed by a shorter line called an Adonic, - ~ ~ - -.” Sappho wrote about herself and the people around her and her erotic poetry is still famous. An example is the following, from Sappho Love Poems: Sapphic Erotica Poetry Illustrated with Female Nudes & Art (2010), edited by Karene Howie:

Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred
 Shadow cast by Helicon's rustling forests;
 Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether,
 Seize and uplift me;

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Thrill my heart that throbs with unwonted fervor,
 Chasten mouth and throat with immortal kisses,
 Till I yield on maddening heights the very
 Breath of my body. (Kindle edition, page unknown)

Another place you can find ancient erotic poetry might be an unexpected one: Ovid. Although Ovid was and is known mostly for his Metamorphoses (8 AD), he also wrote a great number of erotic poems. He published three collections of erotic poetry of which it is unclear when they were published exactly, but it was somewhere around the beginning of the first century. They were called Heroides, Amores and Ars Amatoria. Heroides is a collection of epistolary poems, told by mythological heroines, Amores is an erotic elegy about an affair between the writer and a higher class girl and Ars Amatoria is an instructional love elegy which wants to teach the reader how to find women in Rome, how to seduce them and how to make sure others do not steal them away again. These books are less famous than the Metamorphoses but they were highly influential. For instance, Ars Amatoria was part of the curriculum of mediaeval schools, and the poetry from these works still influence others.

One final example of erotica in ancient times is the Song of Songs from the Bible - the Old Testament, to be precise. This text, also known as the Song of Solomon, is the story of a man and a woman from the moment they court each other to the moment they consummate the marriage. With 117 verses it is one of the shortest books of the Bible. It is not extremely explicit, but it is not hard to find the insinuations towards sex and the erotic. Take for example the following excerpt from chapter seven:

This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
 and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

I said, I will go up to the palm tree,
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I will take hold of the boughs thereof:
now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
and the smell of thy nose like apples;

and the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved,
that goeth down sweetly,
causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

As you can see, the vocabulary is not very explicit, but since it is a chapter in the Bible, this is to be expected. It does however focus on sexual themes, especially in the later chapters.

In ancient times, sex was a subject in literature that was not shunned. However, as the Middle Ages approach, erotic literature “suffered the neglect of literature in general. It was severely curtailed, showing up mostly in low verse, jokes and riddles.” (Perkins, 23) An example of this is “The miller’s tale,” one of the most well-known stories in Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales (late fourteenth century) and another work that is in the Milesian tradition. But true erotic stories from the Middle Ages are relatively rare, and this is at least partly because of one thing: religion. In the Middle Ages, ancient pagan religions and Christianity existed alongside each other. In pagan religions, sex played an important role and the practitioners were open about sex, but this was completely different in Christianity. Sex was, according to Christianity, something that belonged within marriage and was meant solely for reproducing. Original sin and the idea that sexual urges were something to be repressed ensured that serious erotic literature from this period is scarce. You can find erotic folklore stories and fabliaux, short comical stories of which some have been rewritten by Geoffrey Chaucer and used in his Canterbury Tales. But erotica as it became known in later times was almost nonexistent.

Another important work from the Middle Ages in which sex plays a role is the Decameron (1350) by Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio. The stories focus on all aspects of love, including the erotic. This book is a collection of tales about lechery and the seduction of nuns. Like a book we will discuss later, Fanny Hill (1748) by John Cleland, this book was banned. The book was officially banned by pope Paul IV, not because of the erotic imagery but because the reputation of the clergy was damaged. However, Savonarola, an Italian friar, banned the book as early as 1497 because he deemed it lewd and vain.

So, although sex was present in written works, it was by no means a subject one wrote freely and seriously about. A great writer that partly changed the way sex in literature was viewed, was William Shakespeare. Although most people know him mainly from his grande tragedies and comedies, such as Hamlet (around 1600), MacBeth (around 1604), Romeo and Juliet (1597) and A Midsummer Night's Dream (around 1590), he also wrote a great number of sonnets, some of which focused on the physical aspect of the love he writes about. He talks about sex quite openly in "Sonnet 129" (1609):

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action: and till action, lust
 Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight;
 Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
 Mad in pursuit and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof,— and prov'd, a very woe;

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Before, a joy propos'd; behind a dream.

All this the world well knows; yet none knows well

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell. (Shakespeare, Sonnet 129)

He talks about sex openly but not in a positive manner: in fact, the idea of the sonnet is to discourage the reader from having sex because it is not a positive thing. “Lust in action” is something that is not enjoyed but despised. And even though “all this world well knows,” we do not “shun the heaven that leads men to this hell”. In other words, we are too focused on the consummation of our love to realize that it actually leads us towards a hell. Not the most optimistic opinion about sex we will come across in this thesis, but it fits with the idea of the Middle Ages. However, Shakespeare has progressed from the Middle Ages in that he is open about sex and does not deem it something unspeakable. Although he is not very positive (his erection is described in “Sonnet 151” (1609) as “my gross body’s treason” and even reduces the whole self to nothing more than a stiff penis), he acknowledges the existence of sex; we cannot just ignore it, however “hellish” it might be.

Another example of the dark side of sex can be found in another well-known work by Shakespeare, “The Rape of Lucrece” (1594). This is a poem about how a woman is, well, raped:

“Lucrece,' quoth he, 'this night I must enjoy thee:

If thou deny, then force must work my way,

For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee.” (Shakespeare 1594)

Luckily, the man does not leave unpunished (“The Romans plausibly did give consent / To Tarquin's everlasting banishment”).

With Shakespeare, we see the coming of a new era: the Renaissance. Although this period of time is named after the ‘rebirth’ that took place during this time on many levels, when it came to sexuality, things still needed to progress. A very important aspect of the
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Renaissance was a renewed interest in the classics: we can see this in the art from this period. Also, there were many revolutions on a scientific level and we saw the birth of the Renaissance man, of which Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo are examples. However, the progress that was made on all levels was not always apparent in literature.

The Renaissance, which lasted roughly from the late Middle Ages up to the seventeenth century, erotica was first used for the entertainment of the higher classes. This was unheard of until then; in the Middle Ages, only the ‘regular people’ were entertained by erotica in the form of the Canterbury Tales and such. But as sex became more apparent in public writing, the church grew more alarmed and we see the arrival of a phenomenon that would turn out to be a subject of discussion even today: censorship. Erotic writing was treated “as something special and perhaps scandalous. It wasn’t yet forbidden, but the influence of the predominant Judaeo-Christian code was beginning to manifest itself in hypocrisy” (Perkins, 28). And in 1559, the first official, Roman edition of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum or list of prohibited books was published. (A fun fact is that the first unofficial list of prohibited books was published in the Netherlands even earlier, namely in 1529). This list featured all the works that the church deemed dangerous and which were forbidden to own or publish. The list of books consisted mainly of works of an erotic nature, but the selection was not restricted to this: books which supposedly contained errors according to the church, such as Johannes Kepler’s Epitome Astronomiae Copernicianae (a book on astronomy) was on the list from 1621 to 1835. More on this list of prohibited books later, because they inspired the lifework of one of the greatest bibliophiles we have ever known.

Despite the issue of censorship, erotic works were still being published. (Like with the Prohibition in the United States, if something is forbidden, it is often all the more alluring.) The so-called “whore dialogues” were a popular genre in Renaissance literature and encompass conversations between an older, more experienced woman and a young girl. An

example of this is a work from the second half of the seventeenth century called L'École des filles (1655, translated into English as The school of Venus). The author remains somewhat of a mystery, as is tradition with older erotic works. The book was published anonymously, but two of the possible authors are Michel Millot and/or Jean L'Ange, both of whom were imprisoned at some time in their lives for their supposed contribution to the novel. L'École des filles is a book which consists of dialogues between Suzanne, a worldly woman with much experience when it comes to sex, and her younger niece Fanchon. An excerpt from the Dutch translation:

FANCHON En hoe noemt u het orgaan van het meisje?

SUSANNE Ik noem dat het *kutje*. Soms wordt het de *schede* of het *dingetje*, het *gaatje*, het *bemoste gaatje*, enzovoort, genoemd. En als een jongen bij een meisje doet wat ik beschreven heb, zeggen we dat hij *zijn pik in haar kutje steekt*, of eerder nog: dat hij *over haar heen gaat* of haar *berijdt*. Jongens leren ons dit soort taal te gebruiken als ze ons in hun armen houden. Maar pas ervoor op en spreek niet zo als iedereen erbij is, want die woorden worden als plat beschouwd en meisjes behoren te blozen als ze ze horen.

FANCHON Ik beloof dat ik voorzichtig zal zijn, liefste. Maar wat doet een jongen dan om zijn stijve apparaat in haar kutje te kunnen krijgen?

SUSANNE Zo gauw als hij het in de opening van het meisje gebracht heeft, duwt hij met zijn romp naar voren. Dan trekt hij zich wat terug en duwt weer harder naar voren. Het meisje drukt zich op haar beurt naar hem toe om hem dieper naar binnen te laten dringen totdat het geheel in haar opgenomen is. En al die tijd voelt ze het ritme van de heupen van de jongen, terwijl hij haar opzadelt.

FANCHON Hij moet dus blijven bewegen, zonder ooit te stoppen?

SUSANNE Zeer zeker. (Unknown, 1959)

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As you can see, this book was quite explicit. This book can be read as a sort of manual for the young woman, who wants to know the ins and outs of sex. “Although the explanation is very straightforward and you will not even find the language that is used in modern day ‘marriage handbooks’, [the book] lacks the raw lust of modern day commercial pornography, the emphasis is on sexual happiness and warm feelings” (Kearney 33, translation mine). The explicitness of the book, of which the style as illustrated in the quote above is continuous throughout the novel, has attributed to the book’s status of first real pornographic work ever. For a full report on this book (and a great number of other works of erotica from the seventeenth century), I will gladly direct you towards Kearney’s book because he has described the entire history in a much more complete way than I could in the limited frame of this thesis.

The eighteenth century was relatively quiet when it came to erotic books, until John Cleland published his most famous work, Fanny Hill: Memoires of a Woman of Pleasure, in 1748. According to Kearney, this might be because “the ‘pornotopia’ [...] is somehow preparing itself for another era, in which the traditional dialogue form which had reigned since the beginning of the sixteenth century will be replaced by the novel” (Kearney 53). Samuel Richardson’s Pamela can be pinpointed as, at least part of, the cause for this shift. Whereas the books in dialogue form, such as L’École des filles, made up a great part of the literary field previously, the novel would now take over its place as the most important literary form. Some examples of this are the previously mentioned Fanny Hill, Diderot’s Les Bijoux indiscrets (1747) and the new translation of Arabian Nights, which had no lack of erotic content. Some great erotic poetry was written as well: An essay on woman, which is an unmistakable parody of Alexander Pope’s Essay on man and attributed to both John Wilkes and Thomas Potter. An essay on woman is an important work not just because it is erotic, but because it is a very skilled parody as well. The work consists of four poems, amongst which

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“The dying lover to his prick” - an obvious parody on Alexander Pope’s “A dying lover to his soul”.

One of the biggest names of the eighteenth century and indeed of many centuries is Donatien Alphonse François (1740-1814), also known as the notorious Marquis de Sade - who, in reality, was not even a marquis but a count. He even leant his name to sadism, the “cruel sexual practices he describes in his novels” (Harper). One of the works that made de Sade famous was Justine (1791). He said about this book:

They are printing a novel of mine, but it is too immoral to send to you, a pious and decent man. My publisher wanted it to be very spicy, I was short on money so I wrote a book that could corrupt the devil. It is called *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu*. If it happens to fall into your hands, please burn it rather than reading it. I will not acknowledge it. (Kearney 93, translation mine)

But this was not the only controversial work by his hand. Years earlier, in 1785 (when he was imprisoned in the Bastille because of alleged sodomy and the poisoning of prostitutes) he wrote 120 Days of Sodom. It remained unpublished until 1901. The work became very notorious because of the great amount of the sadism, orgies and even murder. A fragment from 120 days of Sodom:

And therewith the libertine deposits her on the bed, her head lying toward its foot, he straightway pops his limp engine between her gums, drives doughtily in up to the balls, wriggles about until, seizing his delight’s legs and perching them upon his shoulders, his snout is nicely lodged between the old creature’s buttocks. His tongue wanders deep into that exquisite hole; the honeybee going in quest of the rose’s nectar sucks not more voluptuously; the lady sucks too, our hero begins to stir. “Ah, fuck!” he cries after a quarter of an hour of this libidinous calisthenic,

“suck me, suck me, suck and swallow it, you filthy buggress, swallow, for it’s coming, by Jesus’ sweet face, it’s coming, don’t you feel it?” (De Sade 1901, 135)

As can be observed, this is not the subtlest of novels. And the subjects he discusses, from buggery and sadism to orgies and violence, were certainly not often described in such an explicit manner before - and this has earned him a reputation that lasts until today, making appearances in popular culture everywhere; from graphic novels (The Invisibles, 1994-2000, Grant Morrison) and movies (Quills, 2000, with Kate Winslet and Geoffrey Rush).

De Sade considered himself a member of the libertine movement, a movement which could be found in the seventeenth century as well but really flourished in the eighteenth century. John Wilmot was also considered a libertine. ‘Liber’ was a figure from Roman mythology who was considered ‘the free one’. And that was exactly what the libertines considered themselves: free. Free of moral restraints which they thought of as unnecessary and fussy. Originally, it was not all about sex: they argued for “free research regarding the quest for knowledge [and they rejected] the strict doctrines and moral laws of the Church as obstacles that were in the way” (Kearney 64). This was, however, the aspect De Sade became most famous for: free sex, in all its different aspects. Intercourse with dead people, flogging, sadomasochism, it was all there. And although libertinism was originally mainly a French tradition, it found resonance in Britain as well. Some genres that were common to the eighteenth century were, amongst others, the libertine novels, gothic novels and epistolary novels.

With the arrival of the nineteenth century and the end of the Renaissance comes the beginning of the Victorian era as well, the period of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837-1901). The novel remained the most important way to tell a story and books were more and more often illustrated as well. The invention of photography quickly led to the introduction of erotic photography, and the erotic kept its place in literature. After the storm that had taken place in
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Britain with the publication of Fanny Hill, the literary world was quiet for a while - at least when it came to erotica.

The Victorian era is somewhat of a contradiction when it comes to erotica and sexual morale. During queen Victoria's reign, prudery played a great role; according to Michael Perkins, "even piano legs were covered with ruffles for modesty's sake" (Perkins 30). There is no historical evidence so it is most likely a myth (albeit a persistent one), but it is a good indication of the standards at that time. Perkins goes on to say that the erotic fiction of this era is "so uniform in theme and execution that sketches of a half-dozen books will suffice for an assessment of its position in the history of the genre" (Perkins 31). The novel, as said, became more and more popular and because of the high demand, books were written as a higher pace - erotic novels included. Quantity does not always ensure quality, and it definitely did not when it came to Victorian erotica. Despite the large demand, it also became more socially acceptable to be prude. One had to avoid at all times to be a "bad woman", meaning that you should not enjoy sex. The Victorian era was an era of oppositions: good versus bad, chaste versus unchaste, moral or immoral, decent and obscene. But although there was a sort of stigma on erotic literature and the erotic in general, more than enough erotic works were published.

As more books were being printed, the role of the publishing houses became more important. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a publisher called George Cannon became famous for publishing all sorts of erotica for over forty years. One of his more daring publications was De Sade's Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice (1830), for which he was persecuted. Like other erotica-lovers before him, he was imprisoned for six months. John Benjamin Brookes, a contemporary of Cannon, published a poor imitation of De Sade in the same year as Cannon was imprisoned called The inutility of virtue (1830). The lustful Turk (1828), a much better written work by an anonymous author, was also published by Brookes.

Brookes and Cannon dominated the first thirty years of the nineteenth century but after them, a man named William Dugdale took their place. He published his own work, Memoirs of a man of pleasure, as early as 1827, but around 1832 he published an edition of Cleland's Fanny Hill and with that, his publishing career officially started. He was, however, not the most honest man in London: according to Kearney, he was "a rogue and a pirate and nothing would stop him from making a profit" (Kearney, 108). He specialized in reprinting books, because that way, he did not have to deal with the costs of copyright. Dugdale was one of the most important sources for erotica in the nineteenth century, so research regarding publications that came out after his death is a lot more difficult. A man named Henry Spencer Ashbee knew the publishers of many works he describes in his books, but he was forced to keep them a secret. Therefore, he uses names like 'D. Cameron' (which may or may not be a reference to the Decameron). This anonymous publisher published for instance The initiation of Aurora Trill (1903) and Curiosities of flaggelation (1875).

Henry Spencer Ashbee (1834-1900), whose pseudonym was Pisanus Fraxi, was another important figure from the nineteenth century and an important source on erotica. He was the owner of one of the biggest collections of erotic books of all times. He was a notorious book collector and he was especially interested in erotic literature. He was also an author himself, and his most famous work is a collection of three bibliographies on erotic works: Index Librorum Prohobitorum (1877), Centuria Librorum Absconditorum (1879) and Catena Librorum Tacendorum (1885). The first book is a collection of erotic works, arranged alphabetically by author. The other two works are arranged by subject. In Fingersmith (2002), another book by Sarah Waters (of whom I have included a fragment from Tipping the velvet (1998) in this thesis), one can find a character based on Ashbee: someone who obsessively collects pornography and indexes it as well. The title of the first book refers to a book by the same name which consists of a list of books that were banned by the Catholic church. The

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first version was published in 1559 and only in 1966 (during the sexual revolution) was the book no longer officially prohibited by the Catholic church.

One last work I would like to mention to close off the nineteenth century is My secret life (1885-1895), written by an unknown author and published by an unknown publisher as well, although it is usually attributed to Auguste Brancart. Regarding the author, according to Vern L. Bullough in “Who wrote my secret life? An evaluation of possibilities and a tentative suggestion” (2000), the book might very well be written by the one and only Henry Spencer Ashbee, the erotic bibliographer. And if he was not the author, it is a possibility that he composed the very extensive index at the end of the book. The work is an autobiographical account of the author’s sex life and is especially impressive because the reader know (or at least can safely assume) that this is not an imaginary tale. It “unveils much more about the lower classes from London and the cruel exploitation of women and young girls than a dozen or more books by Dickens or Mayhews together would ever be able to do” (Kearney 127). The honesty of the book together with the sometimes explicit content made it a very important erotic work of the nineteenth century.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a very specific genre had its heydays. It was a genre that was almost exclusively popular in France and it was called spanking literature. It did not have a long life span: when the war was over, there seemed to be no more room for spanking literature. It can be seen as the end of the trend that was set by, amongst others, the marquis de Sade. The ‘edgy’ eroticism with sadomasochism, spanking and other such extremes would always be present in erotic literature, but it would never be as immensely popular in this sense as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

It is obvious that publishing houses started playing a very important role when it came to erotic literature. Publishing houses had and have a lot of power: if a book does not get published, chances are it will not be read an awful lot, unless the author is willing to make

copies by hand. So publishing houses play a vital role in spreading books. When it comes to erotica, this is a tricky point. We have seen that only a lonely few were willing to put their name and reputation on the line by publishing erotic books. In the twentieth century, there was one particular publisher that made a big difference: the Obelisk Press in Paris. This was an English language press, founded by Jack Kahane in 1929. Kahane was an author himself and the first work that was published with The Obelisk Press was his own erotic novel, *Daffodil*. They also published works by Henry Miller (whose *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) was forbidden in the United States because of explicit scenes), Anaïs Nin, Norman Douglas and James Joyce. Not all works they published were erotic, but that was the genre they became famous for because it was usually shunned by other publishing houses.

The successor of the Obelisk Press was Olympia Press. This publishing house was founded by Maurice Girodias and was a new version of the Obelisk press, which he had inherited from his father Kahane. Olympia Press is most famous for being the first to publish Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) and other publications include works by William S. Burroughs, Pauline Réage and Samuel Beckett. The books Girodias published were what he calls "d.b.'s", dirty books, and caused "a new wave of erotic writing in English" (Perkins 68). The novels published by Olympia Press "comprise a new wave of erotic writing in English" (Perkins 68). He had a funny way of making a living: he would write blurbs of books that had not yet been written, and as orders came in, he would assign the blurbs to authors so they could write the book. The publishing house has survived the last century: after Girodias re-established the publishing house a few times (the last time in 1970) it was gone for a while, but it was re-established once more not too long ago and is currently based in Washington, London and Frankfurt.

In the twentieth century, there is one period we simply cannot skip when on the subject of the erotic: the sexual revolution. In the sixties, we saw a complete turnaround regarding
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sexual morale. Sex was now something to be celebrated and ‘different’ kinds of sex, such as homosexuality, were accepted more. Abortion became a subject of discussion, as were celibacy and the pill. Of course, this revolution had its impact on the literary world as well. The previously banned novels Fanny Hill, Lady Chatterly’s lover (D.H. Lawrence, 1928) and Tropic of cancer were now once again allowed to be published. The twentieth century also provided the reader with one of the most well-known homosexual erotic novels: Maurice (1971), by E.M. Forster.

Relatively speaking we have only just arrived in the twenty-first century, so it is difficult to draw conclusions about the entire century already. However, it is apparent that although the ‘real’ sexual revolution took place in the sixties of the previous century, writing and talking about sex is continually gaining acceptance and erotic books are becoming more and more mainstream still. Take a look at the average bookstore, and you will see that erotic books are no longer stuffed away on the top shelf but are right there between the rest of the books. Authors are most definitely no longer persecuted when they write a sex scene - or, dear lord, an entire erotic novel. Also, sex scenes are more easily incorporated in books that are not of an erotic nature as a whole; take Ian McEwan’s Atonement (2001) for example. The sex scene for this thesis is carefully built into the story, not as a random sex scene but as part of the plot. It is not superfluous but actually adds to the book and the story - more on the analysis of the fragments in later chapters.

Another phenomenon of the twentieth century is the so-called candlelight novel or romance novel. The publishing house Harlequin is one of the biggest publishers which specializes in those novels. They are a typical example of format books: a man and a woman meet, they are undeniably attracted to one another but something stands in their way; and yet in the end they always get each other, as is to be expected. Although the literary quality of these books can be doubted, they are interesting enough as a phenomenon to devote an entire

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thesis to. As a compromise, I have included a fragment from a candlelight novel to compare with the other fragments in this thesis.

One last thing that should be mentioned as we draw to a close of this chapter is the invention of the internet. The internet has obviously played a great role in the evolution of the erotic novel - or rather, the erotic website. Of course, it has been said that more than ninety percent of the internet consists of porn websites, but another phenomenon that has gained popularity is internet erotic fiction. You no longer need to go into a bookstore or a gas station to get a dirty magazine; all over the world, people are writing the erotic fiction that others want to read, sometimes based on tv series, other books or movies. In that case, we speak of fan-fiction. Anonymity will probably play a large role in this: it is much easier to write about sex in all its different forms when no one knows who you are, and what place is more perfect for anonymity than the internet? There is a website with erotic fiction for everyone, no matter what obscure sexual niche you are interested in - whether this is an improvement for the quality of the genre remains to be seen.

The Netherlands

So far, I have focused mainly on English works. However, the history of eroticism remains scarcely documented, and this goes for the Dutch contribution as well. One of the few useful books that the library offered was Venus in minirok: Seks in de literatuur na 1945 (2010) by Piet Calis. Obviously, this is of some use when looking at the works from the second half of the previous century, but works before that period (which is quite an extensive period, obviously) is not documented well at all. Another reason that might explain this lack of documentation is the fact that the Netherlands did not produce many noteworthy erotic works at all. The Routledge Encyclopedia of erotic literature (2006) explains it this way:

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Although, from the seventeenth century on, the Dutch have been industriously supplying the European erotica market, the country has produced but few writers of erotica of its own whose works have been able to stand the test of time due to their inherent quality and/or the extent of the scandal they caused. Much of Dutch erotica was written and published anonymously and has remained anonymous.

Publishers rather published translations than originals. (Brulotte and Phillips 387)

In other words, the Dutch focused on publishing rather than writing. Apparently, even though erotica was written in the Netherlands as well, documentation of it is lacking. According to Brulotte and Phillips, this is because “[t]he genre is mostly determined by its readership, by censors, and other critics. And this framework is totally absent in the Netherlands (Brulotte and Phillips 388). Despite all this, the Netherlands did experience a so-called “Golden Age of Dutch erotica”. Published works were mainly translations, but still, at times the country functioned as “the sex shop of Europe” (Brulotte and Phillips 388).

Of ancient times, not much is known about the Netherlands and erotica, but at around the seventeenth century, documentation is a bit more complete. Someone who played an important role in this was erotica specialist Timotheus ten Hoorn, who was the first “to establish [...] an ‘official’ catalogue consisting of semi-erotic, medico-sexologic, and gallant books” (Brulotte and Phillips 388). He also published explicit Dutch erotic novels and supposedly wrote one or two himself - although this has never been proven. Some of the Dutch novels he published are D’Openhertige juffrouw (1680), De doorluchtige daden van Jan Stront (1684) and De Haagsche lichtmis (1679). The English translation of D’Openhertige juffrouw, The London Jilt, even reached America. After ten Hoorn’s death, a new expert would remain absent until the nineteenth century. Then, we can see a sort of ‘erotica revival’ in the Netherlands. We saw the arrival of explicit magazines and some new writers of erotic

works, such as Lodewijk van Deijssel and Jacob Israel de Haan, the author of the first Dutch gay erotic book.

The Second World War came and went, and afterwards “the literary world was rudely awakened by the raw and realistic novels of Gerard Reve, Willem Frederik Hermans, Anna Blaman, and Jan Wolkers, followed by the beat generation, of which the rogue novel [Ik, Jan Cremer (1964)] caused the biggest stir” according to Inger Leemans, the author of the chapter on Dutch erotica in Brulotte and Phillips (390). A fragment from Ik Jan Cremer 3, which was published in 2008:

‘Please welcome Little Red Riding Hood,’ lispelde ze, haar tong over haar lippen halend.

Er sprong een knots van een kittelaar tevoorschijn, geen potlood-gummetje, maar een clitoris met de grootte van een vingerhoed. Een sidderende hete knop leek het wel. Zo groot was ik ze nog niet vaak tegengekomen.

Evie hield nu haar spleet wijd open en duwde mijn eikel tegen haar walmende clitoris.

‘Lik me, zuig me en bijt me in m’n clit,’ kreet ze met schorre stem.

‘Bijt, neem ‘m stevig tussen je tanden.’ (Cremer 2008, 186)

Although the Beat Generation is something that is typically associated with American literature it was also present in the Netherlands, as we can see from Cremer’s series of books about his travels in America during the sixties - and all the erotic adventures he got himself into as well, as this fragment illustrates.

Another Dutch highlight from the twentieth century is Turks Fruit (1969) by Jan Wolkers. It is a book about love and disease (the girlfriend of the protagonist gets cancer and dies) but sexuality plays a very important role. Sex was very important to the protagonist (who remains unnamed but will for many people always be Rutger Hauer, *Inge van Balgooij - 3113981*

since he played the role in the film adaptation (1973) of the book) and the sex scenes are fairly explicit. An extra dimension is added to the book when the reader knows it is (at least partly) autobiographic.

A final author that deserves mentioning is Xaviera Hollander, whom most people will know as the “Happy Hooker”. She wrote the book with the same title in 1971 (in English, the Dutch translation De Xaviera Hollander Story was published in 1972), sharing her memoirs of a life as prostitute with the rest of the world. After The Happy Hooker, ten other works followed. She is one of a limited few that shares the full details of her sexual life with the rest of the world in such an explicit manner. The autobiographical nature of The Happy Hooker makes it an interesting and enchanting read, a glimpse into the life of a prostitute and madam (a woman who runs a brothel). The fact that it was published around or just after the sexual revolution ensured its popularity.

Regarding recent history, Ronald Giphart and Heleen van Rooyen are two examples of authors that have gained a reasonable following the last few years - and although it may be argued that their books are literary per se, it remains the case that they write about sex often and explicitly, and still they are accepted and read out in the open - something that would not have been possible a few centuries ago. According to Inger Leemans “erotica, the description of sex, and the use of so-called pornographic slang have become integrated in literature at large. [...] In a country and a time where sex and erotica are so integrated in public space, it no longer seems useful to isolate ‘erotic literature’ as a separate category.” (391)

For a complete overview (as far as one exists) I gladly refer you to the Routledge encyclopedia of erotic literature, because Brulotte and Phillips have summarized the entire genre in the Netherlands much better and more complete than I would be able to accomplish in this limited amount of space.

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Chapter 2: Fanny Hill, Memoires of a Woman of Pleasure

“But nature could not long endure a pleasure that so highly provoked without satisfying it.” (John Cleland, Fanny Hill (1784-1785))

Fanny Hill is one of the most famous erotic books in history. It was written by John Cleland, who wrote the book when he was in prison because of an unpaid debt. The book was published in two installments in 1749 and 1750. At the end of that year he was once again arrested, together with his publisher, because the book was deemed too erotic to be published legally. Only a century later would it be published again legally - but this did not mean the book did not find its way to the public. Because the book was not officially published, there was also no official authority so changes could be made easily. Although Cleland was prosecuted again after publishing a more chaste version, the prosecution was dropped and the ‘clean’ version continued to be sold legally.

The book is considered “the first original English prose pornography, and the first pornography to use the form of the novel” (David Foxon, Libertine Literature in England 1660-1745 1965, 45) and it is indeed a controversial book. The epistolary work is about one Frances ‘Fanny’ Hill who writes letters to a man (who will remain anonymous throughout the novel). In the beginning of the book Fanny is a fifteen-year-old girl whose parents die, resulting in her moving to London. There, she meets Mrs. Brown, a woman that runs a brothel and takes Fanny under her wings. That first night, she immediately has her first sexual, lesbian experience with one of the others renters, with many more occasions to follow. Then, she is forced to have sex with a man by Mrs. Brown because she thinks Fanny is a prostitute, and is shocked to learn afterwards she is not. She escapes the brothel with Charles, a man she has fallen in love with. They live together, but when Charles has to leave the country, she has to

find other man to keep her head above the water - and they consummate their union more than a few times.

Striking about this novel is that Fanny does not regret any of her sexual acts. She obviously get a tremendous amount of joy from having sex and almost acts as a spy for the reader: she shows them rich men from all over society at their most private moments. And up until that point, the women in literature who had sex usually didn't gain any pleasure from it, whereas Fanny definitely does. But although sex is a very big part of the book, it is not the sole function of it. Which brings me to the first checkpoint of Sontag's list. There is no denying that Fanny Hill is mainly about sex - she spends most of her time in brothels and with men, so it seems in a sense inevitable. However, there is more to this book. Although it was banned for quite some time, it showed the people that it was okay (albeit not legal) to talk about sex in an explicit manner. Women could enjoy sex: it was not just something that they were forced to do. Of course, true sexual 'enlightenment' would have to wait another century or two, but it opened the eyes of some.

It also was pretty much the first of its kind, at the very least in England. Sex is something that has always been written about, but it never reached the big public like Fanny did - and to top it off, it was rather explicit as well. Fanny does not try to make it easier on the reader, although some of the manners of speaking may seem a bit overly euphemistic or florid (take for example the following sentence: "This bred a pause of action, a pleasure stop, whilst that delicate glutton, my nether- mouth, as full as it could hold, kept palating, with exquisite relish, the morsel that so deliciously ingorged it." (Fanny Hill 1748, 79). Although the writing may seem a bit old-fashioned, it cannot be denied that it is in its own right quite elegant, and "more than a bothersome necessity" as Sontag put it. This is not just writing to put a message across or to act as porn; the author has put considerable thought into his story and his language.

The presence of a definite beginning, middle and end is something that Fanny Hill does not lack. It meets the requirements almost perfectly: the clear beginning is when Fanny's parents die and she has to move in with Mrs. Brown and thus starting her adventure. The middle would be all the 'adventures' she has with Charles, Mr. Brown and other men at the brothels. And the story has a happy ending, when she is finally reunited with the love of her life, Charles. It is indeed quite the 'happily ever after'.

The intense emotions and the development are also apparent in this book. Fanny starts off as an innocent little girl whose parents have died and who is suddenly all alone in the world - a world she does not know much of. Circumstances force her to adapt quickly and to grow up - that is the kind of thing losing your virginity does to you. But it is not just growing up and being deflowered: Fanny also learns that sex is something she can enjoy, even though she fears it in the beginning. She is able to view it from different sides: as a job, when she works in a brothel, but also as something which stems from love and is more special if you do it with the one your heart belongs to than just the next customer. This development becomes apparent throughout the book and of course, the love story reaches its climax when Fanny is reunited with Charles.

Motives and psychology are a hard thing to judge but I definitely think they are apparent in Fanny Hill. Although she might seem a bit shallow and unworldly at first, she *is* a girl of fifteen that manages to get by one way or another in London, all by herself at first. She grows up, finds love and learns to enjoy sex and love herself in the process. What makes her different from other female literary heroines like Moll Flanders is that Fanny does not feel bad about sex or feels sorry for her acts: in fact, she revels in it. This does not make her immoral, though.

The book is more than the story of a young girl in England: it satirised the literary and social conventions of eighteenth century-England. It has earned its place in English literature
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and still continues to make an impact on readers from this day and age, although it might be a less shocking one than in the eighteenth century. Because it is relatively ‘old’, however, it is sometimes difficult for the modern reader to appreciate the text as a product of its age. This also goes for Shakespeare’s sonnets or Tess of the D’Urbervilles (Thomas Hardy, 1891). Some words change meaning over time (a classic example being ‘gay’, which used to mean ‘happy’ but is now used mainly when referring to the sexual orientation) and figures of speech evolve, change or even disappear completely. This is something to be kept in mind when reading (and translating) an older text, although Fanny Hill is relatively easy to comprehend for the modern reader. Perhaps because sex is something of all ages? Because although it does tell the story of a young girl and the way she evolves, the book is still mainly about sex.

A. LEXICAL

The first category that will be analysed is the lexical category, pertaining to for instance the difficulty of words that are used and the word sorts that can be found in the excerpt. A quick reading of Fanny Hill immediately gives the impression that this is a relatively difficult text, mostly because of the long sentences: this excerpt has the longest average sentence of all texts analysed in this thesis. Sentences and sentence length will be dealt with in another paragraph; another aspect that makes this a relatively difficult text is word length and word difficulty. Fanny Hill includes a relatively high amount of ‘difficult words’, although of course this depends on the notion of what aspect(s) determine difficulty. Short and Leech mention word difficulty in relation to morphemes, which seems like a good way to analyse things; however, they also say that “determining the number of morphemes in a word can be a problem, especially with words of foreign or classical origin” (65). Another way to determine difficulty would be counting syllables or letters, of which the first would probably be the most reliable one. Looking at this excerpt from the perspective of syllables, the largest group of words has

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about two or three syllables. There are a few exceptions: words like agitation, impetuosity, encountering, sufficiently and prodigious are relatively long words (both in syllables and in letters) and thus jazz up the difficulty of the text.

The fact that the text contains a relatively high amount of difficult and long words, creates a certain atmosphere that seems to be at odds with who is speaking. The book is written entirely from Fanny's point of view, and Fanny is about fifteen years old. This is not very young, obviously, but fifteen is also not the age during which one is most eloquent. An example: "the melting moment of dissolution, when pleasure dies by pleasure, and the mysterious engine of it overcomes the titillation it has rais'd in those parts [...] tenaciously attracts all the moisture within its sphere of exsuction" (80). Words like tenacious, exsuction and titillation are not usually part of the general vocabulary of a fifteen-year-old, and together with the sentence structure (which will be discussed later) it creates a language that does not seem to fit the speaker (Fanny). Because of this discord between the character and the way she speaks, the text seems almost artificial. It makes Fanny seem older than her years, which could be explained by the fact that she has had to grow up quickly in the story and is wiser than her years; however, this excerpt takes place pretty early in the book, meaning that Fanny has not had much time to grow up yet. Whether or not it is fitting, it is the way the book is written - let us now look at the way this is done in translation. In the Dutch version, Fanny also uses quite some difficult words, like *verhevenheden*, *tomeloosheid*, *liefdesdaad*, *niettemin* and *proefondervindelijk*. Individually and out of context, these words are not too difficult; from the mouth of a fifteen-year-old who is losing her virginity, however, they seem too artificial. The translation strategy applied here is one that sticks close to the text, not changing Fanny's style of diction.

A phenomenon regarding vocabulary that will be dealt with in section C is the use of euphemisms or synonyms (categorised under 'elegant variation' in this chapter) of genitalia in *Inge van Balgooij - 3113981*

this excerpt. However, genitalia are not the only things that are described in a colourful manner by Cleland. He makes Fanny a very eloquent speaker, perhaps one beyond her years, when she is expressing her feelings on all the aspects of the deed itself. An example: “I stroked it gently, on which the mutinous rogue seemed to swell, and gather a new degree of fierceness and insolence; so that dinging it grew not to be trifled with any longer, I prepar’d for rubbers in good earnest. (Cleland 1909, 78) This sentence was translated like this: “Ik streeelde het zachtjes en meteen leek die oproerige duivel nog meer te zwellen en een nieuwe graad van tomeloosheid en ongeduld te bereiken, zodat ik, uit vrees dat aan die groei geen einde zou komen, oordeelde dat het de hoogste tijd was geworden om tot meer beslissende wrijvingen over te gaan.” (Cleland 2007, 127) The first striking aspect is the use of the word “mutinous”, which immediately reminds the reader of mutiny; as if the penis is a pirate or some other kind of rogue or bandit that acts on its own behalf, without consent of the ‘owner’: in fact, that whole sentence is constructed so that it seems as if the penis is acting for itself. The translation of rogue in this case is “duivel” rather than “schurk” or “bandiet”, but this adds to the devilishness of the act and seems appropriate. Another thing that might strike the modern reader of the original text is the use of the word “rubbers”. In modern English (and in fact in modern Dutch as well), this word is used when describing condoms. However, when reading the sentence with that meaning in the back of one’s head, it seems a bit awkward and even ungrammatical. Although the association of condoms with sex is not an illogical one, the grammatical structure of this sentence makes it hard to interpret it this way: you don’t “prepare for” rubbers, you get them or find them or something along those lines. The noun “wrijvingen” in the translation is, in this case, a lot more clear-cut when it comes to the meaning of the word in the sentence - at least for the modern reader: perhaps “rubbers” was a word that was used more frequently to describe the action of rubbing in Cleland’s time. In contemporary texts and spoken communication, this meaning is not the first one that comes to

mind. This emphasises the point that was made earlier in this thesis, that it is important to read a text as a product of its time. Sometimes, words change meaning or become unfamiliar.

The verbs used in this text are mostly active verbs that refer to actions, which is not an unexpected discovery: after all, sex is quite an active thing to do and requires words that refer to activity. Examples are toying, kissing, clipping, feeling, taking, slipping, palating and squeezing. All these verbs refer to physical acts that take place during the deed. This is also reflected by the tense of the verbs: nearly all verb phrases are active. There are hardly any passive constructions; in fact, the only real passive construction in this particular fragment is “as if I had been actuated by a fear of losing him” (Cleland 1909, 79). Typical is that the latter construction does not say anything about sex and pleasure but about a negative emotion, fear of loss. One could say that this sentence is active to stress the idea that this is something Fanny does not have under control: the fact that she is scared of losing her lover leads her to do something involuntarily, namely “twisted my legs round his naked loins” (79). This illustrates also the strength of love and sex, how those feelings can overtake your actions and make you do things involuntarily in the throes of passion.

In the Dutch translation, most active constructions have been preserved. However, the passive sentence mentioned above has been turned into an active sentence in the translation: “sloeg ik in een plotselinge razernij, alsof ik hem vreesde te verliezen, mijn benen rond z’n naakte lendenen” (Cleland 2007, 127). Presupposing that the effect of the passive sentence was to emphasise the helplessness Fanny feels when she has the idea her lover is pulling away from her, then this has disappeared at least in part in the translation. The use of “sloeg” indicates an abrupt change of emotions which fits the motive of fear here, but the effect is not as strong because it lacks the strong contradictory effect of passive versus active. A few sentences however have been made passive in translation: “Direct werd hij al voortgestuwd naar het moment van de ontlading” (Cleland 2007, 128), “het vocht dat door mijn sluizen
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werd vrijgegeven” (129) and “zodat onze prikkels van genot overspoeld werden” (129). In the English original, these are all active sentences: “brought on [...] the melting moment of dissolution” (Cleland 1906, 79-80), “the sluices in flow from me” (80) and “sheath’d and blunted all the stings of pleasure” (80). It is actually quite remarkable that there are more passive sentences in Dutch than in the English original, because the passive tense is much more common in English than it is in Dutch. However, in the Dutch translation, they can be seen as serving a purpose. The passive sentences are used not to illustrate the helplessness of a lover leaving (or at least the feeling that he is), but the way you cannot resist the throes of passion once they are under way. In this part of the fragment Fanny and her lover are slowly but surely making their way towards the climax, the orgasm, and there comes a point when you cannot control this any longer but have to give in to it. Fanny even says so herself: “But nature could not long endure a pleasure that so highly provoked without satisfying it.” (Cleland 1909, 79) Once you are past a certain point, there is no turning back; the control is gone, you are no longer an active participant that makes his or her own choice, but captivated in the act of sex. This is of course a very extreme way of putting it because one usually does have control over ones actions, but during sex it might feel like you do not. However, this is an interpretation of the Dutch passive sentences; they are active in the original, meaning that the translator made a choice to change the tense from active to passive. They can be justified by the explanation given above, regarding the impact passion can have on one.

There is also one verb construction that is quite common in English but almost always poses a problem when translating into Dutch is the present participle: verbs that end in -ing. In English, it is often used to form the progressive aspect, in other words: to indicate that the action is still going on. (It is the same tense as the gerund, but the gerund functions as a noun

whereas the present participle does not.) There are several options to be consider when translating into Dutch, and I will discuss this with the help of a few examples from the text.

- When we had sufficiently graduated our advances towards the main point, by **toying**, **kissing**, **clipping**, **feeling** my breasts;

Geleidelijk voerden we ons verlangen naar het uiteindelijke hoogtepunt op [...] me kussend en knijpend terwijl hij met zijn handen telkens terugkeerde naar mijn borsten.

In this case, the present participle has been maintained in two out of three instances: ‘kussend’ en ‘knijpend’. ‘Toying’ has been omitted altogether and ‘feeling’ has been translated with the simple past of a whole other verb altogether: ‘terugkeerde’. This is a reflexive verb, like ‘feeling’, that requires an object (‘borsten’), just like in the English original. However, the sentence has become a lot longer, which changes the effect of the sentence as well. In the original, the four verbs after each other create a compact repetition that is stylistically attractive. In Dutch, because the present participle is not always suitable to use, the sentence structure has to be changed (by adding “terwijl hij met zijn handen telkens”) and thus the rhythm of the sentence has changed as well, losing some of that staccato recital that is present in the original.

- Then its dimensions, **mocking** either grasp or span;

Zo enorm dat ik hem niet eens kon omspannen.

This is another example in which the translator has decided not to go with any of the above translation strategies but changed the sentence as a whole. “Mock” is used in a particular way here, making it hard to translate it to Dutch directly. You would get a sentence like “die grootte en breedte bespote”, which sounds odd in Dutch. Therefore, the translator has chosen a more descriptive approach, using the conjunction ‘dat’ to describe the way the dimensions in the original “mock either grasp or span”. This way, the problem of the present participle can be bypassed.

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- **Slipping** then a pillow under me;

Nadat ik een kussen onder me had geschoven.

In this case, the verb has also changed tense so as to avoid a translation problem. The present participle from the original, ‘slipping’, has been translated with the present perfect, ‘had geschoven’. The result is a slightly different thing happening: in the original, the action of slipping is still happening at that point in the text. In translation, it is already behind her. Changing the tense altogether is thus also a way of translating the present participle, but it changes the moment the actions take place. In minor cases like this one, it makes not much of a difference in translation, but this is not a strategy that should be used every time.

- Whose ruby head, **presenting** nearest the resemblance of a heart;

Waarvan de rode kop nu sprekend op een hart leek.

Once more, the tense has changed: the present participle from the original has been translated as a simple past (“leek”). However, by adding the adverb of time “nu”, the action is once again placed in the present, as it was in the original. With this detour, the effect of the source and target text remain very similar, despite the change of tense and making the adverb of time explicit. Also, the original sentence contains a subordinating clause, which has disappeared in translation. This causes the information to have more emphasis than in the original.

- There **feeling**, and most gently indeed, **squeezing** those tender globular reservoirs;

Deze magische aanraking, waarbij ik, vanzelfsprekend zeer zachtjes, zijn bolvormige vergaarbakjes beroerde.

One of the other options when translating the present participle from English into Dutch is by adding ‘terwijl’ in Dutch, and this is a variation on that option. The Dutch adverb “waarbij” does not mean the same as “terwijl” but it has a similar effect: it

emphasises the present and continuing nature of “beroerde” that is implicitly present in the present participle in English. “Beroerde” is not a direct translation as “squeezing” as the latter indicates more strength or enthusiasm if you wish; “beroeren” indicates a more careful approach. The other present participle in this sentence, “feeling”, is not a verb in the translation at all: it has become a noun. This is another way to avoid the possible complications of translating the present participle.

- It flung us into an extasy that extended us **fainting**, breathless, entranced.

Zodat [...] we opgingen in een extase, die ons verdovend, buiten adem en in trance weer neersloeg.

In this case, the present participle has been translated as a Dutch present participle. This ensures that a stylistic aspect of the source text is also present in the translation. The original sentence ends with a rhythmic repetition that emphasises the feeling that is described here, especially because the stress is placed on the second syllable and not on the first. The effect is very strong in English but not so much in Dutch, therefore losing some of its effect. However, by using the Dutch present participle, the translator ensured that a sense of rhythm and repetition is maintained in translation. Qua stress, “verdovend, buiten adem en in trance” places stress on the latter part of the phrase three times instead of once, but despite the longer length of the sentence and the addition of “en” the rhythm from the source text is partly maintained and thus the effect of the sentence as well.

In these cases, the translator has mostly opted to ‘avoid’ the problem of translating the present participle by reordering the sentence in such a way that he avoided that particular tense in Dutch. By adding indicators of time, like “nadat” or “nu” also help in making the present participle easier to translate. Sometimes, however, the translation becomes less strong because of it, which can be seen in for instance the final sentence of the examples above. The strong

rhythmic and repeated phrases of the end of the sentence that make it so strong stylistically speaking have partly disappeared, which lessens the effect of the text.

B: GRAMMAR

One of the first things that is striking when the reader first comes across this fragment is the length of the sentences. There are some very long sentences, which are thankfully not too hard to read because of the use of semicolons and other punctuation marks. Also, in English, longer sentence stay readable longer than long sentences in Dutch. Still, they can be a bit hard to chew off at times. Take for example this sentence, from the latter part of the fragment:

I not only then tighten'd the pleasure-girth round my restless inmate by a secret spring of friction and compression that obeys the will in those parts, but stole my hand softly to that store bag of nature's prime sweets, which is so pleasingly attach'd to its conduit pipe, from which we receive them; there feeling, and most gently indeed, squeezing those tender globular reservoirs; the magic touch took instant effect, quicken'd, and brought on upon the spur the symptoms of that sweet agony, the melting moment of dissolution, when pleasure dies by pleasure, and the mysterious engine of it overcomes the titillation it has rais'd in those parts, by plying them with the stream of a warm liquid that is itself the highest of all titillations, and which they thirstily express and draw in like the hot-natured leach, which to cool itself, tenaciously attracts all the moisture within its sphere of exsuction. (Cleland 1906, 79-80)

What might the reason be for such a long sentence? Fanny describes the moment she takes a gentle hold of her lover's balls in order to speed up the process and heighten his pleasure. She says that "the magic touch took instant effect"; in other words, what she did immediately effected her lover. There is no pause between her action and the result, just like there is no

pause in the sentence. Of course, there are semi-pauses in the form of semicolons and the sentence could have been split up to make it easier to read, but Cleland has obviously chosen not to, perhaps for the reason mentioned above. This effect is important, and the translation should include it as well. It has been translated like this:

Niet alleen spande ik mijn gordel van genot vaster aan rond mijn rusteloze bezoeker, door de geheime spanveer te gebruiken die we door onze wil in beweging kunnen brengen, maar tegelijkertijd stak ik ook mijn hand uit en raakte voorzichtig de gespannen voorraadzak aan, waarin de zoete spijs van de natuur ligt opgeslagen, en die zo bevallig opgehangen is aan de afvoerpijp, waarlangs we ze ontvangen. Deze magische aanraking, waarbij ik, vanzelfsprekend zeer zachtjes, zijn bolvormige vergaarbakjes beroerde, deed ogenblikkelijk haar invloed gelden, want nog maar nauwelijks was ik met de streling begonnen of hij vertoonde al de eerste symptomen van de zoete koortsdroom. Direct werd hij al voortgestuwd naar het moment van de ontlading, waarin genot door genot wordt omgebracht, terwijl z'n mysterieuze werktuig de onuitstaanbare prikkeling verdreef die het zelf in mijn organen had opgewekt, door hen te besproeien met een stroom van warme vloeistof, die op haar beurt een nog fellere prikkeling schonk en zoals een zichzelf verwarmend loogvat afkoeling zocht door aan z'n omgeving al het vocht te onttrekken. (Cleland 2007, 128-129)

The long sentence has been split up into three sentences in the Dutch translation. This is an understandable choice to make the paragraph more legible in Dutch because it is easy for the reader to get lost in the sentence and to get confused, otherwise. The translator has to look at long sentences and determine what length is still acceptable in Dutch and when a sentence should be split up - in other words, when readability has precedence over style and the original length of the sentence. In this case, the translator has chosen to split up the sentence.

As a result, the effect that was present in the original text is a lot weaker. The feeling of breathlessness that was present in the source text is not nearly as present. Of course, a translator has several options when dealing with extremely long sentences in the source text (splitting it up, keeping it one long sentence with the risk of losing legibility as well, reordering the phrases et cetera) and choices have to be made and unfortunately some of the stylistic aspects of the source text unfortunately get lost in translation.

One aspect of this genre specifically that relates to the build-up of sentences and the overall rhythm or pace of a text is the sense of climax that a text of this nature should evoke. The subject of the text in erotic fiction is often that of (usually) two protagonists are working towards a moment of climax or orgasm. This climactic ending should be reflected in the text in such a manner that it is believable for the reader, that the intended effect comes across. One way of doing this which can be found in this fragment is the use of repetition, as the final sentence does. The way the sentences are quite long and employ a lot of assonance and alliteration make the text poetic and push the reader forward, as it were. The final phrase, “it flung is into an extasy that extended us fainting, breathless, entranced”, uses rhythm as a way to simulate ‘panting’. As has been discussed in a previous paragraph, the translation has lost a lot some rhythmic properties, though not all. The translation is somewhat less concise and evokes less of a sense of (relaxation after) climax, but the effect has not been lost completely.

Sometimes, because long sentences and difficult constructions are hard to translate, a lot gets lost in translation. The following sentence deserves some attention on a grammatical level. The sentence in question is “[...] in that so vital part of me in which I had now taken him, all indriven, and completely sheathed; and which, crammed as it was, stretched, splitting ripe, gave it so gratefully strait an accomodation! so strict a fold! a fuction so fierce! that have and took unutterable delight” (Cleland 1906, 79). This sentence is a description of the man entering Fanny and it is particularly strong because of the repeated, variating phrases ending

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with exclamation marks: they emphasise the feeling described here by visual repetition on the page. The sentence has been translated like this: “[...] in dat vitale deel van mij, waarin ik hem nu helemaal had opgenomen als een zwaard tot aan het handvat in de schede en dat nu zo barstensvol was dat hij er volmaakt in paste” (Cleland 2007, 127). The changes in vocabulary and explicitness will be dealt with later, but now, let us look at the structure of the sentence. The original sentence is quite long, but it is also unambiguous when it comes to grammar. It is, however, important to get the pronouns right. The “it” in “crammed as it was” refers to Fanny’s ‘parts’, or “that vital part of me”; the “it” in “gave it so gratefully strait” is the man’s penis, or “him”. Effectively, Fanny is describing how the penis of her lover is filling her up - which gives her pleasure. In translation, the word “hem” in the first half of the sentence obviously refers to her lover. However, the second half of the sentence poses a bit of a problem. It consists of a coordinating conjunction, because of the word “en”. So, both “waarin ik [...] de schede” and “en dat nu [...] in pasta” refer to “dat vitale deel van mij”. The first phrase poses no problems, but the second one does: if “dat” refers to “dat vitale deel van mij”, the choice of words seems off. Grammatically, the reference is correct, but for the reader it seems at first glance as if the penis is “barstensvol”. This is obviously not the case, but even if the reference is correct and “dat” refers to Fanny, how can something be “zo barstensvol” (a word with a slightly negative connotation as well) that something else fits in it perfectly? There seems to be a causal connection in the translation (“zo barstensvol dat hij er perfect in paste”) which is not nearly as apparent in the original. Also, the word “barstensvol” seems in and of itself an odd choice. It refers to “splitting ripe” from the original but seems a lot stronger. Because of these changes in the translation, the effect of the paragraph changes as well. In the original, the focus is on Fanny’s ‘girly parts’: she describes the way she feels full or filled and describes them as ‘offering room’, almost, for the male. In translation, the focus is much more on the penis as well, not in the least because of the metaphor that is a lot more

explicit in translation. So, not only have the stylistic aspects changed or disappeared; the text has also become less clear and evokes a different feel. Choices have to be made when translating, and sometimes aspects of a text get lost; however, in this case I feel that by for instance sticking closer to the original text in terms of for instance the repeated phrases in order to emphasise what is being said, the translation would have been truer to the original and less confusing.

C: FIGURES OF SPEECH

Typical of this text is that despite almost being outright pornography, it has an almost poetic air at times because of Fanny's vocabulary, which is quite extensive at times, as well as the intricate long sentences. For instance, the sentence "when pleasure dies by pleasure" is extremely poetic and kind of vague, and those characteristics have been preserved in the Dutch "wanneer genot door genot wordt omgebracht." And this tendency is continued in the rest of the text; because the long, intricate sentences with subordinating clauses et cetera and the 'adult', sophisticated vocabulary Fanny uses are all present in the translation as well, the general effect of the text (including the idea that Fanny seems a bit mature for her age, which has been discussed earlier) is maintained. She is also not afraid of metaphors and exclamations that only strengthen the feeling of exaggeration that sometimes creeps up on the modern reader. Take for instance the "powerfully divided lips of that pleasure-thirsty channel" (Cleland 1909, 79), a very poetic way of describing the vagina. Or the way Fanny describes the orgasm, a description that is so eloquent it almost makes one forget what the phrase describes:

[A]nd brought on upon the spur the symptoms of that sweet agony, the melting moment of dissolution, when pleasure dies by pleasure, and the mysterious engine of it overcomes the titillation it has rais'd in those parts, by plying them with the
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stream of a warm liquid that is itself the highest of all titillations, and which they thirstily express and draw in like the hot-natured leach, which to cool itself, tenaciously attracts all the moisture within its sphere of exsuction. (Cleland 1909, 80)

The translation is as follows:

Hij vertoonde al de eerste symptomen van de zoete koortsdroom. Direct werd hij al voortgestuwd naar het moment van de ontlading, waarin genot door genot wordt omgebracht, terwijl z'n mysterieuze werking de onuitstaanbare prikkeling verdreef die het zelf in mijn organen had opgewekt, door hen te besproeien met een stroom van warme vloeistof, die op haar beurt een nog fellere prikkeling schonk en zoals een zichzelf verwarmend loogvat afkoeling zocht door aan z'n omgeving al het vocht te onttrekken. (Cleland 2007, 128-129)

A stylistic trait that is very common in this fragment and which contributes to the poetic, eloquent atmosphere of the text is the use of phonology, more specifically alliteration and assonance. Take for instance these phrases: “by toying, kissing, clipping, feeling...” (79), “that stood with a stiffness! a hardness! an upward bent of erection!” (79), “so gratefully strait an accomodation! so strict a fold! a suction so fierce!” (79), “crammed as it was, stretched, splitting ripe” (79), “and soon, too soon indeed!” (79), “it flung us into an extasy that extended us fainting, breathless, entranced” (80). Although some combinations of sounds can slow the reader down (such as the last one, which is also meant to imitate the action of breathing or panting after sexual climax), they also emphasise the importance of a moment by lingering in that moment for a few moments - or words, rather. In these quotes, a lot of alliteration and assonance can be found: the /k/ and /i/ sounds in “toying, kissing, clipping”, the a-sounds in “gratefully strait an accommodation”, the /s/ and /f/ sounds in “so strict a fold! a suction so fierce!” et cetera. The use of these kinds of devices indicates that the author has

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thought about the way he puts his story on paper (unless of course it is all a coincidence, which is highly unlikely when it occurs as often as it does with Cleland) and that language and the way the story is presented is an important part of that story.

The question is whether or not these repetitions have been maintained in translation. The assonance in the sentence “by toying, kissing, clipping, feeling my breasts” consists of sounds that are very close together, and this is not the case in the translation: because the sentence is a lot longer and more extensive in translation, the alliteration is stretched apart a bit more as well. The alliteration in the /v/ sounds of “voerden we ons verlangen [...] op” and the /k/ sounds of “kussend en knijpend” proves that it is possible to maintain the stylistic traits in translation - so although the sentence is not as strong as the original, as has been discussed before, some of the alliteration has been maintained. The /s/ sounds in the sentence “so gratefully strait an accommodation! so strict a fold! a suction so fierce!” are what make this sentence stand out and deserve some attention as well. The sentence has been translated as: “waarin ik hem nu helemaal had opgenomen als een zwaard tot aan het handvat in de schede en dat nu zo barstensvol was dat hij er volmaakt in paste’. As you can see, there is alliteration in the /h/ sounds of “hem”, “helemaal”, “had” and “handvat”. Also, the /f/ sounds in “fold” and “fierce” catch the eye of the reader in the case of the original but there is little other alliteration or assonance in the translation. There is some repetition of /v/-sounds in “handvat”, “barstensvol” and “volmaakt”. Also, the /a/-sound is repeated often (“waarin”, “helemaal”, “had”, “als”, “zwaard”, “aan”, “handvat”, “dat”, “barstensvol”, “was dat”, “volmaakt”, “paste”). The assonance is subtly present throughout the entire sentence and although the alliteration in the original is quite striking and the sentence structure has changed quite significantly, I still feel the effect of the repeated assonance makes up for some of the things that are lost and thus ensures that the target text has a similar poetic, eloquent feel to it that the source text has.

D: CONTEXT AND COHESION

One other aspect of vocabulary that I meant earlier and which can easily be linked to erotic fiction is the concept of elegant variation, or “the avoidance of repetition by the substitution of a descriptive phrase” (Short and Leech, 64). In this particular genre, this phenomenon is often used with regards to the genitalia: especially in books with a lot of sex, like *Fanny Hill*, phenomenon of euphemisms or synonyms used to describe ‘sexual’ things like genitalia or sexual acts - and of course, the way they are translated is important as well. Below is a list of the synonyms for male and female sexual characteristics (the genitalia) that are used in this one-and-a-half page long fragment:

Male:

enormous machine	geweldige staf
such a bulk	een zo al het normale te boven gaand voorwerp
mutinous rogue	oproerige duivel
inestimable bulge of lady’s jewels	prachtige beurs met de door vrouwen meest begeerde juwelen
battering ram	wild slaande ram
naked loins	naakte lendenen
restless inmate	rusteloze bezoeker
store-bag of nature’s prime sweets	de gespannen voorraadzak, waarin de zoete spijs van de natuur ligt opgeslagen
conduit pipe	afvoerpijp
globular reservoirs	bolvormige vergaarbakjes

Female:

breasts	borsten
furnacemouth	ovenmond
pleasure-thirsty channel	kanaal van genot
nether-mouth	ondermond

pleasure-girth

gordel van genot

In this fragment, Cleland obviously used more synonyms for male genitalia than he did for Fanny's private parts. This can be explained by mentioning that Cleland was himself, obviously, a male and thus was more familiar with the euphemisms for his own genitalia than he was with those of a woman's. However, the fact remains that these examples were taken from a fragment of not only two pages of a book that is over two-hundred pages long. If one were to make a proper comparison, all the synonyms in the entire book would have to be counted and compared to see if Cleland really was more creative with man's parts.

Some of the words he uses are quite common, especially in erotic literature: "breasts", obviously, is not an uncommon term to use in any kind of text, but "battering ram", "loins" and even "bulk" are used often as well. However, terms such as "globular reservoirs" and "furnacemouth" are relatively uncommon. The comparison of the vagina with a mouth is obviously used often: the image, which is brought to mind by the labia or 'lips' of the vagina is not an uncommon one. Combining that image with a 'furnace', however, is more unorthodox. Cleland's creativity can perhaps be attributed to the fact that his book, which is more than two-hundred pages long, contains many explicit scenes in which the genitalia are often addressed. If the author would stick to 'cunt', 'penis', 'vagina' and 'shaft', repeating those words over and over, it would easily bore and perhaps even alienate the reader. By using fresh synonyms and euphemisms where possible - without overdoing it - Cleland ensures that the reader will not get bored with the explicit sex scenes in the book.

Keeping this in mind, a proper translation strategy for this particular aspect of the book would be to maintain the variation so as to avoid repetition in the translation as well. The more 'general' descriptions of genitalia, like breasts, have been translated simply as "borsten". However, words like "nether-mouth" and "store-bag of nature's prime sweets" require a bit more creativity from the side of the translator. In this case, the translator has

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stuck quite closely to the original terms, with some exceptions. The “enormous machine” has become a “geweldige staf”, which is in a sense a hyponymy of the word machine. Machine is more general, whereas “staf” is a more specific description which might not mean the same as machine but is more suitable in Dutch. The Dutch “machine” evokes the sense of a large instrument or apparatus, and although ‘large’ is a word men would like to hear in this context, ‘machine’ would be over the top. This justifies the choice for “staf”, which is a lot more specific than the original but also more functional. The opposite has happened with the translation of “battering ram”. The original is quite a term for the penis which is a bit on the exaggerated side, but the image is very clear. Now, the translation is “wild slaande ram”, which is odd for a number of reasons. “Battering ram” has a very straightforward translation in Dutch: ‘stormram’. This is an image that is, again, quite strong but would be in line with the image used in the original. Instead, the translator chose the adverb and verb “wild slaande”, which in and of itself evokes a strange image. “Slaan”, is that what a penis does? It evokes the image of a penis that moves in all directions, independent of its owner. Surely, that does not fit the image of the original. A less striking but still present issue is to do with “ram”. Although it is indeed a Dutch synonym for ‘stormram’, it also means the animal (aries) and is more often used in the context of “iemand een ram geven”, instead of as a noun.

In general, the translator seems to have chosen a more descriptive approach to the text. The original text employs stylistic devices like repetition and alliteration, as have been illustrated above, to create a sort of effect and a build-up that eventually leads to this sense of climax, for Fanny and her partner as well as for the reader. However, sometimes those stylistic devices cannot be maintained in translation, because of restrictions of the target language for instance. This is what has become clear in the analysis of this excerpt of Fanny Hill as well. When translating a text it is impossible not to make compromises at times: sometimes, what has been lost at one point can be added or changed in another instance. This

translation of Fanny Hill loses some of the striking sentences that are so much foregrounded in the source text, especially those sentences with repeated phrases at the end of the excerpt which emphasise the climactic moment and push the text forward, but they are not lost completely and are indicative of a compromise that is sometimes necessary. This is true for some of the very long sentences from the source text as well; they had to be split up into smaller segments as a compromise towards the readability of the text. This is not necessarily a bad thing, or at least not something that is unsolvable. The translator seems to have tried to compensate for these ‘losses’ by at least maintaining the diction that Fanny employs throughout the text, which is at times of a relatively high register and contains a fairly large amount of ‘difficult’ words. These qualities of the text are still present, as is the elegant variation that is applied to synonyms of a sexual nature in both the original text as the translation. Now, the question is: will some of these characteristics and translation problems return in the analysis of the other excerpts?

Chapter 3: Lolita

“I entered a plane of being where nothing mattered, save the infusion of joy brewed within my body.” (Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (2006))

Lolita can be seen as a true classic in the literary canon. There are few people that have not heard of this book at all, and a great number can at least recall the first paragraph of the book, in which Nabokov immediately demonstrates his amazing skill with words: “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta” (Nabokov 2006, 1). Even in these few sentences he demonstrates how he knows his way around words - especially for someone whose mother tongue was not English but Russian. Alliteration, repetition, the way he invokes the almost physical sensation of articulating the word ‘Lolita’; it is all a testimony of why he is considered one of the greatest writers of all times. Although Nabokov has written more books than just this one (take for instance The real life of Sebastian Knight (1941) and Pale fire (1962)), Lolita will always be the work he will be remembered for. There may be several reasons for this: as said, his knowledge of and skill with language attribute to his status, but the subject of this particular book has played its part in making sure the book has become part of the literary canon as well. Lolita is not rarely described as a humorous book as well - albeit dark humor - and the scene that will be analyzed in this thesis can be seen as somehow comical as well. A man, fighting his natural urges and later trying to satisfy himself while the little girl sits on his lap, oblivious of the whole thing; it could have been funny, if only it had not been so tragic.

The story is told by one Humbert Humbert, a somehow handsome (at least according to himself: “I was, and still am, despite mes malheurs, am exceptionally handsome male: slow-moving, tall, with soft dark hair and a gloomy but all the more seductive cast of

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demeanor” (Nabokov 2006, 7)) but very unreliable narrator whom the reader both likes and, later on in the book, hates. He tells the story of his obsession with a young girl or ‘nymphet’, as he likes to call the young girls he falls in love with repeatedly. Lolita is the daughter of Charlotte, a woman of whom he rents a room. When the woman shows him around the house he sees Lolita and immediately falls in love with her, although she is not the first nymphet in his life: according to Humbert, his obsession with young girls can be traced back to a childhood sweetheart of his who died when they were both young. He rents the room so as to be as close to “the love of his life” as he can, going as far as marrying her mother (although he was, according to himself, forced to do so because Charlotte would kick him out of the house otherwise). After they are married, Charlotte becomes more aware of Humbert’s true nature and plans to flee with her daughter. As she runs out onto the street, however, she is killed by a passing car - which is obviously very convenient for Humbert.

As the book progresses, the reader becomes more and more uneasy with the relationship between the two. Humbert picks up Lolita from summer camp, where she was when her mother died, and tells her that her mother is very ill and that he is watching her for the time being. They tour the United States and all the while, Humbert resorts to more extreme measures to answer his sexual needs and longings. He drugs Lolita in order to molest her, but they do not work properly and his plan fails. This would seem like a good thing; however, when Lolita turns out to be the one initiating the sex, the reader becomes even more uncomfortable. Eventually, after many travels and after Lolita has married another man and has grown up, Humbert kills that man and is sent to prison. The book is revealed to be not just fiction but the memoirs of his life, to be published after both their deaths.

Although there are no true explicit sex scenes in the book, it is definitely regarded as an erotic work of sorts. Not all critics agree, obviously, and even Nabokov himself once said that he had tricked some readers “into assuming this was going to be a lewd book [expecting]

the rising succession of erotic scenes” (as said by Nabokov in the afterword of Lolita (1989 edition), 313). They were in for a disappointing read, because especially the second half of the book is not as explicitly sexually charged as the first half. Either way, it is true that eroticism is not the sole function of the text, even though Humbert’s motives rely mainly on his sexual attraction to Lolita. Of course, Humbert would not put it that way himself: he regards their love as mutual and as something more than merely sexual, even though he is also very honest about the sexual side of it all: “Why does the way she walks--a child, mind you, a mere child!--excite me so abominably?” (Nabokov 2006, 27) But it is not all about sex. Irony and sarcasm play a large role in this novel as well, lifting it to a higher plan altogether and attributing to its status as a literary work. When looking for explicit sexual fragments (or at least as sexually charged as they occur in Lolita), the reader has to rely on the first part of the book more than the later chapters. Somehow, the focus shifts from the erotic to the travel they both undertake and the psychological aspects of his love for Lolita. However, it is easy enough to find a sexually charged passage in this book that is usable for this thesis; specifically, the scene during which Lolita and Humbert have not known each other for a long time yet and she sits on his lap, unaware of how aroused this makes him. The text ends with a climax, just like the fragment from Fanny Hill in the previous chapter did; however, Fanny and her lover were enjoying sexual intercourse from a state of mutual agreement and enjoyment but Humbert is forced to remain as quiet as possible as he, in a way, violates the young Lolita without her knowing. An orgasm is an orgasm is an orgasm, but not in literature.

Looking at the characteristics of Sontag’s list, we have already in a sense answered the first checkpoint: sexual arousal is not the sole function of the text. This is obviously not just a pornographic work: the story that is told is a big one, of which eroticism is only a part. As such, it follows the narrative structure as it has been described by Sontag as well. The beginning of the story can be traced back to either the love affair of Humbert and his

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childhood sweetheart - and her death, bringing with it his obsession for young girls and his inability to love anyone beyond the nymphet age (between nine and fourteen, according to Humbert). In a way, we can say he was doomed from then on. Of course, it is an entirely different question whether or not Humbert was an innocent victim of his sexuality - nowadays, one side of the argument on pedophilia believes that pedophiles cannot help loving young children and should be treated as victims, not perpetrators (provided that they have not raped anyone, obviously) - or if he is just a man who sexually harassed a young child and should be punished. Or, as the reader is led to believe at times when reading the novel, is Lolita not as innocent as she seems and has she, in a way, provoked the sexual advances of Humbert?

Either way, the fact remains that Nabokov has written a book that has earned its place in the literary canon because of its wonderful language and entrancing story - with a beginning, a middle and an end. The middle of the book, after Humbert meets Lolita and their relationship is established, revolves around his obsession with her and his problems with her mother. His feelings for her are nothing short of loathing, and yet, he marries her. Only until she dies, whereafter he takes Lolita with him and travels through the United States. The book is concluded and the story ends when Humbert has lost Lolita, who is now no longer a child but a woman whom he loves nonetheless, and visits her one last time. Their conversation is very awkward and Humbert leaves Lolita's house to kill her husband. He succeeds and is taken away by the police. He bids the reader farewell and wishes his Lolita well. There is even a fictional foreword which accompanies the book and which states that both Humbert and Lolita have died, thoroughly finishing the story. The narrative is a finished whole without an open ending of any kind, answering to the second point of Sontag's checklist.

It almost goes without saying that the third point of the checklist, the elegant writing which is more than a bothersome necessity, is not only present but one of the strong suits of this book. Nabokov is known for his elegant writing and in Lolita, it can almost be regarded a plot device. Humbert Humbert is presented as an eloquent man and the style of the book is elegant, full of clever findings, double entendres and puns. In the fragment that will be analyzed in this thesis, he even tries to recite an old song he knows but cannot quite remember because he is obviously distracted. The full text is this:

O my Carmen, my Carmen!

Something, something those something nights,

And the stars, and the cars, and the bars and the barmen--

And, O my charmin', our dreadful fights.

And the something town where so gaily, arm in

Arm, we went, and our final row,

And the gun I killed you with, O my Carmen,

The gun I am holding now. (Nabokov 2006, 68-69)

In the fragment that will be analyzed in this chapter, only the first three lines are cited by Humbert - or stuttered, rather. It is not a real song but made up by Nabokov himself (according to Carl Proffer in Keys to Lolita (1968), p. 46). It is full of clever wordplay and rhyme - I will analyze the song in more detail a little later on - and shows, once more, Nabokov's skill with language. It also is a clever reference to the opera Carmen by Georges Bizet (1875). This opera tells the story of a gypsy girl for whom love is nothing more but a game. A man falls in love with her when she promises to love him back (if he helps her escape from prison), but she does not love him at all. This obviously refers to the relationship between Humbert, the desperate man who loves and adores Lolita, who in turn rejects him. This reference is subtle but Nabokov has obviously thought about it extensively. And this

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goes for all the language in the book, which is no surprise: Nabokov himself admitted that he loved language. “After Olympia Press, in Paris, published the book, an American critic suggested that *Lolita* was the record of my love affair with the romantic novel. The substitution "English language" for "romantic novel" would make this elegant formula more correct,” he said in the afterword of *Lolita* (1989). His love for language shines through in this book and makes it obvious to the reader that language was not at all merely a bothersome necessity for him.

Regarding the intense emotions, I think they speak for themselves: the entire book is devoted to Humbert’s struggle with his love for nymphets and in particular for *Lolita*, and although the development does not take place in Humbert in a sense that he changes his ways or comes to realize what he is doing is wrong, he does develop in the sense that he seems to be at least partly at peace with what has happened - or rather, not peace but a sort of resignation that seems to come from the inevitable fate that awaits him, prison. *Lolita*, in turn, also develops as a character, and although she does ‘escape’ Humbert in the end, it could be said that she can never escape the influence he has had on her. However, she does manage to build up something of a life of her own, despite the fact that she will never truly be free of the experiences of her past. The themes, motifs and character developments in this book are too many to deal with in this thesis (they could form a thesis of their own) but this only emphasizes that the book easily meets the requirements Sontag demands of a literary work.

This immediately completes the final point on the checklist as well: *Lolita* and Humbert are nothing if not round characters. Especially Humbert, because he is one of the protagonists and the speaker and thus, we get to know an awful lot about him. That is not to say that *Lolita* is not a rounded character without details because she definitely is, but because we are in Humbert’s head, we get to know very much about his way of thinking and his personality - despite his attempt to veil this with his eloquent language. He gives the

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impression of being a man who tells his story almost in a resigned way: he speaks as if he is in front of the judge and jury of a court (which he probably is) but does not seem like he regrets any part of the story he tells us, not truly. He speaks of “evidence” and “ladies and gentlemen of the jury” without really giving the impression of feeling any guilt at all. Yes, he literally says that he feels remorse and is not proud of his relationship with the young Lolita, but reading between the lines the reader can get the feeling that this is not as genuine as he would like you to believe. This could make the reader hate him, because after all, how can you feel no regret and such resignation after doing such horrible things to a child - yet somehow, Nabokov succeeds in raising empathy for Humbert on the part of the reader, at least partly. Although it is easy to become enchanted by the story because he tells it so wonderfully, it still remains the story of a pedophile, a (potential) rapist and even a murderer. His elaborate defense can make this hard to overlook at times, but it remains there between the lines, giving the impression that Humbert was not as nice and innocent as he sometimes claims he was in the book. Nice or not, Lolita and himself are intriguing and well-rounded characters who have motives of their own, even though they are not always clear or easy to understand, and they are complicated characters that are worthy of analysis and capable of carrying the story.

A: LEXICAL

One of the first things that catches the attention of the reader upon reading Lolita is, as has been said before, the language that is used by Nabokov and - in extension - Humbert Humbert. Most people know the book as ‘a story about a pedophile’ or at least as just a love story of a man and a young girl and are sometimes surprised at the eloquent language that is used by the protagonist. This is of course not without reason: Nabokov has thought extensively about how to phrase the story he wanted to tell. The text is eloquent but at times difficult because of its elaborateness, forcing the reader to really dive into the story. This

creates a lack of distance, distance needed to take a good look at Humbert and see who he really is. The density of the language, however, can make this very hard. As a result, we sometimes ‘forget’ or are incapable of viewing Humbert from a distance and judge him for his actions, not the way he phrases things. Because of this, he can almost seem to get away with murder - quite literally. One of the tricky aspects of this book is that language seems to preside over meaning at times.

On a lexical level, a few things can be noted. The number of adjectives for instance is quite high and often, Nabokov chooses to let the adjective and noun alliterate or includes assonance in the phrase. As a result, the text seems quite poetic - which fits with the idea that Nabokov uses language as a sort of distraction for the reader, to deter him or her from the subject of the text. A few examples of this are “guileless limbs”, “healthy heat”, “shameless innocent shanks”, “happy hand”, “huge hairy hand” and “hot hollow”. This use of alliteration indicates that Nabokov has put real thought in what words to use in what situation, and thus is something that should be looked at in the translation as well. The examples mentioned above have been translated as follows:

Guileless limbs: Argeloze ledematen.

Healthy heat: Weldadige warmte

Shameless innocent shanks: Schaamteloze onschuldige benen

Happy hand: Gelukkige hand

Huge hairy hand: Reusachtige harige hand

Hot hollow: Warme holte

Obviously, not all alliteration has been translated with an alliterating phrase. This is, however, not a surprising result: it is common knowledge that different languages have different characteristics and that it is not always possible to translate every stylistic or other aspect from the source text directly into the target text. Sometimes, one has to compromise. In the
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case of Lolita, the translator has taken note of the alliteration and attempted to recreate it as much as possible without making it seem too forced. “Weldadige warmte” and “harige hand” are examples in which the alliteration works perfectly; in other cases, alliteration was more difficult to achieve. The /s/-sounds in “shameless innocent shanks” have not been maintained completely, but “onschuldig” does contain an /s/-sound and is therefore not a bad recreation of the source text. A final option is to compensate for ‘losses’ in a text by inserting it in another place. In Lolita’s case, some alliterations have unfortunately been lost in translation, some have been maintained and some have been added: an example of this is “zonverbrande benen” (which is not a true alliteration but the /b/-sound is consciously repeated, and of which the original was “sunburnt legs” - without alliteration). More on alliteration later, but this combination of alliterating nouns and adjectives give the text a certain sense of eloquence and elegance, and the translation has managed to maintain this aspect.

One more thing about the adjectives and nouns used by Nabokov, and especially of the combination, is that they are often hypallages or unusual combinations. An example of this is the Dutch expression ‘de warme bakker’, in which ‘warm’ refers to the bread the baker makes and not actually the baker. These ‘odd’ combinations catch the reader unaware, as it were, and might distract him or her from the story for a brief moment - which fits with the intentions of Humbert and the effect of the text, namely that of slight alienation. Some examples of hypallage in this excerpt are “guileless limbs”, “shameless innocent shanks”, and “voluptuous abyss”. All these examples are nouns that are modified by adjectives that do not quite seem to fit. As said, this evokes a sense of alienation in the source text that is important to maintain when translating this text. The first example, “guileless limbs”, is a hypallage because “guileless” is an adjective that refers to the owner *of* the legs, not the legs themselves. The phrase has been translated as “argeloze ledematen”, which has the same stylistic feature; it is not the “ledematen” that are guileless, but the owner. The second example, “shameless

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innocent shanks”, is similar to the first example in that it applies a human characteristic to an individual body part and has been translated as “schaamteloze onschuldige benen”, applying the same idea: “benen”, after all, cannot be shameless, only the owner of those legs. The way Humbert addresses the individual body parts the way that he does, emphasized by the hypallages, creates the feeling that he sees Lolita as her individual body parts, almost - at least in this scene he does, as he is taken over by his lust. In translation, this same alienating feeling comes to the foreground by means of among other things these hypallages. The final example, “voluptuous abyss”, has been translated as “wellustige afgrond”. “Voluptuous” immediately made me think of the shape of a woman’s body because that is what that adjective often refers to. However, it also means “full of delight or pleasure to the senses” (merriam-webster.com), which is what the Dutch translation “wellustig” makes clear immediately. However, it is still a hypallage because an abyss is an inanimate and even abstract object that cannot be “voluptuous”. The Dutch translation “wellustig” brings to mind less associations than “voluptuous” but it is an adequate translation in that it represents the alienation mentioned earlier and the way Humbert uses language. All in all, the translator has taken notice of the effect of this stylistic trait and managed to maintain it in translation.

Nabokov does not only use language as a way to ‘enchant’ the reader, but tends to use difficult words at times as well. This is not just without reason: for one thing, Humbert wants to illustrate his knowledge. More importantly, though, the language is used to draw the reader into the story and at the same time distract him or her with the language, which is beautiful and difficult and sometimes those two things at the same time. This distraction serves to guide the reader away from the *meaning* of the words, which might change the way the reader sees Humbert - as a man who rapes and murders, not the ‘innocent’ intellectual that is seduced by the nymphet. By using words like “solipsize”, “equipoise” and “corpuscles of Krause” he distracts the reader from the essence of the text, almost alienating the reader. Later in the book

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it becomes apparent that this 'veil' of language that Humbert draws up starts to fall apart, because the language becomes less eloquent and more direct as Humbert is more and more lost in his infatuation with Lolita and the things he does to her - and she to him. But in the beginning, so in the scene that is analyzed in this thesis as well, he still plays with words and tries to mislead the reader. This is especially apparent in this fragment; when reading it for the first time, it can be easy to skip over the implications of what Humbert is actually doing in this scene. The complex sentences and eloquent language almost disguise the fact that he is a 37-year-old man that is masturbating with a young girl on his lap - which is what Humbert would want. Almost, because upon closely reading the fragment there is no denying what is going on, but the fact that he tries to veil the events is testimony to Humbert's character.

Another subject that has also been discussed in the analysis of Fanny Hill is the use of passive and active verbs and the way they are used in the text to achieve a certain effect. In the previous chapter, it became clear that passive verb constructions can be used to emphasize a certain moment or action in the text - and in erotic fiction, this is a good device to use when describing the (helplessness of/surrender to) orgasm. However, passive sentences are a lot more common in English than they are in Dutch and in Lolita, the passive tense is not used specifically to emphasize the moment of orgasm, although Humbert does reach a climax at the end of the excerpt. There are a few instances of the passive tense in Lolita: "were presently taken over by her", "Lolita had been safely solipsized" and "The nerves of pleasure had been laid bare". All three instances say something about control: the first and third example indicate a sense of 'losing control' or being led by his sexual arousal on the part of Humbert, and the second example gives him some of that control back in that he (feels like he) has "solipsized" Lolita (more on that term later). The passive sentences are not key to this fragment in that they strongly emphasize the loss of control one can feel when rushing towards release, but they indicate the way passion can make you the passive one in the

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interaction and not the active one. All three sentences have been translated with a passive Dutch construction; the first example has been translated as “werden alras overgenomen door haar”, which maintains that passive construction and has the same effect as the source text. The same goes for the second and third examples, which were translated as respectively “Lolita was veilig gesolipseerd” and “De genotszenuwen waren blootgelegd”.

I have mentioned earlier that passive constructions are more common in the English language than they are in Dutch. However, this particular excerpt seems to indicate the opposite; apart from the examples above, there are three more passive constructions in Dutch. These are: “Ik kwam op een bestaansvlak waar niets ertoe deed, behalve het genotsaftreksel gebrouwen in mijn lichaam”, “die elders in het bewuste leven niet wordt aangetroffen” and “die door mijn reusachtige harige hand werd gemasseerd en langzaam omsloten”. These were not passive sentences in the original English text, which seems odd. However, two out of three of these sentences pertain to the subject mentioned in the previous chapter: using the passive tense to illustrate the passivity of the character, of the helpless feeling that one can have when it comes to relationships and sex. “Het genotsaftreksel gebrouwen in mijn lichaam” indicates how something other than Humbert/his body has brewed a sense of joy inside his body - Lolita, most likely. Similarly, the last example indicates not Humbert’s but Lolita’s helplessness, if one could call it that, as she is being touched by Humbert unknowingly. Only the second example, “die elders in het bewuste leven niet wordt aangetroffen”, does not have anything to do directly with the effect the other passive constructions refer to. So the passive constructions in Dutch do add to the effect of this erotic excerpt - and perhaps they are a means of making up for other stylistic aspects that may have been lost in translation.

B: GRAMMAR

Grammar is a term that covers a great deal textual aspects, but one of the most important ones regarding the specific genre of erotic fiction is sentence length because that is an important aspect when it comes to building tension. Also, as we have seen above, long sentences can add to the level of difficulty of the text, which is especially relevant for Humbert because he uses language as a tool for his own plans. Part of the eloquent language with which Humbert misdirects the reader are the long and complex sentences - and they also add to the illusion of rambling and Humbert losing himself in the moment, as it were. The average amount of words per sentence in Lolita is about 34, which is quite a lot. The goal of the long sentences, the intended effect, is different than it is in Fanny Hill. In the latter book, the long sentences give Fanny a sense of eloquence and seem a little out of place. In Lolita, the long sentences serve a specific goal. An example can be found in the first paragraph of the fragment:

Talking fast, lagging behind my own breath, catching up with it, mimicking a sudden toothache to explain the breaks in my patter - and all the while keeping a maniac's inner eye on my distant golden goal, I cautiously increased the magic friction that was doing away, in an illusional, if not factual, sense, with the physically irremovable, but psychologically very friable texture of the material divide (pajamas and robe) between the weight of two sunburnt legs, resting athwart my lap, and the hidden tumor of an unspeakable passion.

(Nabokov 2006, 64)

As you can see, this is once more a long sentence consisting of an accumulation of several clauses and subclauses. Nabokov keeps adding 'conditions', so to speak: "in an illusional, if not factual, sense, with the physically irremovable, but psychologically very friable texture". Some sentences are just an accumulation of impressions, giving the reader the feeling that he is almost part of it and can experience the feelings Humbert in the story has fragment by
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fragment. Despite the eloquent language, the impressions are direct and draw the reader into the story. The sentence cited above has been translated thusly:

Terwijl ik snel praatte, achterbleef bij mijn eigen adem, die weer inhaalde, een plotselinge kiespijn voorwendde ter verklaring van de onderbrekingen in mijn geratel - en al die tijd een maniakaal innerlijk oog op mijn verre gouden doel hield, verhoogde ik behoedzaam de betoverende wrijving die dan wel niet in feitelijke maar wel in elk geval in denkbeeldige zin het fysiek onverwijderbare, maar psychologisch zeer brosse weefsel wegnam van de stoffelijke afscheiding (pyjama en kamerjas) tussen het gewicht van twee zonverbrande benen die dwars over mijn schoot rustten, en het verborgen gezwel van een onuitsprekelijke hartstocht. (Nabokov 2009, 73)

As you can see, the sentence is slightly longer than the English original - as seems to be tradition when translating from English to Dutch. However, whereas usually longer sentences are split up in translation to make the text more readable, this has not been done in this particular instance. As a result, the sentence seems long (which it is) and a big piece to chew off (which it is as well). However, the skill of Nabokov and of the translator as well is that they manage to write a long, complicated and sometimes confusing sentence but still manage to make it readable enough so as not to distract the reader or to make him or her lose the 'flow' of the text. A dash can be found in many texts and usually in pairs, because they can indicate a sort of 'in between'-thought before continuing with the original train of thought. However, using only one dash has a slightly different effect. It also evokes a sense of a thought or new phrase 'interrupting' the sentence, and in this case it indicates a clear distinction between what he is presenting to the outside world, the pretense he is holding up, and on the other hand what is actually going on, i.e. the way he is moving towards orgasm.

There is another example of dashes in this excerpt, and in this fragment the dashes evoke a sense of rambling that is stronger than in the previous example:

[F]or there was, I swear, a yellowish-violet bruise on her lovely nymphet thigh which my huge hairy hand massaged and slowly enveloped - and because of her very perfunctory underthings, there seemed to be nothing to prevent my muscular thumb from reaching the hot hollow of her groin - just as you might tickle a giggling child - just that - and “Oh, it’s nothing at all,” she cried with a sudden shrill note in her voice. (Nabokov 2006, 67)

The use of dashes in this sentence represents the slightly unhinged mind of Humbert as he is working towards his orgasm. It seems as if he is trying to justify what he is doing (“just as you might tickle a giggling child - just that”) but almost as a side-thought - it is obvious that his mind is elsewhere at the moment but he still tries to misguide the reader as he goes along. The dashes emphasize the sense of rambling that is represented here. This sentence has been translated like this:

Want ze had, ik zweer het, een gelig paarse blauwe plek op haar lieflijke nimfjendij die door mijn reusachtige harige hand werd gemasseerd en langzaam omsloten - en dankzij haar zeer plichtmatige ondergoed leek niets mijn gespierde duim te belette om te reiken tot de warme holte van haar lies - zoals je misschien een giechelend kind zou kietelen en strelen - meer niet - en: ‘O, dat is niks,’ riep ze met een plotselinge schrille noot in haar stem. (Nabokov 2009, 75-76)

The sense of rambling that was present in the original has been repeated in translation by the same stylistic device: the use of dashes. Especially the short phrase and afterthought “meer niet” emphasizes Humbert’s state of mind at that moment. In the original as well as in the translation, the reader gets a sense of rambling and almost confusion - indicative of the rush of emotions and feelings the protagonist is going through. The paragraph describes, like in the *Inge van Balgooi* - 3113981

original, how Humbert is excited by the feeling of Lolita on his lap and actually goes on to masturbate some way. He has problems catching his breath, especially because he has to pretend to Lolita that everything is all right. His speech is jumbled and he has trouble making proper sentence, which is exactly what this odd mixture of commas and a single dash brings about. In this sense, it is a perfect way of representing what is happening through the written word, in Dutch as well as English. And obviously, jumbled speech and catching one's breath are characteristics of sex and descriptions of sex.

C: FIGURES OF SPEECH

Fitting with the idea that Humbert wants to misdirect the reader by means of language, he uses some terminology that adds to that effect. By contrasting the quite primal thing he is doing with theoretical knowledge, he both displays his intellect and guides the reader gently away from the unspeakable thing he is doing. An example of this terminology of sorts is the phrase “The corpuscles of Krause were entering the phrase of frenzy” (Nabokov 2006, 66). These corpuscles are part of the somatosensory system; in other words, they have to do with touch. They can be found in several places in the body, including the penis and the clitoris. I will leave the reader with the responsibility to look up the technological details for him- or herself since that would be a description too detailed for this thesis, but it is likely that the average reader does not really know what the corpuscles of Krause are. And unless the reader has some knowledge on this topic, it is very hard to derive the meaning of the phrase from its context as well (for most readers, anyway). Thus, a sensation of estrangement is created, a sense of being disconnected from a text because of the ‘odd’ phrase. Also, it seems somehow out of place in an erotic fragment. The translation, “De lichaampjes van Krause kwamen in het stadium van razernij” (Nabokov 2009, 75) evokes a similar sense of estrangement because the term is just as specialistic as it is in English and emphasizes the duality of the intimate

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action of the excerpt and the way Humbert uses language as a means of both showing his knowledge and distancing the reader from the text.

From the point of view of erotic fiction, it seems like an odd choice to want to distance the reader from the text, because sex (and thus the descriptions thereof) are about involvement, about making a connection on a physical level and convey that feeling to the reader. However, this is not a typical erotic scene because of its context (the absurdity of the 'relationship - after all, one must not forget that this scene pictures a grown man masturbating with an underage girl on his lap) and because of the way Humbert uses language as a sort of veil to obscure the moral objections one might bring up when confronted with a scene like this. Because of the different nature of this text compared to the other excerpts analyzed in this thesis, it makes sense that sex is approached in a different way as well. The distance that is created is supposed to misdirect the reader, but upon second thought it only emphasizes what Humbert is doing and how wrong that is.

The idea that Humbert is misdirecting the reader and almost creating a sort of fantasy world for himself in which the things he does are okay, is reinforced by the sentence "Lolita had been safely solipsized." (Nabokov 2006, 66) Solipsism is the philosophical idea that your own consciousness is the only thing that definitely exists and all the rest takes place in your mind. (This is of course a very short and straightforward explanation for something a lot more intricate and difficult, for which I apologize, but the idea is clear.) By using this word in the text, Nabokov achieves an effect similar to the one described above with the use of the "corpuscles of Krause." If the reader does not know what it means, he or she might be alienated. It does, however, fit with the theme of this book and particularly this excerpt. The entire time, the reader (consciously or unconsciously) gets the impression that Humbert is almost creating a little fantasy world in which he and Lolita exist together and their love is a true and valid thing. Of course, looking at it from the outside he is merely a paedophile, but

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inside his own head their love is pure and good. The sentence “Lolita has been safely solipsized” creates the suggestion that Lolita, or rather *his idea* of Lolita, his fantasy image of the girl he loves, is safely inside of his head where she is, or they are, perfectly content and safe from the outside world. Later in the novel it becomes clear that Humbert’s fantasy world is falling apart and this is reflected through the language. When Lolita marries another man, his image is completely shattered - yet he still loves her, or perhaps the image in his head. The sentence has been translated as “Lolita was veilig gesolipseerd” (Nabokov 2009, 75). “Gesolipseerd” is not a real word in the Dutch language, although “solipsisme” is. The translator has created is a neologism that might cause an even greater sense of estrangement on the part of the reader.

Another way of looking at a text that was already discussed in the previous chapter is from the point of view of the phonology of a text - in other words, looking at stylistic devices such as alliteration, rhyme and assonance. In *Lolita*, he alliterations are sometimes blunt but more often subtle, present but not in your face when reading the text. Some examples of the more subtle alliterations are “my masked lust to her guileless limbs” (Nabokov 2006, 64) and “distant golden goal” (64). These sentences have been translated like this: “mijn verholde lust af te stemmen op haar argeloze ledematen” (Nabokov 2009, 73) and “verre gouden doel” (73). In the first case, the assonance of the /l/-sounds in “lust”, “guileless” and “limbs” have been transposed as “lust” and “argeloze ledematen”. The /l/-sounds have been preserved, and “verholde lust” is an assonance that was not present in the original English text but can serve as compensation for other instances where the assonance or alliteration has been lost, such as in “verre gouden doel” (the alliteration of “golden goal” was lost in translation but “verholde lust” can make up for this). This is a perfect example of what is usually done when translating a text like Nabokov’s, with so many instance of different kinds of rhyme and alliteration and so on: it is almost impossible to transpose all alliterations and such with an

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alliteration with the same letters on the same location in the text. As a compromise, translators often try the best they can for every instance and when it does not work out because of the limitations of the source language, they try to insert another instance of alliteration at another place in the text. This way, the general ‘feeling’ and flow of the text are preserved without being forced to substitute all alliterations with another alliteration in translation. Some examples: “radiant and robust Turk” (Nabokov 2006, 66) has been successfully translated as “stoere en stralende Turk” (Nabokov 2009, 75), which is not exactly the same when it comes to meaning, but regarding style, it is a very good translation. The sentence “huge hairy hand” (Nabokov 2006, 66) has been translated as “reusachtige harige hand” (Nabokov 75), in which the three instances of /h/ could not be completely transposed, but as a compromise, the /a/-sound in “hand” has been repeated in “reusachtige”, compromising for the lack of triple alliteration. These are small examples and might not seem to make a difference on a text as long as *Lolita*; however, when looking at the entire ‘atmosphere’ of a book, it is small things like these that can create the feel of original and translation alike.

Alliteration also returns in a sentence from the fragment in which Humbert refers to *Lolita* as ‘little Haze’. The full sentence is: “I lost myself in the pungent but healthy heat which like summer haze hung about little Haze.” (65) This is not just a sentence that flows wonderfully but also has a pun in it, something that Nabokov is known to do very often. The full name of *Lolita* is Dolores Haze, and her last name also means mist or damp as well as confusion or insecurity. This brings us to something else that Nabokov does throughout the book: playing with names. *Lolita*’s first name (well, the name Humbert has given her) is the center of the first paragraph and her last name summarizes perfectly the state Humbert is in when he sees her or is with her: hazed, dazed, bewildered, confused. Her presence is enough to make him feel like he is in a ‘haze’ and later on, he is quite literally in a Haze. This can make the translation difficult: the particular sentence quoted above has been translated as “Ik
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verloor me in de priemende maar weldadige warmte die als een zomernevel om de kleine Haze hing.” (Nabokov 2009, 74) The pun with the double meaning of Haze/haze is almost impossible to transpose to Dutch in an equivalent way. Verhoef has tried his best to compromise for this loss, in other places of the text but in this particular sentence as well. The alliteration of “healthy heat” is transposed perfectly with “weldadige warmte” - although “healthy” does not quite mean “weldadig”, it works very well in this sentence. The fact that “priemende” has been chosen and not “scherpe” or “stekende” for “pungent” can be explained by the presence of the /r/-sound in that word, which is repeated in “warmte”. The alliteration of “healthy heat [...] summer haze hung about little Haze” is impossible to transpose completely but is attempted with “Haze hing” and “weldadige warmte” (since “pungent heat” is not an alliteration in the original). It is not a perfect transposition, but then again, this is not always necessary when translating. The ‘vibe’ of the sentence is similar and the sentence flows so well that the loss of the one little pun is not a terrible loss.

But Lolita’s last name is not the only name that has been thought about. Take a look at Humbert Humbert: the first impression you get as a reader is that the name is odd, because of the repetition. When pronouncing the name it reminds one of humming because of the /um/-sounds, making the name almost sound ‘comfortable’ or cosy. The sounds are not hard on the ears and the repetition makes the name easy to remember without being very extraordinary. It brings to mind a reliable man; who would suspect such evil from a man with such a name? The name also brings to mind the French “ombre”, meaning “shadow”. This would refer to the darker side of Humbert’s personality, the shadow side he has when it comes to his infatuation with nymphets. “Ombre” is also a Spanish word, meaning “man”. Another character’s name, that of Vivian Darkbloom, is an anagram of the author’s name. It is easy to see that Nabokov has paid a lot of attention to these names, and fortunately for the translator, they do not have such a specific meaning that they need to be different in Dutch. (Take a look, for instance, at *Inge van Balgooi* - 3113981)

the the characters in Harry Potter, whose names are so closely intertwined with their roles in the book or their personalities that they needed to be altered quite severely at times in the Dutch translation.) To top it off, he even describes the list of names from Lolita's classmates as a poem: "[T]here was a mimeographed list of names referring, evidently, to her class at the Ramsdale school. It is a poem I know already by heart. [...] A poem, a poem, forsooth!" (Nabokov 2006, 35) Names are obviously of enormous importance to Humbert and Nabokov alike, but fortunately do not post many problems for the translator.

One last thing that deserves to be looked at is climax. The climax of this fragment is in all aspects a true climax; in the literary sense and in the physical sense, a climax is reached. Humbert orgasms, as secretly as he possibly can with Lolita on his lap. This climax is reflected in the text, and in particular the last sentence:

[A]nd she wiggled, and squirmed, and threw her head back, and her teeth rested on her glistening underlip as she half-turned away, and my moaning mouth, gentlemen of the jury, almost reached her bare neck, while I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster has ever known. (Nabokov 2006, 67)

The translation is this:

[E]n ze wiegelde, en kronkelde, en wierp haar hoofd naar achter, en haar tanden rustten op haar glinsterende onderlip terwijl ze zich half afwendde, en mijn kreunende mond, heren van de jury, raakte bijna haar blote hals toen ik tegen haar linkerbil de laatste stoot uitperste van de langste extase ooit door monster of mens gekend. (Nabokov 2009, 76)

Once again, we see the accumulation of short clauses, the enumeration of sensations and images that make up this scene. The squirming girl, Humbert's mouth, the final ecstatic moan that summarizes all his frustration and longing. The fact that Lolita "throws her head back"

almost makes it seem as if she is experiencing the same climax as Humbert, which is of course not the case but the suggestion of it is enough to create an extra dimension to the story. What makes this impression even stronger is the fact that immediately after (which is described in the scene after this fragment, which is not part of the excerpt in this thesis) Lolita jumps off Humbert's lap, as if she instinctively knows what has happened. The phone was ringing, but not until this moment did she decide to go and pick it up. Is Lolita perhaps not as innocent as we would like, or are we seeing this scene the way Humbert would like us to see it? Either way, the scene oozes sexual tension in a very awkward manner. The climax makes such a big impression partly because the moment itself is delayed: the entire preceding scene serves to lead up to this climax, and not until the last sentence do we - or does Humbert - get 'rewarded'. That it has been quite the task is emphasized by the clashing sounds in this sentence: when reading it aloud, "crushed out" consists of /t/- and /d/-sounds that stop the sentence from flowing easily and gently along. The sounds create a sort of 'hump'; a similar effect is reached with "against her left buttock" and "the last throb". The quick succession of dental fricatives almost mimics the panting and the shocks that one goes through in the moment of orgasm.

In translation, Lolita also throws her head back and squirms around, which brings about the same effect as in the original, the idea that Lolita might not be as innocent as she seems to be. The clashing of /t/-sounds that is so obviously present in the original and which mimics the sensation of thrusting that is associated with the orgasm is also present in the translation, but not quite as strong. In the original, the thrusting sensation begins to build up in the beginning, whereas in translation especially the latter part of this citation contains those /t/-sounds and delays ("raakte bijna haar blote hals toen ik tegen haar linkerbil de laatste stoot uitperste"). Another thing that causes delay is the addition of the sentence "ladies and gentlemen of the jury", which is also present in translation. This phrase is inserted just before

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the *moment supreme* and emphasizes once more the apologetic feeling that the entire text has because Humbert tries to be the sympathetic narrator of a story he was victim to as well. But apart from that, the phrase itself also literally delays the moment of climax as it occurs in the text, thus enhancing the strength of the moment even more - in the original as well as in translation.

D: CONTEXT AND COHESION

Context and cohesion are quite broad concepts: as Short and Leech themselves say, “an important part of what makes a text, both in literary and non-literary writing, but it is not always an important aspect of literary style. In literary fiction it can most often be seen as a background to more significant style markers” (Short and Leech 197). Not all points that Short and Leech touch upon in that chapter are always relevant to this thesis’ particular focus point: erotic fiction. However, I will touch briefly on the subject of point of view and the relationship between the narrator and the reader. Lolita, like Fanny Hill, is told from the first person point of view by an in-text narrator: the protagonist. In *Lolita*’s case, this is the man we have discussed already in previous paragraphs: Humbert Humbert. The fact that he is the narrator of the story influences the way the story is told - this is the case in all stories, but in this case it plays an important role in the way sex is portrayed as well. Humbert, as said, has the intentions of misguiding the reader and making his sexual deeds and feelings towards *Lolita* seem less incriminating. Additionally, Humbert does not direct the reader per se; from the beginning of the book, he refers to his implied audience as “ladies and gentlemen of the jury.” Humbert has been arrested and is now telling his story to the judges in court - which, in a sense, are we: the reader. Because of the situation he is in (in front of the jury), he will tell the story a certain way - as we have seen in the previous paragraphs. These references to his implied audience have been maintained in the translation, but I think leaving them out was not

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really an option since that would drastically change some aspects of the text that are critical to the story.

The fact that Humbert narrates the story has quite some impact on the story; if anything Humbert is prejudiced because he wants to defend his feelings for Lolita and thus will not shy away from making his descriptions less incriminatory towards himself. This is actually something that cannot be pinpointed as *one* particular aspect of the text, but which is present throughout the text and is communicated to the reader by for instance the way he uses beautiful or difficult language to divert the reader from the gravity of the situation. This pertains to the eroticism in the text as well: the reader gets a certain impression from the sexual deeds in this paragraph because it is told a certain way by Humbert; how different would it be if Lolita or an anonymous, objective narrator retold this particular scene? The point of view is key to the descriptions here, which ties into the idea that Humbert wants to misdirect the reader. When looking at this topic from the point of view of translating, especially the erotic scenes, it is important to maintain the subtlety and the way Humbert tries to conceal the seriousness of the situation. The translation stays quite close to the original feeling of the text, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs: the hypallages, the long sentences, the complex language as a distraction for the reader, et cetera. By almost ‘beating around the bush’ when it comes to sexual descriptions, he creates a sort of distance between the act and its meaning, for himself as well as for the reader, and this effect is present in the translation as well: take sentences like “wat begonnen was als een zalige zwellung van mijn innerlijke wortels werd een gloeiende tinteling die nu reikte tot die absolute staat van zekerheid, gerustheid en vertrouwen die elders in het bewuste leven niet wordt aangetroffen” (Nabokov 2009, 74).

Chapter 4: Atonement

“They were stilled not by the astonishing fact of arrival, but by an awed sense of return.” (Ian McEwan, Atonement (2001))

Atonement is a novel by the British author Ian McEwan and is generally regarded as one of his best works so far. It is the story of a young inspiring writer, Briony Tallis. The book is told mostly from her perspective and focuses on her as a character in the book but also as her role as an author. The book begins when she is thirteen years old and witnesses an awkward moment between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, a childhood friend. The sexual tension of that moment makes a big impression on Briony, and when she later witnesses the two of them having sex in a library, she starts to think that Robbie is a sexual maniac. When Briony’s cousin Lola (a subtle reference to Lolita) is raped later in the novel, Briony blames Robbie and he is sent to prison. The book ends with the reunion of Cecilia and Robbie after the war, and they marry and live happily ever after - only not *really*, as is revealed in the last section of the book. Briony reveals herself as the author of the story about Cecilia and Robbie, and although they are reunited in her book, they are not in real life. This ‘book within a book’ offers an interesting extra dimension to the story of Atonement.

It is not difficult to classify this book as literary: Ian McEwan is, first and foremost, one of the most famous British literary authors of this day and age, and his books provide the reader with a depth that pornography usually does not have. As such, sexual arousal is definitely not the sole function of the text. Instead, McEwan weaves the sex scene in the library into the story in such a manner that it is believable, not awkward and fitting. It is not there just to have some sex in the book so that it will sell better, it plays a vital part in later developments. It is one of the key scenes of the book because it leads to the arrest of Robbie; the scene is not just there to arouse the reader. it serves a bigger purpose, and one of the

questions of this chapter is therefore: will the characteristics of erotic literature that we have found in previous chapters (long sentences, accumulation of impressions, climax et cetera) be apparent in this fragment, or will they differ greatly because they are different kinds of texts? Although Lolita was not an erotic novel, the eroticism was more apparent and present throughout the book than it is in Atonement - although the fragment that will be analyzed in this chapter is without a doubt erotic. And to compare Atonement with Fanny Hill is also very difficult, because the latter was meant as an erotic novel and is a lot more explicit in its descriptions than is the case with Atonement. Before we start our analysis of this particular fragment, however, it is time to look at the other points on Sontag's checklist and how it applies to this particular novel.

Regarding the structure of the novel, it answers to the criterium of having a beginning, middle and end. Although some stories start *in medias res* and other *ab ovo* - in other words, some stories start at the beginning and others 'fall into' a situation in the middle of events - there usually is an experience or event that sets things in motion. In the case of Atonement, this is partly the moment Briony watches her older sister Cecilia have sex with Robbie. (One could argue that the scene in the fountain, with its obvious erotic undertones, is the true beginning of everything because that is when Briony grows suspicious of Robbie, the sex scene leads leads to her having her opinion on Robbie truly established.) Because of this, she does not defend Robbie when he is questioned about raping Lola, a girl that was attacked in the hallway. She does not know it was him but since she saw him and Cecilia having sex and having read a letter with lewd remarks that she was not supposed to read, she doubts him. Robbie unrightfully goes to prison for this and the rest of the novel revolves around Briony trying to atone for what she has done. That is the middle part: her attempts to try and make peace for having destroyed the life Cecilia and Robbie could have had together. Eventually, writing the book is her attempt at atonement for her sins. The end of the novel is a definitive

one because the speaker, Briony, is at her death bed. Her story will end with her, and with her the book as well.

McEwan is famous for his writing and while reading the text, it becomes clear that the way he uses language is something he thinks about extensively. The characters and the storyline are constructed carefully and he uses language not just to put across a message, but to do so in a meaningful and elegant manner. Language is not just a bothersome necessity, to cite Sontag once more, but a means of putting something on paper not just to convey a meaning or to tell a story, but to do so beautifully and with meaning. There are reasons for picking one particular synonym and not the other. McEwan has thought about the words he uses and what effect they have on the reader, what sensations they convey when they are put on the page. This obviously provides the translator with a challenge at times, because as has been said before, those effects and meanings have to be conveyed in a language that has other characteristics, freedoms and limitations than the source language. The translator of this book is Rien Verhoef, who also translated the version of Lolita discussed in the previous chapter.

According to Charles Murtaugh of BlogCritics.com, Ian McEwan has sometimes been accused of being “a cold fish” (6) because of the lack of emotional attachment in his books. Presumably, there is always a sort of distance between the readers and the book, causing a lack of emotional involvement with the characters on the part of the reader. In the case of Atonement, according to Murtaugh, “he makes us care more deeply about his characters than in any other that I’ve read. I personally found it hard to put down the book, I was so worried about the fate of his almost helpless dramatis personae.” (6) The characters go through some rather heavy and depressing events (prison, betrayal, the war) and as a reader, you feel for them. The emotions they feel are real and wild and draw you into the story. This also goes for the sex scene; the description of Cecilia and Robbie in the library is so detailed and well-described that as a reader, you are drawn into the scene. More details on this will follow in the

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analysis of this chapter. For now, it suffices to say that the character and the book are not at all lacking an emotional life, nor a development of character: Briony makes mistakes and tries to atone for them, and the one event in her life that led to the separation of Cecilia and Robbie causes her to change as a person. In this respect, McEwan passes the fourth criterium of Sontag's list easily. The final checkpoint, which as always partly overlaps with the fourth checkpoint, regards the motives and psychology of the character. This is always a hard thing to describe without analyzing the entire novel, but since that is not the purpose of this thesis, I still stick to saying that the personalities that play the most important role in the book (Briony, Robbie, Cecilia) are definitely well-rounded and have motives for what they are doing. For instance: although Briony makes the wrong choice in the beginning of the book by distrusting Robbie and making him a suspect (which eventually leads to him going to prison), she does have her reasons for this. She has seen him 'doing the dirty' with her sister *and* she has read a letter that she was not supposed to read which contained sexually charged language she was too young to understand. Because of her youth, she was not able to make the proper decision. In the rest of the book she does her best to atone for what she has done and develop as a character. Again, it is not as simple as it is presented here, but unfortunately, there is not enough room in this thesis on translation for an in-depth analysis of the book.

A: LEXICAL

One of the first aspects of a text dealing with sex, which became apparent in the analysis of the previous two texts, is the use of verbs - and, in extension, the use of passive versus active verb forms which I will discuss in a later paragraph. In *Atonement*, many of the verbs describe some kind of physical activity: feeling, piercing, gnawing, plucking, biting, et cetera. Especially noticeable is the large amount of verbs related to the mouth and to biting: these verbs emphasize the need of the two protagonists of this scene to be as close together as

possible. The feeling of wanting to literally eat one another is not an unknown one for passionate lovers. Since this is the first time that the two protagonists make love, their eagerness can easily be explained. Also, many of those verbs are written in the simple past (felt, seemed, aroused, spoke). Of course, the text does not contain *only* simple past verbs, but that tense is noticeably dominant in this particular fragment. Simple past indicates that the action took place in the past and also ended in the past - which fits, since this book is Briony's account of what has happened to her and her family in the past. Additionally, the focus of this text is not on the complexity of the sentences per se: the verbs and sentence structures are kept relatively simple in the original text.

The translation also contains many verbs that have to do with physical activity: *kusten*, *plukte*, *omarmde*, *knelde*, *liggen*, *likte* et cetera. Many of these verbs are also in the simple past - this is one of the tenses that is quite 'simple' to translate and work in English as well as in Dutch. The verbs related to biting are also present in translation: *beet*, *sloot er zijn mond omheen*, *likte*. These sensations make up a great part of this scene, it is even mentioned in the text itself "There was nothing but obliterating sensation" (136). This includes the physical sensations that I just described, but especially in the latter part of the fragment the mental sensations start to play an important role as well. The last paragraph describes their orgasm (at least, that is one interpretation of the sentence "and then, for seconds on end, everything stopped. Instead of an ecstatic frenzy, there was stillness." 137) and focuses mainly on the emotional connection between the two. This is represented by sentences like "Struck by the sense of her own transformation, and overwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime's habit had taught her to ignore" (137). Verbs like "overwhelm" and, in an earlier sentence, "astonished" indicate these psychological sensations that also play an important role in this fragment and have been translated as "overweldigd" and "verbazende" (which has become an adjective but still indicates the sensation described in the original). These verbs, like in the

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original, indicate the importance of what has happened and the impact it has on someone, physical but especially psychological.

Another topic that was also dealt with in the previous chapters was passive and active verb phrases. In this particular excerpt, passive sentences are not really used to emphasize the moment of orgasm or climax. This excerpt from Atonement is a good illustration of the way passive sentences are a lot more common in English than they are in Dutch: most of the passive sentences from the original have been translated with an active construction. The most important example that is relevant for erotic fiction can be found in the last paragraph of this excerpt: “She returned his gaze, struck by the sense of her own transformation, and overwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime’s habit had taught her to ignore” (137). This sentence really illustrates the impact that the deed has had on both protagonists, and the use of a passive verb phrase emphasizes that sensation of being overwhelmed even more. The translation is “Zij beantwoordde zijn blik, getroffen door het besef van haar eigen metamorfose en overweldigd door de schoonheid van een gezicht dat ze uit levenslange gewoonte had leren negeren” (156-157), which is also a passive construction. If the sentence had been translated as an active one, a lot of the effect that is present in the original sentence would have been lost, especially the emphasis on the sense of being overwhelmed. The other passive verb phrases in the original text have less to do with the erotic context of this excerpt; only the sentence “They were stilled not by the astonishing fact of arrival, but by an awed sense of return” matches the effect of the other sentence, the idea of being overwhelmed. However, this sentence has become an active one in Dutch: “Ze verstilden niet door het verbazende feit van een aankomst, maar door een eerbiedig besef van een terugkeer” (2002, 156). The meaning of the sentence has not been lost, but the effect of the sentence that is acquired by using a passive construction is partly lost.

Regarding vocabulary, an important aspect of erotic literature is the way the genitalia are described. In Fanny Hill it became apparent that elegant variation is sometimes necessary to avoid repetitiveness in a text - especially when the author refers to the genitalia time and again. In Atonement, this is not the case: McEwan does make references to body parts and genitalia, but not very often at all. Additionally, the nouns used for these descriptions are quite straightforward. The body parts are described simply as what they are: tongues, cheek, nipple, limbs, ear lobe et cetera. The buttocks are also called simply that, and “membrane” is as close to genitalia as this fragment gets. In fact, using the term “membrane” actually makes the text seem a bit more clinical than is usually the case in erotic fiction. This might be attributed to the fact that Cecilia and Robbie are probably unfamiliar with all the euphemisms for genitalia and the act itself because they are not experienced at all. Then again, earlier in the book Robbie does send a rather lewd note to Cecilia which is intercepted by Briony, so at least one of them is not completely unfamiliar with the vocabulary. Either way, McEwan has chosen not to focus on what to call the bodily parts and functions but rather on the actions, the dynamic verbs that describe what is going on. The task for the translator can be somewhat simpler when there are few overly creative, florid descriptions that require a creative attitude; after all, tongues and cheeks can be translated simply as ‘tong’ and ‘wang’, which is what the translator has done in this case as well. The word “membrane” has been translated as “vlies”, which is a very appropriate choice because it does remind the reader of the full word, ‘maagdenvlies’, while not feeling as clinical or overdone as the latter option would. However, synonyms of genitalia are nowhere near as important in this text as they were in Fanny Hill: the focus is much more on the tactile and emotional sensations than on the physical descriptions.

B: GRAMMAR

A first thing regarding style that should be addressed, as it was also one of the main issues of the previous two texts, is sentence length. In *Atonement*, the sentences are relatively short - especially when compared with the previous two fragments, which had extremely long sentences at times. The sentences are not overly simplistic, but there are no extremely long sentences that consist of a great number of clauses piled on top of each other either. This gives the translator an easier job to do in one respect, because he or she does not have to juggle with clauses and subclauses when translating, only to make the text readable in Dutch as well. The sentences often consist of the simple subject-verb structure; obviously, the sentences are expanded beyond a simple "the subject does...", but the structure remains relatively simple: "They felt watched," "this sound seemed to enter," "he pushed," "he pulled away" (McEwan 2001, 135) et cetera. The verbs that are used are predominantly active verbs, as I have discussed in the previous paragraphs.

A very clear opposition that is present in the text regarding sentences is the sentence length. The excerpt is subtly divided into three sections, in which the focus changes from the personal and emotional to the physical. The middle fragment - especially its first half - which focuses largely on the physical side of sex and thus on touch and physical sensation, consists of a lot of similar sentences which are relatively simple structure-wise. Of course, not all sentences are the same or too simple, since that would make the text less interesting. However, a great deal of sentences in that particular fragment of the text (roughly from "But the contact of their tongues..." (McEwan 2001, 135) to "They were astonished by..." (137) begin with a subject-verb-object. (Of course, there are often other phrases added to this simple basic sentences, but a lot of sentences in this fragment have a similar beginning, structure-wise.) A few examples are "He pushed her", "their heads rolled and turned", "she bit him", "he tilted her face", "her helplessness drew", "she was licking his face" and "these bites

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aroused him”. In a way, this might seem like a very simple way of telling a story, but with regards to the genre of erotic literature, it has a very specific and effective result: because of these simple sentences that follow each other, a certain rhythm is created that pushes the reader forward through the scene, towards the climax at the end of the excerpt. Fanny Hill has proven that very long, sometimes complicated sentences that do not give the reader time to breathe can attain a similar effect; however, short sentences have a less breathless and more rhythmic feeling to them, creating an effect that pushes the story forward as well. Short phrases can strengthen this effect, like “thrilling and swelling” (2001, 136); that phrase has two words with the emphasis on the first syllable, strengthening that feeling of being pushed forward.

This idea of working towards a climax via short, simple sentences that create a sense of rhythm and repetition is very present in the original - the question is once more: is it in the translation as well? Looking at the fragment from “Maar het contact van...” (2002, 154) to “Ze verstilden niet door...” (156), one can see that the translator has taken the facts I discussed in the previous paragraph at heart and tried to keep the sentences relatively simple and of a similar structure. However, since Dutch is in general a more extensive language that needs more words to say things than English does, the sentences themselves are a little less compact than the originals. Despite this, sentences like “hij week terug, kwam weer naar voren”, “haar ruggengraat verstijfde”, “ze beet hem”, “ze knelde zijn tepel tussen haar tanden”, “hij hief haar gezicht op”, “ze likte zijn oor” and “hij voelde onder haar jurk” still maintain the feeling of being propelled forward as it was present in the source text. The phrase “thrilling and swelling” from the original has been translated not as a clause that is ‘separated’ from the rest of the sentence but as “dan de verwoestende gewaarwording die trilde en zwol”, i.e. a subordinating clause. Not separating this phrase from the rest of the sentence by means of two

commas gives the sentence a new rhythm in the translation, which kind of diminishes the pushing effect that the original did have.

These are small examples and tiny words and details, but combined, they can make or brake a certain feeling that is trying to be put across to the reader - and in this case, the effect or feeling being pushed forward is a lot less strong in Dutch than it is in English. However, there is always a need to compromise when translating a text, because it is simply impossible to translate everything with a one to one ratio. Sometimes, compromises and choices have to be made. However, especially these tiny changes can have a great influence on the text. As mentioned before in the beginning of this thesis, one of the challenges of writing (and thus translating) erotic fiction is the fact that physical sensations and strong emotions have to be caught in text, have to be transposed to paper in such a manner that the reader can relate and envision the scene in his mind. This is obviously always the case when describing something, but in the case of erotic fiction (in which physical sensations and feelings are of great importance), this is especially important. Of course, these things are sometimes very hard to translate but I think it is a very important feature of erotic fiction and therefore their translation as well. In texts such as Lolita there is an abundance of alliterations and onomatopoeic words, which are sometimes hard to translate - but the sheer number of them makes it slightly easier for the translator to omit some instances and compromise for those losses at another moment in the text. In texts such as Atonement, where the language is not as florid but more subtle, it is important to watch out for such stylistic devices and translate them as well as possible.

C: FIGURES OF SPEECH

Reading a text about erotica should be an almost physical experience: putting feelings and emotions into words can be a hard task to begin with, and this is especially the case with
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erotic fiction. By using words that imitate the meaning of the word and evoke a sense of what that word means, it becomes easier for the reader to ‘experience’ what is going on in the text. It should almost be tangible, especially with erotic fiction. Of course, this can sometimes make the job of a translator more difficult, because languages do not always correspond perfectly (in fact, they rarely do) and it is not always easy to transpose one particular effect from one language into another without running into trouble. For the sake of erotic fiction, however, this is an important skill and something to be looked at extensively by the translator.

McEwan sometimes uses languages in an almost onomatopoeic way at times; that is, the words he uses represent the sound of the action or event that is described. An example of this is the following sentence: “and it was then she made the falling, sighing sound which, he realised later, marked a transformation” (McEwan 2001, 135). Especially “falling, sighing sound” is quite onomatopoeic and reminiscent of what Nabokov does with his opening paragraph of *Lolita*. The word “sighing” itself is already an onomatopoeia of sorts: the /aI/-sound is almost a sigh in itself, especially because it is aspirated. The succession of the vowels in the three words are also reminiscent of a sigh, a downward motion: the /a:/ in “falling” is articulated in the front of the mouth and is a very open sound. The /aI/ in “sighing” is pronounced slightly more in the middle of the mouth and with less lip-rounding. The /aʊ/ in “sound” is pronounced in the back of the mouth and finishes the downward movement of the succession of vowels (from /a:/ via /aI/ to /aʊ/). The consonants reinforce this feeling: the /f/ is a labiodental fricative that is pronounced at the front of the mouth, and the /s/ is an alveolar, meaning that it is pronounced with the tongue-tip near the teeth-ridge - a little bit more inside the mouth. This ‘backwards’ or ‘downwards’ motion, brought to mind by the succession of consonants and vowels, creates the impression of the “sighing sound” that Cecilia presumably makes.

This is obviously just a very small example, but such tiny examples can be very important aspects of how effective a text is. Thus, in translation, things like this should be kept in mind. This particular sentence has been translated as follows: “en op dat ogenblik maakte zij het dalende, zuchtende geluid waarvan hij later beseftte dat het een overgang markeerde.” (McEwan 2002, 154) Here, we see a similar effect, although it is not quite as strong. The Dutch /a:/ (note, this is a very different sound from the English /a:/) is articulated in the front of the mouth. It is an open front vowel, meaning that it is pronounced with the mouth in the ‘open’ or ‘low’ position. The Dutch /ʌ/ from “zuchten” is also an open front vowel, but the lips are less rounded. Although the sounds do not create the impression of ‘falling’ as much as in the English original yet, there is a definite movement. The main vowel from the third word, the Dutch /œy/, is actually a gliding vowel which moves from an open to a close front vowel, reinforcing the sense of ‘movement’. Regarding consonants: the /d/ is an alveolar, pronounced at the front of the mouth. The /z/ is also an alveolar but whereas the /d/ is a plosive, meaning it is pronounced with a slight ‘burst’ of air, the /z/ is a fricative, pronounced while air is ‘pushed’ through the space between the lips, creating friction. The move from a plosive to a fricative is reminiscent of motion, which was what we were attempting to get to. The final consonant of the Dutch translation is, in the dialect of myself at least, a sound which the English are not familiar with: the so-called ‘soft g’. In the average Dutch tongue this sound is approached the best with the /x/ in the Scottish ‘Loch Ness’. This sound is a velar fricative, meaning it is pronounced with the back of the tongue at the soft palate and by creating friction by pushing air through the opening (in this case, between the tongue and the palate). In my dialect it is voiceless, but generally speaking, this is a voiced sound. Because it is pronounced at the back of the mouth, it completes the motion from the front to the back of the mouth, from “dalende” to “geluid” - and thus imitating, at least

partially, the effect that was also present in the English original, namely that of the sigh that Cecilia gives.

Another aspect of the phonological characteristics of a text is the use of assonance and alliteration. These are stylistic traits that are present in many types of texts and many genres, so they are present in erotic fiction as well. They can make a text seem ‘prettier’ or flow better, but they can also create a sort of rhythm or pace in a text that coincides with or leads to the climax, both the literary and the physical one. Alliteration and assonance are, as we have seen, quite common in *Lolita*, but they can also be found in this excerpt from *Atonement*. However, they are a lot more subtle than those in Nabokov’s book, and they are not nearly as numerous as in the former text: hence, their effect is also a lot more subtle. It does fit with the theme I discussed in the previous paragraphs and therefore, I would like to highlight one or two examples and their translations.

The first example is: “But there was only one inevitable end” (McEwan 2001, 136). The words “was” and “one” alliterate - but only on an auditory level, not a visual one. One has to read the sentence out loud to notice the similarities. Visually, “only” and “one” alliterate as well. “Inevitable end” is also an example of subtle alliteration: the /e/-sound is repeated here. Together, these subtle alliterations create a sentence that flows well and emphasize the importance of the moment. The translation of this sentence is “Maar er was maar één onontkoombaar einde” (McEwan 2002, 156). Obviously, the alliteration and similarity in sounds is a lot less strong than in the original, and since that sentence was already quite subtle, not much of the alliteration has been maintained. The word “maar” has been repeated, but this not have the same effect as the alliteration in the original: in fact, repeating words too close together usually only has an adverse effect - which can be solved by using “slechts” instead of the second “maar”. Other than this, the subtle alliterations of the original sentence have not been maintained in translation, making the sentence less strong -

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especially because of the repetition of “maar”. In the rest of the text, there are some small and subtle instances of alliteration and assonance, but they are not as foregrounded and prominent as in for instance Lolita. In this excerpt, the focus is not so much on the phonology of the words in the sense of alliteration and assonance, but rather on rhythm and the opposition of personal versus impersonal, which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter.

One last aspect that belongs in this section of the chapter is a rhetorical aspect that has to do with the erotic part of this text. The excerpt that I chose for this analysis has a certain build up that has to do with the emotional bond between the two protagonists and that is reflected in the language that is used. In the beginning of the excerpt (i.e. the first half of the first paragraph), the focus of the text is on a mixture of the personal and impersonal, but mostly the personal: the sentence “They felt watched by their bemused childhood selves” (135) indicates their personal involvement and the sense of incredulity they both experience because they are in this situation together. However, as their ‘session’ continues, the focus is moved more and more towards the impersonal aspects of the deed, on the physical sensations and the almost aggressive nature of wanting to possess the one you love. This change is introduced by the sentence “But the contact of tongues, alive and slippery muscle, moist flesh on flesh, and the strange sound it drew from her, changed that” (135) and from that moment on, the emphasis is even more on the physical, the sexual act itself. Here, McEwan uses a great number of verbs that indicate physical action (kissing, biting, feeling, fumbling), as I have discussed in the first section of this analysis. This continues for about two paragraphs, during which the two characters “were strangers, their pasts were forgotten” (136). The frenzied feeling lasts up until the last paragraph of the excerpt, until their moment of climax. Then, “it was the impersonal that dropped away” (137). From that point on, there are little to no verbs expressing physical activity but rather descriptions of the emotional side of the deed, of the feelings of the two protagonists and the bond that they now share. Vocabulary-wise, this part

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is a lot more subtle - as emotions are more subtle than the physical touch. This opposition perfectly illustrates two different sides of sex. This duality is also present in the translation, especially because of the presence of verbs indicating physical activity in the middle part of the excerpt. In the first and third part described above, there are few verbs of that nature in the translation and they are very present in the middle section, illustrating the contract that is also present in the original.

D: CONTEXT AND COHESION

There are different ways of dealing with the spoken word in a written text. In the excerpt from Fanny Hill that was analyzed in this thesis, there was no direct speech whatsoever, that is to say no direct quotations. There is no indirect speech either: the text never mentions something along the lines of 'he said' or 'she mentioned'. In Lolita, there is both direct (“‘Look, look!’ - I gasped - ‘look what you’ve done, what you’ve done to yourself, ah, look’”) and indirect (“ I kept repeating this automatic stuff”) speech. In Atonement, then, no direct speech is used in this particular fragment. This does not mean that nothing is said: in fact, the things that are said in the last paragraph of the excerpt are quite important to the protagonists. However, McEwan has chosen to use indirect speech: “She whispered his name with the deliberation of a child trying out the distinct sounds” (2001, 137) and “Finally he spoke the three simple words that no amount of bad art or bad faith can ever quite cheapen. She repeated them” (137). He focuses not so much on what is being said, but the way it is being said. This is important because it emphasizes the gravity of the situation and the words, without explicitly mentioning them. As free as this way of noting down conversation is, in this case, there is not very much room for interpretation.

Regarding translation, this is not a very hard decision to make. It is not hard to deduce what is being said, so when translating the last example that I mentioned above, the only thing

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the translator had to make sure of was that instead of uttering three words, they utter four in the Dutch translation. Generally speaking, the translation also avoids directly quoting the conversation between the two protagonists by using words like “fluisterde”, “antwoorde” and “sprak”. This use of indirect speech, in the original as well as in the translation, creates a sense of both distance (because of the lack of direct quotations) but, more importantly, immersion in the text: although the direct quotations are not mentioned in the text, the *way* the things are said is described with such minute detail (by using phrases like “Ze fluisterde zijn naam met de omzichtigheid van een kind dat de verschillende klanken uitprobeert” (157) and “zij herhaalde ze, met diezelfde lichte klemtoon op het tweede woord, alsof zij degene was die ze het eerste zei” (157)) that the reader cannot help but be drawn into the moment and feel the emotions that the characters are feeling. This is a huge difference with for instance Fanny Hill, where the focus was almost exclusively on the physical side of things.

Which brings me to one last topic that I would like to briefly discuss in this topic, namely the role of sex in this text as opposed to the other text I have analyzed and will analyze, and the effects this has on the translation of erotic fiction. In Fanny Hill, the role of sex is obvious: it plays a very important role because although the book is not *just* pornography, its main focus is definitely on sex. There is a plot, but it is not the most important aspect of the book - which is why it is not odd that some people still call it simply smut. In Lolita, the erotic was also important but in a different way. It is more of an underlying theme or motivation of the book and the protagonist’s ways; although Humbert emphasizes that his love for Lolita is more than physical, the excerpt that I discussed in the previous chapter clearly indicates that the physical aspects of their relationship are an important motive for Humbert. However, the scenes where the focus is on sex alternate with scenes that focus on other aspects, which makes it different from Fanny Hill: in that book, the focus is almost exclusively on sex. In Atonement, then, the proportions are different once

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more. There are few sex scenes to be found in the entire book, and the library scene that is discussed in this chapter is perhaps one of the most famous ones. Sex is not a theme that often comes back in the book, even though it is the underlying cause for a lot of problems that occur in the book (Briony lies about Robbie because she has seen him and Cecilia 'behave inappropriately' and later have sex in the library). Sex was one of the reasons that things go so badly for Robbie and Cecilia (and thus for Briony as well), yet somehow it is not nearly as present in the book as in the other two books I discussed. This makes the library scene both very important and quite isolated in the book. As a result, several things happen. For instance, simply on the level of vocabulary, McEwan was not forced to make use of elegant variation with regards to for instance nouns referring to the genitalia, because those words are not repeated nearly as often as they are in Fanny Hill (in fact, they are hardly mentioned at all). Secondly, the focus is much more on the emotional side of things, as I discussed earlier: feelings play a much more important role in this fragment than they did for Fanny, although that is not to say that Fanny Hill has nothing to do with feelings at all. All aspects that I discussed in this chapter, such as the grammatical and vocabulary aspects, are influenced by the role of sex in this book and in the chapter I discussed. As a result, the translator must have a different kind of vocabulary and knowledge at his or her disposal. When translating a text like Fanny Hill, the focus is much more on the physical side of things, whereas the protagonists in Atonement have to do more with the emotional side of sex and the psychological effects, although the middle part of the excerpt mostly focuses on the physical frenzy of the moment.

Another things that influences the strategy of the translator is the point of view of the text. In other words: who is telling the story? Fanny and Humbert are both protagonists telling their own story - which has because a colored, subjective story because they are told through the eyes of a certain person with certain opinions and ideas. The 'voice' of the story is colored

by their personality, resulting in a certain vocabulary that the translator should pick up on. In Atonement, however, the authorial voice of this particular excerpt seems to be an anonymous, objective narrator. However, this is Briony's voice: she is the authorial voice of the book. The fact that this fragment seems to be told by a fairly objective narrator is because Briony is an author and has 'trained' herself to tell a story. Hence, it is the narrator in her speaking, not the little girl that witnessed the scene originally. She describes the scene mostly from the point of view of Robbie, although sometimes we get a glimpse of what is inside Cecilia's head as well ("She returned his gaze, struck by the sense of her own transformation" (137)). All these layers add so much complexity to the story, especially when placing the library scene in the context of the entire book and when comparing it on the level of erotic fiction and the way it differs from the other fragments I have analyzed so far. This complexity might make this particular text harder to translate because the translator should not only have extensive knowledge on the level of vocabulary, for instance, but keep much more different aspects in mind.

Finally, I would like to say some general things about this excerpt and the way it has been translated. This particular excerpt describes two young people having sex, and for both of them it is the first time. They are new to this: the text even mentions that their only experience are "second hand" (McEwan 2001, 136) and "films she had seen [...] and all the novels and lyrical poems she had read." (136) The whole thing is new to them and their sex scene has something clumsy about it, but it is also very genuine and honest: it is sex between two people that truly seem to love each other, however young they are. This lack of experience could lead to a lack of words to describe what they are feeling and doing, because it is all so new to them. They focus on what they are doing with determination but at the same time experience everything for the first time. This scene setting goes very well with the way McEwan has described what they are doing: the distance is not clinical but evidence of the

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novelty and inexperience of the two lovers. It feels almost “impersonal, almost abstract.” (136) As they reach orgasm and stare at each other after the deed, their feelings becoming stronger and the language also become less matter-of-factly and more poetic. Take for instance a sentence like this one: “[O]verwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime’s habit had taught her to ignore.” (137) The focus changes: whereas the beginning of the fragment consists mostly of direct, active descriptions of what is going on, the latter half of the fragment focuses more on the bond between the two lovers and the emotions they are experiencing. The physical needs have been fulfilled; now, they realize the impact of what they have done. The language changes with them, which should also be the case in the translation.

The translator seems to have taken notice of this change in vocabulary and makes subtle changes in his own translation as well. In the beginning, the focus is on activity-related verbs in the translation - just like in the original. Although the first part is obviously not merely an emotionless report of ‘first this happened, then this, et cetera’ in the original, the focus is definitely more on the actions themselves than on the emotional connection of them. This is especially the case after the narrator observes that Cecilia and Robbie themselves feel somehow distant and abstract. As they build up towards that moment of climax in the original and in the translation as well, the language changes and becomes more related to emotions. (Although whether or not they physically ‘climax’ and reach orgasm could be subject to debate due to McEwan’s choice to leave it in the middle and sticking to ‘stillness’, I will for the sake of argument assume that they have.) The translation moves from impersonal to personal, from action-focused verbs and short sentences to the emotional connection and the psychological aspects of a connection like the one the two protagonists have just experienced. The translation also switches from sentences like “Ze beet hem in zijn wang, niet echt speels. Hij week terug, kwam toen naar voren en ze beet hem hard in zijn onderlip” (McEwan 2002, *Inge van Balgooij* - 3113981

154), which is a simple description of what is going on, to sentences like “Hij was niet gelovig, maar het was onmogelijk om niet te denken aan een onzichtbare verschijning of getuige in de kamer, en dat die hardop gezegde woorden net handtekeningen onder een ongezien contract waren” (158), focusing more on the emotions of the characters.

Chapter 5: Red-Hot and Reckless

“The sound was soul deep and long, and wound around and around him, urging him toward a conclusion he didn’t want to reach yet.” (Tori Carrington, Red-hot and Reckless (2003))

So far, we have seen a variety of literary texts with an even wider variety of subjects: true love, pedophilia ... All these texts differed greatly from one another, but with the help of Sontag we have determined that they all have at least one common denominator: they all qualify as literary texts. The following excerpt, however, will not be called literary by many people. You find candlelight novels everywhere, there are few people who have not read one (or a part of one) at one point in their life and they are not usually associated with literary research: candlelight novels. These are books usually associated with middle-aged housewives who read these romantic, easy-to-digest booklets, often with stories about soul mates and true love and of course: sex. Romantic, erotic, perfect sex, usually - because the point of these stories seems to be to offer an escape from the real world, a temporary residence in a fantasy world full of over-the-top characters and situations. This particular novel is called Red-hot and Reckless (Tori Carrington, 2003) and tells the story of Alex Cassevetis and Nicole Bennett. Alex is a former cop and insurance investigator who is following Nicole Bennett, a Robin Hood-esque thief who steals from the rich and gives to the poor. It goes without saying that both protagonists are handsome, sexy, smart and suffer from strong, deep emotions - and a healthy sex drive. It is in many ways a story of clichés - so why add the story to this thesis?

The focus of my research is on the language of sex: what devices do authors use to convey a sex scene, to make it real for the reader? To ensure the quality of the scenes, the excerpts that have been analyzed so far have all been taken from literary works adhering to a certain standard. (And let us not forget that the six excerpts analyzed in this thesis represent a

very small part of all available erotic literature, let alone of all literature in general. It is simply impossible to include *all* texts, even of a certain genre, in a single thesis - especially since erotic fiction is not the most well-documented genre around. It is inevitable that one must make use of sampling to conduct research.) The characteristics we have determined with the help of Sontag have aided the selection of these fragments, even though there are many other great candidates that could have ended up in this thesis - so why Tori Carrington, then? I feel that candlelight novels make up an important part of the world or genre of romantic and erotic fiction. They may be regarded by many people as too simple and too perfect, which some people might find boring, but it cannot be denied that there are many people who enjoy this genre very much. Harlequin, one of the leading publishing houses of erotic and romance novels, has been around since 1949 and releases, according to its own website, “thirty new titles every four weeks” and has “over fifty million readers worldwide” (Harlequin). Just the fact that many people read a book, however, is not the sole reason to include it in this research. I made this choice because of the relatively large role sex plays in these novels: since this thesis revolves around analyzing erotic fiction, it seemed logical to include a genre that also focuses largely on sex.

This particular novel, however, does not focus solely on sex - meaning that there were only two true, all-the-way sex scenes included. Part of candlelight novels is also the chase, the attraction between the two protagonists and their journey. Of course, candlelight novels do not meet all the requirements from the checklist composed in the first chapter. Take for instance the first checkpoint: sexual arousal is not the sole function of the text. Now, it has to be said that this little booklet is indeed not entirely about sex: there is romance and excitement (Nicola is a thief, something exciting is bound to happen) and, dare I say, true love involved as well. But when stripped to the core, a big part of all these candlelight novels are the

physical attraction and the sex scenes. Not all of them are of great quality and some are downright awful (as illustrated by the examples from Knight Moves), but they are a very important part of the genre. The second part of the checklist refers to the narrative structure: does the text have a proper beginning, middle and end. In the case of Carrington's little book, the answer is yes. The story begins when Nicole notices a dark stranger following her - Alex, who has to investigate her. From her, the story alternates between their attraction for each other and the other plot line, which is about an important criminal Alex is looking for - and Nicole has to lead him to that man. The book ends when the criminal is caught and Alex and Nicole live happily ever after, after much suspense: they only get together at the very end of the book. Cliché or not, the beginning, middle and end are there, so the presence of a plot cannot be denied.

As for the third checkpoint, this is a point of discussion. The style of the previous excerpts differed greatly, but it was apparent in all of them that the author paid great attention to the language. Often, the writing was indeed elegant and more than a bothersome necessity, as Sontag states. In the case of most candlelight novels, including this one, language is not a first priority: it is about the message being delivered, not the way it is phrased. Of course, some attention has been paid to language, but it is not nearly as important as it seems to be for, for instance, Ian McEwan. Also, we have concluded earlier that erotic fiction, especially of a lesser quality, usually goes beyond 'beautiful phrasing' or an artful way of using language and descends into euphemisms and phrasings which are laughable rather than beautiful or smart. This can be an interesting study in and of itself, but for now, the focus will be on whether Carrington uses or does not use the characteristics distilled from the previous excerpts and perhaps the other ways she utilizes language in order to 'represent' the act of sex in her books.

Regarding character depth and personal progress, the fourth and fifth point on Sontag's checklist, a few things can be said. Some novels of this genre have what is also known as a 'Mary Sue character' (or Gary Stu, if it is a male): a flat character with idealized and exaggerated physical and psychological characteristics. It is a term that is associated with the world of fan fiction but is applicable to characters from cliché-ridden candlelight novels as well. The female protagonists of Ret-Hot and Reckless answer to this criterion as well, but where Mary Sues are often also a so-called goody two-shoes, Nicole has a bit more depth and a bit more naughtiness as well. The book is part of a series called The Bad Girls Club, focusing on naughty and cool women instead of passive, overly feminine characters. Nicole's characteristics, however, still seem quite exaggerated, as do Alex's. They have little imperfections and the story focuses more on their physical attraction and other positive traits. That said, it is impossible to write a compelling story without any sort of conflict of any kind, without the protagonist going through some sort of development. Also, the books in this particular genre rely for a great part on the suspense of 'will the man and woman get together in the end?' - even though it is a given that they do most of the time. Therefore, it is necessary to insert some conflict - in this case, Alex thinking that Nicole stole family jewels when she did not - in order to push the story forward and have the reader keep turning pages. In that sense, Nicole and Alex both go through emotional struggles (regarding their attraction towards each other and other personal issues) and therefore develop as characters when they overcome these problems. Therefore, they answer to Sontag's criteria to a certain degree, but of course, there is a big gap between the five dollar-booklets that this genre consists of and authors as Nabokov and McEwan. Still, I think we can conclude that despite the book being a bit of a misfit compared to the other books analyzed in this thesis, the premise of Carrington's descriptions of sex being interesting enough on a textual level to analyze here seems sufficient.

Analysis

Before turning to the analytic part of this chapter, I felt the need to add a small introduction because this text contains some translation issues that were not really relevant in the other texts I analysed. The translation of every text requires a translation strategy, and with literary works this strategy is often even determined in the contract that both publisher and author sign. Usually, the contract has a clause that refers to the obligation of making a translation that is loyal to both style and content of the original in flawless Dutch (or any other target language). When translating a book from the Harlequin series or another series of candlelight novels, some other things come into play as well. Lidia Dumas, the senior editor of Harlequin Holland, describes in an e-mail the requirements made of a Harlequin translator. Apart from writing a translation in impeccable Dutch that is faithful to both style and content, the atmosphere of a text is emphasised. Because romance is such an important aspect of these novels, it should not be lost in translation. Also, Harlequin maintains certain rules that I have not seen with other texts or translations. One of the rules that has a major influence on the way the story can be translated has to do with length. Harlequin sets a certain quantitative limit for their books (an x number of words or pages) and the final product has to be that length - as a result, sometimes not all the information can be put in the translation. Some of the manuscripts therefore have to be shortened considerably, which can be seen when the original and the translation are put side to side for analysis.

This reduction results in the need to cut out some of the fragments from the original or shorten certain passages to such a point that the length requirements are met. From the analysis of this excerpt, I concluded that many parts of the story that were cut or shortened were relatively erotic or sexual as opposed to more 'romantic'. Dumas emphasised, however, that there are no simple rules for what scenes to cut; the most important aspect here is that the story's atmosphere is maintained in translation. The more erotic scenes will not lose the erotic

atmosphere from the original, but in books that focus more on the emotional bond or the romantic scenes, the erotic scenes might be shortened or omitted. Also, Dumas says in her email: “With romantic stories, it is important that the translator is able to do justice to the sensual elements of the story with his/her style and vocabulary, without violating the romantic atmosphere.” Since style is not a hundred percent objective, no quantitative requirements can be said. However, it indicates that the atmosphere of the story, which is nearly always a romantic one in these novels, should not be sacrificed - and in case of Red-hot and Reckless, the atmosphere obviously presides over the explicitness of the sex scenes.

There is one last aspect of this text that is to be taken into consideration when looking at the translation strategy. Someone who has looked into the translations of candlelight novels is Deanna Carlyle, an American novelist and screenwriter. She wrote an analysis of the Dutch (and German) ‘romance novel scene’ on her website, www.dyannacarlyle.com. She also illustrates that big publishing houses like Harlequin and Candlelight publish translations only and that Dutch romance novel authors are still relatively scarce. She has distilled a number of traits that apply to Dutch romance novels, both translated and original: “What’s hot in Holland? [...] Conservative language, no swearing, no F-words. Sweet love scenes, sex is alluded to (there are exceptions among the Harlequin imprints, especially their Sexy line, and among so-called literary novels, e.g., Heleen van Royen’s Happy Housewife)” (2008, 10). Carlyle has also interviewed Anita Verkerk, one of the biggest romance novel authors in the Netherlands. She says about the ‘conservatism’ of Dutch romance novels, which we have also seen in the translation of Red-Hot and Reckless: “Our shops are closed on Sundays, our Queen goes to church every week, our government is in fact rather Calvinist, too. This means that having fun for fun’s sake is, in fact, considered ‘not done. [...] If you read a book, you can't just read for fun; no, the reading has to serve a higher purpose. You have at least to learn

something from it. Our literature can take romance as a subject, but ‘happily ever after’ is considered bad” (7). This is of course a highly oversimplified view of the Netherlands: of course, people read books just for fun and ‘happily ever after’ is not as big a no-go as Verkerk makes it seem. However, part of it does ring true: although our country is known for its open-mindedness regarding drugs and sex, the other side of the medal, that is influenced by our Calvinist, roots is equally important.

Now, although neither Carlyle’s nor Dumas’ reasons and explanations for translating a text in a certain way, as is done when a book is translated for Harlequin, offer a complete explanation, the combination of the two might shine some light on the translation strategies employed for books in this genre. Both offer different reasons for the same phenomenon and ensure the requirement for a certain translation strategy, which I will now discuss with the help of the categories that I also employed in the previous chapters.

A: LEXICAL

Let us first look at the nouns in this excerpt, particularly the nouns referring to the sexual parts of the body - which occur quite frequently. It is something that erotic fiction is notorious for and candlelight novels even more so: the use of euphemisms regarding the private parts. We have discussed this with regards to the other excerpts as well, and it could be noted that some texts pay more attention to the graphic description of certain body parts than others. Since romance novels have such a reputation, it seems important to analyse it for Red-hot and reckless as well. Surprisingly, most of the descriptions are fairly straightforward: breasts, nipple, bottom, groin and erection are all quite neutral terms, which have been translated in an equally neutral manner: borsten, tepel, billen, erectie. “Groin” has not been translated in this instance because that sentence was omitted in the translation, which also goes for “knob of his arousal”, “shiny dome” and “pubis”. A few of the more interesting synonyms are “swollen

flesh,” “engorged womanhood” and “ramrod-straight erection.” Unfortunately, none of these have been translated because they have been, as has become a familiar sight in this analysis, lost in translation. This is unfortunate, obviously, because this way it becomes very hard to analyse the interesting aspects of this text.

Looking at the translation for euphemisms, there are few to be found: “die gevoelige plek” (2004, 66) refers to Alex’s penis but it is a lot less explicit than “knob of his arousal” or even “erection”, and it is almost supposed to be a summary of the entire fellatio paragraph that follows in the original. Nicole’s “swollen folds” (2003, 1260¹) become “vochtige plooiën” (2003), which is actually a sort of contraction: the word “vochtig” coming from the “wetness” (2003, 1265) that is mentioned a little later. Overall, there are no real cringeworthy euphemisms nor synonyms that pose an interesting translation problem: most of the words used to describe genitalia are relatively straightforward and almost clinical. However, it has become apparent that although it is a persistent myth that romance novels like this one are renowned for their colourful, creative and sometimes toe-curlingly bad euphemisms, this is not always the case. The most colourful euphemism of this excerpt is probably “ramrod-straight erection” or “knob of his arousal” (notice that most of the colourful vocabulary is male), but they are nowhere near the examples I have mentioned earlier (trouser snakes et cetera). Especially in translation, this is understandable: if the assignment of the translator contained making the text less explicit and more ‘romantic’, if you wish, then trouser snakes or other almost outrageous synonyms would counter the atmosphere that the translator was trying to evoke. Additionally, Dumas’ remark from the e-mail mentioned in the introduction of this section comes to mind: since one of the goals of a Harlequin translation is to maintain

¹ Note that I used the digital Kindle-version of *Red-Hot and Reckless*, which is a service offered by Amazon. Reading a book this way, you will note that there are no page numbers that one can refer to in a thesis. Instead, I used the location number supplied by Kindle.

the romantic atmosphere and since this booklet is not particularly focused on solely the erotic, it is understandable that the focus is not put on (graphic) descriptions of body parts.

There is one aspect of this text that I feel could be put in any of the four categories I discuss in each chapter, but since it applies to the removal and addition of words, phrases and sentences, I have chosen to put it under category A. An important point of discussion in translation studies has always been the degree of freedom a translator allows himself with regards to the original texts. Some people claim it is important to stick as close to the original text as possible in all aspects, whereas others think a little more freedom is allowed. In earlier days, when translation was not yet an official study or a real acknowledged profession, it was quite common for a translator to treat the text more freely and insert more of his own hand in the translation. This remains an item of discussion, but the translator of Red-hot and Reckless has interfered with the original text quite drastically. Although an anecdote told by Johan Hos during a two week-course on translation studies in Antwerp taught me that translators of candlelight novels sometimes rewrite entire chapters, this is not the case with Carrington's book. However, there have been some quite drastic changes regarding sentence order and the omitting or adding of certain phrases. There is for instance this sentence in the beginning of the excerpt: "What emerged as important to him just then was that they use every last one of the condoms" (Carrington 2003, 1186). The translation is: "Er was nu nog maar één ding belangrijk, namelijk zo snel mogelijk die condooms uit te proberen" (Carrington 2004, 63). The emphasis in this sentence is a lot stronger than in the original. Something that "emerges as important" does indicate that it is the most important thing in the man's thoughts, but it is a lot less strong than "Er was nu nog maar één ding belangrijk" - in this sentence, there is no more room for other thoughts, whereas in the original, this feeling is not present as strongly. The haste is emphasised even more in the translation by adding "zo snel mogelijk", a phrase absent in the original. Also, in the original, Alex "breathed in the spicy scent of *Inge van Balgooij* - 3113981

her” (Carrington 2003, 1186), whereas the translation is: “[hij] snoof genietend haar kruidige geur op” (Carrington 2004, 63). The word “genietend” has been added here. This is not necessarily a huge shift from the original because the sentiment is implicitly present in the original as well (after all, we can safely assume that Alex is not revolted by the smell of the women he lusts after), but making something explicit when it is implicit in the original is an obvious translational choice. A translator can make implicit information explicit when he thinks the reader will not understand or pick up on it, but one can wonder whether or not this is always necessary.

But additions are not the only changes that have been made in the translation: more important are the omissions, because they tie into the theory that I discussed in the introduction. Some sentences or clauses have been omitted altogether in the translation. An example is the memory Alex has about his youth: “When he was five he would take his weekly allowance to Old Man Mano’s corner store and spend half an hour trying to decide what he wanted to spend it on. Mano used to tell him that one day his head was going to explode from the effort it took for him to buy a piece of nickel candy” (2003, 1220). This fragment serves to illustrate a part of Alex’ character (his indecisiveness and thoughtfulness) and is not just a random memory. Details like this often bring the character to life, by offering the reader a look into his life and more details on his personality and background. Admittedly, this is not the most important part of a candlelight novel, but it still adds some depth to the story. In translation, this entire paragraph has been translated as “Al vanaf zijn vroege jeugd was hij een twijfelaar geweest die alles eerst van alle kanten wilde bekijken voordat hij een beslissing nam” (2004, 65). The anecdote from Mano has been made implicit: the reader still understands that the paragraph serves to illustrate a character trait of Alex, but the details that bring it to life in the original have been omitted. Although this particular fragment is not

related to sex directly, most of the omitted sentences have something to do with sex - and most of them are a subtle or less subtle reference to part of the deed or genitalia.

This is the complete list of sentences from the original that are not present in the translation:

- “Good god, she was going to end him here and now.” (Carrington 2003, 1208)
- “She sucked on her index finger then played with his nipple again.” (1208)
- The entire fragment about Mano (1225)
- “Not just in his groin, but all over. He was afraid that if he held his hand out he’d find it trembling.” (1225)
- “But even as fire swept through his abdomen...” (1225)
- “She bent over him [...] her mouth and hand were gone” (1236)
- “With the same finger, she began drawing lazy circles against his enflamed skin. He threw his head back against the pillow and gritted his teeth.” (1238)
- “He watched as she wrapped her fingers around the width of his erection, covering the knob of his arousal, then drawing his hand down over the length of him.” (1238)
- “He’d never been the type to engage in that kind of one-upmanship...” (1238)
- ““Oh yes,’ thought Alex in anticipation.” (1238)
- “Her skin nearly searing his...” (1256)
- “He’d never seen a shaven pubis before up close and personal. There wasn’t a lick of hair on her swollen flesh, nothing to impede his view of her engorged womanhood. And he found he’d very much like to return the favour of oral sex.” (1256)
- “... so that her bare womanhood hovered mere millimetres above his ramrod-straight erection.” (1256)
- “In the sweet sensation of Nicole Bennett connected to him in the most intimate way.” (1268)
- “Her face was drawn in utter concentration, her gaze grimly on him as she went down again and again, her breasts swaying, her heat growing hotter still.” (1268)

- “His mouth watered with desire to pull one of those breasts into his mouth even as his blood steamrolled through his veins. The sound of flesh against flesh, harsh, laboured breathing and his own quickening heartbeat filled his ears.” (1268)
- “He stiffened and his hips bucked upwards violently. Seeming to catch on to his condition...” (1277)
- “‘Mmm, I guess-’ The rest of her sentence exited on a ragged breath as Alex filled her.” (1277)
- “This woman who stoked his passion to such a fevered pitch he wondered if he was too turned on to come.” (1289)
- “He slid into her to the hilt...” (1289)
- “Drawing his gaze down the length of her long neck where sweat coated the skin of her chest...” (1289)
- “She moved her hands to his buttocks.” (1289)
- “[He] drove into her like nobody’s business [...] as he dove for home.” (1289)

It immediately becomes apparent that most of the omitted or highly shortened sentences and excerpts have to do with sex in a relatively explicit way. Although none of the fragments seem really shocking or out of the ordinary in the context of erotic fiction, one could argue that they are quite graphic. Now, not all candlelight novels require a high amount of eroticism, as became clear from Dumas’ e-mail; she explained that some novels are more romantic and others more erotic, and the translation depends on the atmosphere of the original. The amount of explicitness can vary from book to book, from series to series. In this case the focus of the book is more romantic than erotic, even though there is plenty of sex to go around. The approach of the translator, therefore, is also more romantic or intimate. Since the translator also has to keep the issue of a set length in mind, for which shortening the original text might be necessary, choices have to be made. In this case, some of the more erotic sentences bit the dust in order to maintain the romantic atmosphere. An example: the sentence “being buried inside of her” (2003, 1268) becomes “haar intieme warmte” (2004, 67), which is a less

explicit and more emotional approach to what is going on here. Another similar example is the sentence “[s]he ground her hips hungrily against his” (2003, 1290) which becomes “ze drukte haar lippen gretig op de zijne” (68). Although this could also be explained by a typo in the manuscript used by the translator (in which “hips” might possibly have become “lips”) or a mistake on the side of the translator, this adaptation fits within the general tendency of the rest of the text. Especially because one does not usually “ground” lips together; if “hips” had accidentally become “lips”, it would seem like a very odd combination of words. One last example of this is the final moment of this excerpt. Right at the climactic moment, Carrington describes how Alex “drove into her like nobody’s business” (2003, 1297) in the English original. This almost seems a bit crude but it fits with the other rather explicit descriptions in the original. In translation, the sentence becomes: “Alex [...] dook nu rechtstreeks op z’n verlossende hoogtepunt af” (2004, 68). This is still somewhat graphic (it is simple to picture Alex literally diving on top of Nicole) but the phrase “like nobody’s business” is a lot harsher than the Dutch translation “dook [...] rechtstreeks”. Once again, the sentence has been toned down a little bit in translation compared to the original.

One last example can be found in the sentence “Instead he breathed in the spicy scent of her” (2003, 1189). The word “spicy” could be read as an opinion but it is mostly a factual statement of Nicole’s smell. In the Dutch version, however, the sentence is: “maar snoef genietend haar kruidige geur op” (2004, 63). The word “kruidig” returns here, but a word has been added as well: “genietend.” This is a value judgement that is not present in the original - at least not explicitly. Knowing Alex and knowing what is going on, the reader can draw the conclusion that her smell is most likely enjoyable to him, but the author has chosen not to make it explicit in this sentence. Making it explicit in translation is a conscious choice which changes the atmosphere of the sentence: “her spicy scent” is a mere observation where “genietend” is obviously an opinion.

It is true that not all sexual descriptions have disappeared. At one point during the action, the following sentence is used: “She rode him as if he were a galloping horse” (2003, 1268). This sentence has been translated as: “Ze begon hem haastig te berijden, steeds sneller” (2004, 67)). The metaphor of the “galloping horse” has been omitted, but the image is a very clear one, in the original as well as in translation. However, this is one of the few instances in which the detail has been preserved; as illustrated, most of the more explicit descriptions have been omitted or edited in such a way that they are more general and focus on a different aspect of sex. All in all, the erotic atmosphere that is definitely present in the original is still present in the translation, but it has been softened considerably. The “well-shaped” breasts, “not too large, not too small, and were pert in full, in perfect proportion” have become “werkelijk prachtig”, which is still a compliment but a lot more subtle than the original was. Changes, omissions and additions; all contribute to the fact that the translation has obtained a different atmosphere than the original had. It is not necessarily a bad translation, but a lot of changes have been made.

B: GRAMMAR

The first issue I will address in this section is, once more, sentence length. There are different ways of employing this stylistic trait: long sentences evoke a different feel than short sentences do, but they can both be applied to erotic fiction to attain a certain effect. The average words per sentence in this excerpt from Red-hot and reckless is almost twelve, which is relatively low - especially compared to some of the other texts I analysed in this thesis. Additionally, Carrington uses little to no fragmented sentences; most sentences are a complete grammatical whole. This is the opposite of what happened in parts of for instance Lolita, where the fragmented thoughts of Humbert sometimes shine through in the sentence structure. Carrington does not focus on creating elaborate sentences with clause stacked upon clause,

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which might make the text more difficult but would also create certain effects. Nabokov, or rather Humbert, uses language to enchant the reader and conceal his true intentions; this is not the case with Carrington. However, this makes sense when the target audience is brought into the picture. The target audience of a romance novel will typically not be looking for the most beautiful language; it is more important that the text is easily readable and does not ‘challenge’ the reader too much, which would distract from the story and hinder the way readers escape into these novels for a short moment. This explains why Carrington does not play with the language too much and does not make her sentences too long. She focuses on another aspect of written texts, dialogue, which I will discuss under section D.

Another recurrent theme of this thesis is the use of passive and active sentences in order to foreground certain moments of the scene. The general tendency seems to be, according to the previous excerpts, that passive sentences are quite rare in the build-up of certain erotic scenes because it is, after all, an active way of passing the time; to highlight the helplessness and loss of control that occurs during (the road towards) orgasm, however, passive constructions are quite useful and can highlight or emphasise the *moment supreme* even more. In this excerpt of Red-hot and reckless, there are few passive sentences to begin with. An example is “there was something dangerously exciting about being shackled to his own bed” (2003, 1208), in which case the use of passive is obvious: Alex has been tied to that bed by Nicole and he is in the epitome of helpless situations. The sentence was translated as “[hij vond] het echter gevaarlijk opwindend om zo aan zijn eigen bed vastgeketend te liggen” (2004, 64). The passivity of the situation is still clear to the reader, but it is not reflected in the grammar: the verb phrase is no longer passive, the passive verb from the original has become an adverb that does not emphasize the helplessness as much as the original sentence did.

The other instances of passive sentences that are relevant to the erotic aspect of this text are “One wasn’t raised knowing that the world’s first great thinkers were Greek” (2003, 1222), “Instead he was forced to lie back” (1258) and “he was consumed by his need for this enigmatic woman” (1291). The first sentence was modified in translation: the entire sentence has become “Zelf zag hij die karaktertrek het liefst als iets wat deel uitmaakte van zijn Griekse erfgoed” (2004, 65). “Raised” resonates in the noun “erfgoed”, but the entire passive structure is gone. The second sentence has become “gedwongen op zijn rug te moeten liggen” (66). The forced aspect is still present, but once again, not reflected in the form of a passive sentence. If one thinks of language as a way of both showing and telling a story, showing being the more implicit hints and telling indicating a more direct approach, the translator has chosen telling rather than showing in this case. The final passive sentence is very close to the end in the original, and this is an important one: in almost all excerpts analysed prior to this one, the passive sentence became important during the moment of climax because it emphasises the helplessness and loss of control in that moment. In this case, the phrase “he was consumed” is important. This sentence is translated as “Nog nooit had hij zo’n allesoverheersende begeerte gevoeld als naar deze mysterieuze vrouw” (2004, 67). As you can see, the passive sentence has disappeared here as well. Contrary to the other translators I have looked at, this one seems to have given less priority to these stylistic aspects of the text, which have earlier proven to be common in erotic literature and thus important aspects to look at when translating such texts.

C: FIGURES OF SPEECH

Some parts of the original and their translation cannot be analysed because the sentence has been omitted in the translation. This is unfortunate, but luckily, there are more sentences to be analysed, as well as other aspects of the text that can be looked at. One of those is the use of

sounds, phonology, to create a certain mood or to illustrate a certain effect. This can add to the pace of the text and is therefore an important aspect (as we have seen before, in for instance Lolita). Alliteration and other forms of rhyme and assonance play a large role in this. For instance, there are alliterations like the /h/-sounds in “him, her hair” and the /t/-sounds in “trailing, tongue, top” (and “thighs” as well, but this is only ‘visual alliteration’ since the sound is not similar at all). Assonance is present as well in the /i/-sounds of “him, his, flicked, pink” and the /o/-sounds in “tongue, top, holding”. All these repeated sounds create a sense of almost a trance-like state, something which Alex must be experiencing. The consonants sometimes clash, which creates the need to read the sentence slowly: “his thighs as she” is an example of this. Because of the different /s/-sounds, this sentence needs to be articulated slowly and meticulously. This sentence has unfortunately not been translated, but there are some other examples to look at and to see if the translator has kept this aspect of the text in mind.

The first is the phrase “sinfully sexy, unabashedly bold” (2003, 1197). This has been translated as “zondig, sensueel, schaamteloos of wellustig” (2004, 64). The /s/- and /b/-sounds create the alliteration in English, and this effect has been maintained partly in the translation. The /s/-sounds are definitely present, however, the effect is not as strong as it is in the original. The /l/-sounds are also quite prominent, but not as prominent as the /b/-sounds in the original. The effect is there, but not quite as strong. One of the last sentences has assonance: “but knowing one thing as he dove for home” (2003, 1290). The repetition of /o/-sounds emphasises the run towards climax that is present in this moment. This effect is not entirely lost in the translation; in “dook nu rechtstreeks op z’n verlossende hoogtepunt af” (2004, 68), there are also /o/-sounds, but they are once again not as prominent as they are in the original. Overall, Carrington has not paid as much attention to phonology as other texts we have seen but there is definitely assonance and alliteration; in translation, however, most of these

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instances are gone either because the entire sentence or clause was omitted, because the translator felt less strongly about these stylistic aspects and rather chose to focus on making the text flow well or because there seemed to be no better, stylistically fitting alternatives.

D: CONTEXT AND COHESION

A subject that I have not really discussed in any of the previous chapters, because it has not really been relevant, is dialogue. The other three excerpts had little to no spoken text, or only a few lines (like what Humbert is mumbling, or the one sentence Cecilia and Robbie utter). In Red-hot and Reckless, dialogue is a lot more important. There is a lot of direct speech, which is something that hardly occurred in the previous texts. Using this form of discourse, a direct representation of what is being said, makes for a different text than a text in which mostly or only indirect speech is used. In a sense, direct speech is easier to read: the quotation marks make it easy for the reader to see who says what (unless the *inquit* (from the Latin for ‘he says’) are absent, which might make the dialogue confusing to the point of illegible, but this is not the case in this excerpt). It is a very structured way of rendering dialogue in writing, and it has an additional effect: because there is no additional step between the speaker and the reader, which is the case with indirect speech (in which the narrator tells the reader what is being said), the reader can get the feeling that he or she is more involved in the scene. This is convenient from the perspective of erotic fiction. It is important for every sort of fiction to draw the reader into the story and to put into words thoughts and feelings that can be quite abstract, but as said, this is especially the case for erotic fiction because those feelings and experiences are very hard to put into words appropriately. The dialogue in this excerpt makes it easy for the reader to feel involved in the story, which is something that is important for all books. In the case of the latter, however, the sale of these books usually depends on how engaging and ‘exciting’ the story is; having the reader feeling involved is very important.

One thing about the dialogue that is striking is that the sentences are quite well-formed, despite the precarious situation Alex finds himself in (namely, tied to the bed with the woman he lusts after in control). It is in line with the character: Alex is a very composed man, and this shows in his dialogue. As for Nicole, in this particular fragment she is the one in control for most of the time, so her language reflects that. In fact, the part of the story during which there will probably be a higher amount of fragmented or unfinished sentences and exclamations, during the ‘real’ act, has been left out. This is a common occurrence in romance novels: the suspense is part of the fun for the readers, who have to use their imagination. It also gives the author an easy way out in some regards, because describing the act of sex itself and even more so the orgasm is one of the hardest tasks of erotic literature. This way, it is a little easier for the author. In translation, the dialogue has been kept fairly simple as well and the grammatical completeness of the sentences has been mostly maintained.

Something that does not seem to fit is the way Nicole is still very eloquent at the end of the fragment, even though she is supposedly not able to hold herself back as she is close to orgasm and is overwhelmed with lust. In the English original, the sentence she manages to get out is a little bit unrealistic, looking at the situation she is in, but not to such an extreme that it breaks our willing suspension of disbelief: “That once all pretense is stripped away, we’re very much alike, you and I. [...] What we feel, we feel strongly. [...] And when we have sex, it’s with no holds barred” (2003, 1290). Now, a sentence like this one does not really fit the character: it seems overdramatic. Also, it does not match the situation. However, since it is a candlelight novel, which have the tendency at times to overdo everything a bit, the fact that the dialogue is not completely realistic can be ignored. In translation, the sentence is: “Dat wij onder ons uiterlijke masker heel veel op elkaar lijken, jij en ik. [...] Wat we voelen, voelen we heel sterk. En als we vrijen is alles toegestaan” (2004, 67-68). The register is very similar to that used in the English original: a little overdone, especially because of phrases like “ons
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uiterlijke masker”. It does not really fit Nicole, nor does it fit the situation she is in. However, the focus of the English text was a little more erotic and the Dutch translation is slightly more romantic; when looking at this particular sentence that way, the translation almost seems more fitting than the original did. The general tendency of romance novels is to overdo it a little bit because the stories are not usually about realism, but about romance - about escaping your life for a few hours into this fantasy world where everything turns out perfect. The characters tend to be a bit overdramatic at times because of this, more so than when the focus is more on the erotic nature of the text. Therefore, in this case the translation is very fitting.

Overall, this text was very different from the other three excerpts I analysed in that a lot of radical changes were made, which was not the case in the other three chapters. Content-wise this text is perhaps mostly similar to Fanny Hill, because the focus of the text is much more on the sex than it was in Lolita and Atonement. It is hard to call a candlelight novel literary, but it still proved to be interesting to analyse specifically because of those radical changes. Because so much was omitted and many of the omitted text had to do with things of an erotic nature, the translation has become a text with a different feel than the original. However, it meets the requirements that Harlequin has set for the translator (maintaining the romantic atmosphere, true to the original regarding style and content) and although the focus has shifted from erotic to more romantic, the style has not been changed too much. The biggest issue with translating a text like this is thus figuring out what parts of the text have to disappear in order to meet the quantitative requirements; the vocabulary and sentence structure have not proven to be a major translational issue, as I have shown in the previous paragraphs. This is not meant to be a ‘difficult’ or educative text with lots of different difficult constructions and philosophical ideas; it is and remains a candlelight novel, but a proper translation project in its own right.

Conclusion

“Pornography is a malady to be diagnosed and an occasion for judgement.” (Susan Sontag, Styles of radical will (1967))

Every written text must come to an end at some point (unless it is pornography²), and that moment has arrived. But of course, some conclusion will need to be drawn first as a result of the research done. As a reminder, the research question I posed at the beginning of this thesis was the following:

**What are the stylistic characteristics of erotic fiction
and how do translators deal with them?**

Then, I selected and analyzed four excerpts from novels that had something or other to do with erotic literature on a stylistic level and looked at the translation of those excerpts as well. The excerpts were chosen in such a manner that they, in my opinion, represented a variety of genres and stories in which sex played a role. In the analysis that followed, I looked at the texts with the help of a checklist by Short and Leech, using the categories they offer in their chapter three of Style in Fiction: lexical, grammar, figures of speech and context and cohesion. Now, all those sections come with a large number of criteria which can be analysed, and not all of them were equally relevant for the research I was conducting. Therefore, I tried to take the most important aspects and analyse those, trying to look at similar aspects of a text with every excerpt. From this, a few things came to the foreground.

One thing that became apparent during the writing of this thesis and the analysis of all the different fragments, apart from the well-known fact that it is quite hard to draw conclusions about literature and language in general because it is often all a matter of interpretation, is that writing about sex and analyzing written sex scenes is quite similar to

² See page 11.

writing about and analyzing humor: it partly takes away the essence of the thing you are writing about. Of course, overanalyzing *anything* usually has a negative effect (overanalyzing something you love will usually lead to loving that particular thing less), but this is especially the case with sex (and humor). These things are such important aspects of our lives and play such a large role but are at the same time so intangible that it is very difficult to describe them in full detail and analyze what it is that makes them special. The beauty of sex can partly be attributed to the fact that it is so intangible - and so personal. Anaïs Nin describes my sentiment as well, in the foreword to Delta of Venus: “Sex loses all its power and magic when it becomes explicit, mechanical, overdone, when it becomes a mechanistic obsession. It becomes a bore” (Nin 2000, 5). Despite this issue, however, I enjoyed looking at the different sorts of sex scenes and see how they could be translated.

On a lexical level, one of the things that I set out to analyse from the beginning was the use of synonyms and euphemisms, especially those pertaining to the genitalia and other sex-related words. Most people immediately associate ‘erotic novels’ with incredibly silly synonyms (I think I may have mentioned the ‘one-eyed trouser snake’ at some point) and metaphors that are incredibly overdone. As with all stereotypes, there is probably *some* truth in that, but the excerpts that I analysed were of such a linguistic standard that I found little to no laughable metaphors. The story that paid the most attention to synonyms and euphemisms was Fanny Hill. Since this was the novel that was focused on sex the most of all four texts, it contained a lot of references to body parts. As such, John Cleland probably saw himself forced to vary his descriptions in order to avoid too much repetition - after a while, too much repetition can make a text boring and tedious to read. The other texts actually contained less euphemisms than I had expected, especially Red-hot and Reckless; since this is the only candlelight novel I analysed, I too became the victim of a sort of prejudice and expected a reasonable amount of ‘moist caves’ and the like. Actually, the entire book did not contain as

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many sex scenes as I had anticipated, and the sex scenes that were there were less explicit and, well, silly than I had expected. Both *Lolita* and *Atonement*, both works that fall into the category of Culture with a capital C, had a different approach of sex and the erotic played a different role in the book than it did in the other too - I will go into this a bit more later in the conclusion - and as such also had a different approach to the euphemisms I mentioned. Generally speaking, however, I feel that although a certain degree of creativity is needed on the side of the translator, translating these phrases did not pose a really difficult translation problem for this genre.

Other topics I have discussed in all chapters is sentence structure and sentence length. Sentence length is a general translation issue when translating from English to Dutch because long sentences are more 'acceptable' and easier to read in English. As such, a translator must always be aware of this problem and make a choice between the stylistic effects of long sentences and the readability of a text. An important stylistic effect of long sentences with regards to erotic fiction specifically is the effect of build-up and climax, both in the narratological and the physical sense. In sex scenes, the protagonists often work towards their own climax, and this should be reflected in the way it is described. In the excerpts I have analysed, I found that writers generally used two ways of achieving this: with either very long or very short sentences. Long sentences simulate a feeling of breathlessness and force the reader to keep reading without stopping, as the protagonists are unable to stop their climax. This is a technique that could be found in *Fanny Hill*. The problem with translating these long sentences, as said, is the way they sometimes undermine the readability of the text in Dutch. The short sentences are employed in *Atonement*, where the accumulation of many short sentences with a similar structure and mainly active verbs create a sense of rhythm and pace that reminds the reader of having sex. Those are easier to translate because the problem mentioned above does not occur, but a problem with this might be that Dutch is sometimes a

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less compact language than English and some sentences turn out longer in translation, diminishing the effect of the source text.

I found another way of simulating climax in the excerpt from Lolita. At one point, Humbert mentions a child's tune that he utters as he is in his own way working towards climax with Lolita on his lap. The words become jumbled as his state of mind is becoming less stable as well, and part of this paragraph reads:

Suspended on the brink of that voluptuous abyss (a nicety of physiological equipoise comparable to certain techniques in the arts) I kept repeating chance words after her - barmen, alarmin', my charmin', my carme, ahmen, ahahamen - as one talking and laughing in his sleep while my happy hand crept up her sunny leg as far as the shadow of decency allowed. (Nabokov 2006, 66)

He keeps repeating the name Carmen in an almost chanting manner, which brings to mind a religious connotation but more importantly the way a lover screams or moans the name of his or her lover as they climax. This phonetic representation of the way Humbert is moaning her name greatly contributes to the feeling of climax that has to be put across to the reader and thus is important to maintain in translation. It has been translated like this:

Op de grond van die wellustige afgrond zwevend (een verfijnd geval van fysiologisch evenwicht vergelijkbaar met sommige kunsttechnieken) zei ik haar telkens toevallige woorden na - armen, alarmen, erbarmen, mijn carmen, ahahamen." (Nabokov 2009, 73-75)

Although different words are used in translation in order to make the song rhyme as it does in English, the effect of "carmen, ahahamen" is similar to the effect the text has in English. This is not a very difficult translation problem, but it is very important to translate it properly because it plays such an important role to convey the eroticism of the text.

Climax in Red-hot and Reckless, then, turned out to be a lot more subtle than I had expected from a candlelight novel. For one, the real physical climax of the protagonists is not described, only alluded to (which immediately solves the problem of how immensely difficult it can be to accurately describe and thus translate such a phenomenon). Also, Carrington uses a subtle way of teasing the reader and thus conveying the feeling that is described to the reader: delay. The female character is described as teasing the man, and Carrington teases the reader by alternating between descriptions of the sexual actions and other things, such as Alex's youth. At one point in the excerpt, there is mention of oral sex. As readers, we are drawn into the story because we are curious as to what happens next. The last sentence of this paragraph is: "Then just like that, her hands and mouth were gone." The suspense is stretched out until the last word: gone. This use of end focus is important to keep in mind for the translator, because the suspense is so vital to a scene like this.

One other aspect of the excerpts that I found particularly interesting was the way the authors used the phonology of words in order to achieve a certain effect. I feel that stylistic devices such as alliteration and assonance can greatly contribute to the feel of a text when used properly, and in the case of erotic fiction, they contribute to the eroticism of the text because they appeal to our senses: the musicality of a text can be very important. From the point of view of translation, these stylistic devices can be difficult to translate because it is sometimes very hard to maintain the alliteration of the words as well as the meaning of the text, simply because of the linguistic differences. As a result, sometimes these stylistic aspects are partly or entirely lost in translation. In that case, another option is to compromise for the losses at other places in the text, i.e. to add for instance assonance to a phrase that does not have it in the original text. This is a good way of maintaining the general atmosphere and effect of a text without either having to resort to 'forced' translations simply to maintain the stylistic characteristics, or having to dismiss the stylistic characteristics altogether. Since I feel

this aspect is especially important in erotic fiction, it is also important for the translator to lose as little of it as possible when translating a text. In the fragments that I analyzed, most of the instances of these stylistic devices were translated either in the same phrase or at another point in the text, as a means of compromise.

I think the analysis of these excerpts have also illustrated the diversity of erotic fiction. Although the sheer quantity of erotic texts of all sorts was already illustrated in the overview of the genre I made in the first chapter, the analysis of these texts only made that clearer. The way a sex scene is written, and in extension the way it should be translated, strongly depends on the role that sex plays in that particular text. For instance, the role sex plays in Fanny Hill differs greatly from the importance it has in Atonement. In the first book, sex is a great and especially recurrent part of the plot, whereas in the latter the sex scene has important effects on the rest of the story, but is not a recurring event and additionally focuses much more on the psychological and emotional effects of the deed. And in Lolita, then, the erotic atmosphere of the text is much more subtle (the excerpt analyzed in this thesis is one of the few explicit occurrences of sex in the book) These different kinds of sex scenes require a different vocabulary, from the author as well as for the translator.

I by no means claim to have produced a finished and complete work of reference on erotic fiction and its translation. However, I hope that I have illustrated some of the problems that arise when writing and translating erotic fiction. What has stuck with me the most is the way a text can simulate certain feelings, sensations and atmospheres to a reader by choosing the right words, thus conveying all aspects of a text to the reader. Translation is an activity that requires involvement of the translator on many levels, especially when trying to describe something as indescribable as sex - although I think these excerpts have proven that with the right approach, even the indescribable can be put to words.

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Fanny Hill: Confessions of a woman of pleasure

John Cleland

Here began the usual tender preliminaries, as delicious, perhaps, as the crowning act of enjoyment itself; which they often beget an impatience of, that makes pleasure destructive of itself, by hurrying on the final period, and closing that scene of bliss, in which the actors are generally too well pleas'd with their parts not to wish them an eternity of duration.

When we had sufficiently graduated our advances towards the main point, by toying, kissing, clipping, feeling my breasts, now round and plump, feeling that part of me I might call a furnace-mouth, from the prodigious intense heat his fiery touches had rekindled there, my young sportsman, embolden'd by every freedom he could wish, wantonly takes my hand, and carries it to that enormous machine of his, that stood with a stiffness! a hardness! an upward bent of erection! and which, together with its bottom dependence, the inestimable bulge of lady's jewels, formed a grand show out of goods indeed! Then its dimensions, mocking either grasp or span, almost renew'd my terrors.

I could not conceive how, or by what means I could take, or put such a bulk out of sight. I stroked it gently, on which the mutinous rogue seemed to swell, and gather a new degree of fierceness and insolence; so that finding it grew not to be trifled with any longer, I prepar'd for rubbers in good earnest.

Slipping then a pillow under me, that I might give him the fairest play, I guided officiously with my hand this furious battering ram, whose ruby head, presenting nearest the resemblance of a heart, I applied to its proper mark, which lay as finely elevated as we could wish; my hips being borne up, and my thighs at their utmost extension, the gleamy warmth that shot from it made him feel that he was at the mouth of the indraught, and driving foreright, the powerfully divided lips of that pleasure-thirsty channel receiv'd him. He hesitated a little; then, settled well in the passage, he makes his way up the straits of it, with a difficulty nothing more than pleasing, widening as he went, so as to distend and smooth each soft furrow: our pleasure increasing deliciously, in proportion as our points of mutual touch increas'd in that so vital part of me in which I had now taken him, all indriven, and completely sheathed; and which, crammed as it was, stretched, splitting ripe, gave it so gratefully strait an accommodation! so strict a fold! a suction so fierce! that gave and took unutterable delight. We had now reach'd the closest point of union; but when he backened to come on the

fiercer, as if I had been actuated by a fear of losing him, in the height of my fury I twisted my legs round his naked loins, the flesh of which, so firm, so springy to the touch, quiver'd again under the pressure; and now I had him every way encircled and begirt; and having drawn him home to me, I kept him fast there, as if I had sought to unite bodies with him at that point. This bred a pause of action, a pleasure stop, whilst that delicate glutton, my nether-mouth, as full as it could hold, kept palating, with exquisite relish, the morsel that so deliciously ingorged it. But nature could not long endure a pleasure that so highly provoked without satisfying it: pursuing then its darling end, the battery recommenc'd with redoubled exertion; nor lay I inactive on my side, but encountering him with all the impetuosity of motion but encountering him with all the impetuosity of motion I was mistress of. The downy cloth of our meeting mounts was now of real use to break the violence of the tilt; and soon, too soon indeed! the high-wrought agitation, the sweet urgency of this to-and-fro friction, raised the titillation on me to its height; so that finding myself on the point of going, and loath to leave the tender partner of my joys behind me, I employed all the forwarding motions and arts my experience suggested to me, to promote his keeping me company to our journey's end. I not only then tighten'd the pleasure-girth round my restless inmate by a secret spring of friction and compression that obeys the will in those parts, but stole my hand softly to that store bag of nature's prime sweets, which is so pleasingly attach'd to its conduit pipe, from which we receive them; there feeling, and most gently indeed, squeezing those tender globular reservoirs; the magic touch took instant effect, quicken'd, and brought on upon the spur the symptoms of that sweet agony, the melting moment of dissolution, when pleasure dies by pleasure, and the mysterious engine of it overcomes the titillation it has rais'd in those parts, by plying them with the stream of a warm liquid that is itself the highest of all titillations, and which they thirstily express and draw in like the hot-natured leach, which to cool itself, tenaciously attracts all the moisture within its sphere of exsuction. Chiming then to me, with exquisite consent, as I melted away, his oily balsamic injection, mixing deliciously with the sluices in flow from me, sheath'd and blunted all the stings of pleasure, it flung us into an extasy that extended us fainting, breathless, entranced.

Fanny Hill: Bekentenissen van een vrouw van plezier

John Cleland

Meteen konden we beginnen met de tedere preludes, die vaak even heerlijk zijn als de erop volgende eigenlijke liefdesdaad zelf, maar die niettemin vaak domweg overgeslagen worden door de brutale minnaars die zich laten opzweepen door het onberedeneerde ongeduld dat het genot doodt en die blind naar de slotscène rennen, waardoor ze veel te snel een eind maken aan de zegeningen, die alleen de goede spelers ten deel vallen, omdat slechts die zo intens van de zaligheid weten te genieten dat ze juist alles doen wat in hun macht ligt om ze zo lang mogelijk te laten duren. Geleidelijk voerden we ons verlangen naar het uiteindelijke hoogtepunt op en hij toonde zich zo mogelijk nog bedrijviger dan ik, want hij bespeelde me als een kostbaar instrument, me kussend en knijpend terwijl hij met zijn handen telkens terugkeerde naar mijn borsten, die nu rond en vol waren. Ondertussen streekte hij ook dat deel van mijn lichaam dat meer en meer begon te lijken op een ovenmond, omdat de brandende aanrakingen van zijn snelle vingers er een laaiende hitte opwerkten en wisten te behouden. Zo bleef hij minutenlang bezig, terwijl hij me steeds meer in vervoering bracht, tot hij plotseling, daartoe aangespoord door een onweerstaanbare opwelling en de vele vrijheden die ik hem veroorloofde, mijn hand in de zijne nam, om ze te brengen naar zijn geweldige staf, die in uiterste erectie uitzonderlijk hard en stijf was geworden en die samen met zijn aanhangsel, deze prachtige beurs met de door vrouwen meest begeerde juwelen, een onvergetelijk schouwspel bood, zo enorm dat ik hem niet eens kon omspannen... wat volstond om opnieuw een bijna panische schrik bij me op te roepen.

Of ik er naar wilde kijken of niet, ik moest wel, want van een zo al het normale te boven gaand voorwerp kón men de blik niet afwenden. Ik streekte het zachtjes en meteen leek die oproerige duivel nog meer te zwellen en een nieuwe graad van tomeloosheid en ongeduld te bereiken, zodat ik, uit vrees dat aan die groei geen einde zou komen, oordeelde dat het de hoogste tijd was geworden om tot meer beslissende wrijvingen over te gaan.

Nadat ik een kussen onder me had geschoven, om het hem zo minder moeilijk te maken, leidde ik met mijn hand die wild slaande ram, waarvan de rode kop nu sprekend op een hart leek, behoedzaam naar de daartoe voorbestemde plaats, die nu zo hoog opgelicht was als we maar konden wensen. Met mijn heupen opgetrokken en mijn dijen tot het uiterste gespreid wachtte ik hem op en de gloeiende warmte, waar hij opeens tegenaan stootte, liet

hem voelen dat hij de poort van mijn voorhof bereikt had, waar een trefzekere stoot nu voldoende was om de lippen krachtig uit elkaar te drukken, zodat mijn kanaal van genot opening om hem te ontvangen. Even aarzelde hij, tot hij voelde dat de doorgang vrij was en begon zich dan wringend een weg te banen, waarbij niet meer hinder ondervond dan hem aangenaam was, want de gang was breder geworden en de zachte plooiën lieten zich gewillig glad strijken. Het genot dat ons overviel nam nog in hevigheid toe, naarmate onze gemeenschappelijke aanraking hechter werd in dat vitale deel van mij, waarin ik hem nu helemaal had opgenomen als een zwaard tot aan het handvat in de schede en dat nu zo barstensvol was dat hij er volmaakt in paste, met als gevolg dat we elkaar overal raakten en als et ware aanzogen in een overvloedige, onuitsprekelijke lust. We hadden nu het punt van opperste vereniging bereikt en toen hij eventjes terugtrok om een nieuwe stoot te plaatsen, sloeg ik in een plotselinge razernij, alsof ik hem vreesde te verliezen, mijn benen rond z'n naakte lendenen, waar het vaste en toch soepele vlees onder die druk hevig begon te rillen. Zo hield ik hem omgord en omcirkeld, terwijl ik hem nog dichter tegen me aantrok en hem vasthield, alsof ik hoopte hem volledig in me te laten verdwijnen, zodat we nog slechts één lichaam zouden vormen. Zo ontstond een korte pauze in onze actie, een zalige pauze, waarin mijn hele ondermond kwijlde van gretigheid en ik gulzig het heerlijke vlees proefde, waarmee hij tot aan de rand gevuld was. Maar de natuur kan een zo hooggespannen genot niet lang verdragen zonder totale bevrediging te vragen en vanzelf trad dat geliefde eind dus weer in werking, zodat het geklop opnieuw begon, ditmaal met dubbele heftigheid, waarbij ik van mijn kant net zomin werkeloos bleef als hij, maar juist zijn bewegingen beantwoordde met al de kracht die ik nog kon opbrengen. De zachte verhevenheden van onze onderlijven bewezen ons nu wezenlijk dienst door het geweld van de botsing te breken en snel - te snel - lieten de vurigheid van onze opwinding en de dwingende kracht van zijn op- en neergaande wrijving de prikkel in mij het hoogtepunt bereiken, tot ik voelde dat ik het ging begeven, wat ik echter nog lang niet wilde, zodat ik me tot het uiterste inspande en gebruik probeerde te maken van al de knepen die ik proefondervindelijk bij dit soort dingen geleerd had om zo de zaligheid te rekken, omdat ik hem tot het einde van de reis wilde vergezellen. Niet alleen spande ik mijn gordel van genot vaster aan rond mijn rusteloze bezoeker, door de geheime spanveer te gebruiken die we door onze wil in beweging kunnen brengen, maar tegelijkertijd stak ik ook mijn hand uit en raakte voorzichtig de gespannen voorraadzak aan, waarin de zoete spijs van de natuur ligt opgeslagen, en die zo bevallig opgehangen is aan de afvoerpijp, waarlangs we ze ontvangen. Deze magische aanraking, waarbij ik, vanzelfsprekend zeer zachtjes, zijn

bolvormige vergaarkakjes beroerde, deed ogenblikkelijk haar invloed gelden, want nog maar nauwelijks was ik met de streling begonnen of hij vertoonde al de eerste symptomen van de zoete koortsdroom. Direct werd hij al voortgestuwd naar het moment van de ontlading, waarin genot door genot wordt omgebracht, terwijl z'n mysterieuze werktuig de onuitstaanbare prikkeling verdreef die het zelf in mijn organen had opgewekt, door hen te besproeien met een stroom van warme vloeistof, die op haar beurt een nog fellere prikkeling schonk en zoals een zichzelf verwarmend loogvat afkoeling zocht door aan z'n omgeving al het vocht te onttrekken. Volkomen gelijktijdig met mij en dus precies op het ogenblik dat ik wegsmolt, schonk hij me de balsemende injectie, en deze vloeistof vermengde zich met het vocht dat door mijn sluizen werd vrijgegeven, zodat al onze prikkels van genot overspoeld werden en we opgingen in een extase, die ons verdovend, buiten adem en in trance weer neersloeg.

Lolita

Vladimir Nabokov

By this time I was in a state of excitement bordering on insanity; but I also had the cunning of the insane. Sitting there, on the sofa, I managed to attune, by a series of stealthy movements, my masked lust to her guileless limbs. It was no easy matter to divert the little maiden's attention while I performed the obscure adjustments necessary for the success of the trick. Talking fast, lagging behind my own breath, catching up with it, mimicking a sudden toothache to explain the breaks in my patter - and all the while keeping a maniac's inner eye on my distant golden goal, I cautiously increased the magic friction that was doing away, in an illusionary, if not factual, sense, with the physically irremovable, but psychologically very friable texture of the material divide (pajamas and robe) between the weight of two sunburnt legs, resting athwart my lap, and the hidden tumor of an unspeakable passion. Having, in the course of my patter, hit upon something nicely mechanical, I recited, garbling them slightly, the words of a foolish song that was then popular - O my Carmen, my little Carmen, something, something, those something nights, and the stars, and the cars, and the bars, and the barmen; I kept repeating this automatic stuff and holding her under its special spell (spell because of the garbling), and all the while I was mortally afraid that some act of God might interrupt me, might remove the golden load in the sensation of which all my being seemed concentrated, and this anxiety forced me to work, for the first minute or so, more hastily than was consensual with deliberately modulated enjoyment. The stars that sparkled, and the cars that parkled, and the bars, and the barmen, were presently taken over by her; her voice stole and corrected the tune I had been mutilating. She was musical and apple-sweet. Her legs twitched a little as they lay across my live lap; I stroked them; there she lolled in the right-hand corner, almost asprawl, Lola the bobby-soxer, devouring her immemorial fruit, singing through its juice, losing her slipper, rubbing the heel of her slipperless foot in its sloppy anklet, against the pile of old magazines heaped on my left on the sofa - and every movement she made, every shuffle and ripple, helped me to conceal and to improve the secret system of tactile correspondence between breast and beauty - between my gagged, bursting beast and the beauty of her dimpled body in its innocent cotton frock.

Under my glancing finger tips I felt the minute hairs bristle ever so slightly along her shins. I lost myself in the pungent but healthy heat which like summer haze hung about little

Haze. Let her stay, let her stay... As she strained to chuck the core of her abolished apple into the fender, her young weight, her shameless innocent shanks and round bottom, shifted in my tense, tortured, surreptitiously laboring lap; and all of a sudden a mysterious change came over my senses, I entered a plane of being where nothing mattered, save the infusion of joy brewed within my body. What had begun as a delicious distension of my innermost roots became a glowing tingle which *now* had reached that state of absolute security, confidence and reliance not found elsewhere in conscious life. With the deep hot sweetness thus established and well on its way to the ultimate convulsion, I felt I could slow down in order to prolong the glow. Lolita had been safely solipsized. The implied sun pulsated in the supplied poplars; we were fantastically and divinely alone; I watched her, rosy, gold-dusted, beyond the veil of my controlled delight, unaware of it, alien to it, and the sun was on her lips, and her lips were apparently still forming the words of the Carmen-barmen ditty that no longer reached my consciousness. Everything was now ready. The nerves of pleasure had been laid bare. The corpuscles of Krause were entering the phase of frenzy. The least pressure would suffice to set all paradise loose. I had ceased to be Humbert the Hound, the sad-eyes degenerate cur clasping the boot that would presently kick him away. I was above the tribulations of ridicule, beyond the possibilities of retribution. In my self-made seraglio, I was a radiant and robust Turk, deliberately, in the full consciousness of his freedom, postponing the moment of actually enjoying the youngest and frailest of his slaves. Suspended on the brink of that voluptuous abyss (a nicety of physiological equipoise comparable to certain techniques in the arts) I kept repeating chance words after her - barmen, alarmin', my charmin', my carme, ahmen, ahahamen - as one talking and laughing in his sleep while my happy hand crept up her sunny leg as far as the shadow of decency allowed. The day before she had collided with the heavy chest in the hall and - "Look, look!" - I gasped - "look what you've done, what you've done to yourself, ah, look"; for there was, I swear, a yellowish-violet bruise on her lovely nymphet thigh which my huge hairy hand massaged and slowly enveloped - and because of her very perfunctory underthings, there seemed to be nothing to prevent my muscular thumb from reaching the hot hollow of her groin - just as you might tickle and caress a giggling child - just that - and: "Oh, it's nothing at all," she cried with a sudden shrill note in her voice, and she wiggled, and squirmed, and threw her head back, and her teeth rested on her glistening underlip as she half-turned away, and my moaning mouth, gentlemen of the jury, almost reached her bare neck, while I crushed out against her left buttock the last throb of the longest ecstasy man or monster had ever known.

Lolita

Vladimir Nabokov

Inmiddels was ik in een staat van opwinding die grensde aan krankzinnigheid; maar ik had ook de sluwheid van van de krankzinnige. Daar gezeten, op de bank, wist ik door een reeks tersluikse bewegingen mijn verholde lust af te stemmen op haar argeloze ledematen. Het viel niet mee om de aandacht van de kleine jongedame af te leiden terwijl ik de duistere afstellingen verrichtte die nodig waren om de truc te laten slagen. Terwijl ik snel praatte, achterbleef bij mijn eigen adem, die weer inhaalde, een plotselinge kiespijn voorwendde ter verklaring van de onderbrekingen in mijn geratel - en al die tijd een maniakaal innerlijk oog op mijn verre gouden doel hield, verhoogde ik behoedzaam de betoverende wrijving die dan wel niet in feitelijke maar wel in elk geval in denkbeeldige zin het fysiek onverwijderbare, maar psychologisch zeer brosse weefsel wegnam van de stoffelijke afscheiding (pyjama en kamerjas) tussen het gewicht van twee zonverbrande benen die dwars over mijn schoot rustten, en het verborgen gezwel van een onuitsprekelijke hartstocht. Omdat ik in de loop van mijn geratel was gestuit op iets subtiel machinaals, zei ik, lichtelijk verbasterd, de woorden op van een mal liedje dat destijds geliefd was - o mijn Carmen, mijn kleine Carmen, die puntje-puntje avonden en wij, ocharmen, heb erbarmen, 'k wil me warmen, in je armen; ik bleef die werktuiglijke onzin herhalen en hield haar in de bijzondere ban ervan (ban vanwege de verbastering), en de hele tijd was ik doodsbang dat een daad Gods me wellicht zou onderbreken, wellicht de gouden lading weg zou nemen in welker gewaarwording mijn hele wezen geconcentreerd leek, en die angst dwong me, de eerste minuut of zo, gehaaster te werk te gaan dan strookte met welbewust gereguleerd genot. Het erbarmen dat lenigde, en het warmen dat enigde, en de armen, ocharmen, werden alras door haar overgenomen; haar stem stal en herstelde het deuntje dat ik had verminkt. Ze was muzikaal en appelzoet. Haar benen beefden een beetje terwijl ze over mijn levendige schoot lagen; ik streelde ze; daar ging ze in de rechterhoek, bijna breeduit, Lola de bakvis, en verslond haar oeroude vrucht, zong heen door het sap ervan, verloor haar slofje, wreef de hiel van haar slofloze voet, in zijn slonzige enkelsok, tegen de stapel oude tijdschriften die links van mij op de bank lagen opgehoopt - en elke beweging die ze maakte, elke schuifeling en golving, hielp me bij de verberging en verbetering van het heimelijke stelsel van tastverwantschap tussen Beest en Belle - tussen

mijn geknevelde, op springen staande Beest en de Belle met haar kuiltjeslichaam in de onschuldige katoenen jurk.

Onder mijn schampende vingertoppen voelde ik de minieme haartjes langs haar schenen heel licht overeind gaan staan. Ik verloor me in de priemende maar weldadige warmte die als een zomernevel om de kleine Haze hing. Laat haar blijven, laat haar blijven... Toen ze zich uitrekte om het klokhuis van haar afgedankte appel door het haardrooster te smijten, verschoof ze haar jonge gewicht, haar schaamteloze onschuldige benen en ronde bips, op mijn gespannen, gekwelde, heimelijk zwoegende schoot; en opeens werden mijn zinnen door een mysterieuze verandering bevangen. Ik kwam op een bestaansvlak waar niets ertoe deed, behalve het genotsaftreksel gebrouwen in mijn lichaam. Wat begonnen was als een zalige zwellung van mijn innerlijke wortels werd een gloeiende tinteling die nú reikte tot die absolute staat van zekerheid, gerustheid en vertrouwen die elders in het bewuste leven niet wordt aangetroffen. Met diepe warme zoetheid aldus gestaafd en ruimschoots op weg naar de uiteindelijke uitbarsting, voelde ik dat ik kalmer aan kon doen om zo de gloed te rekken. Lolita was veilig gesolipseerd. De onvergankelijke zon zinderde in de vergankelijke populieren; we waren fantastisch en goddelijk alleen; ik sloeg haar gade, rozig, goudbestoft, achter de sluier van mijn beheerste verrukking, haar onbekend, haar vreemd, en de zon was op haar lippen, en haar lippen vormden zo te zien nog steeds de woorden van het Carmen-armen deuntje dat niet meer tot mijn bewustzijn doordrong. Alles was nu gereed. De genotszenuwen waren blootgelegd. De lichaampjes van Krause kwamen in het stadium van razernij. De minste druk zou volstaan om het hele paradijs te ontketenen. Ik was niet langer Humbert de Hond, de verloederde straathond met de droeve ogen die zich aan de laars vastklemde die hem zo dadelijk weg zou trappen. Ik stond boven de beproevingen der bespotting, buiten de mogelijkheden der vergelding. In mijn zelfgemaakt serail was ik een stralende en stoere Turk, die welbewust, in het volle besef van zijn vrijheid, het ogenblik uitstelde waarop hij werkelijk bezit nam van de jongste en teerste van zijn slavinnen. Op de rand van die wellustige afgrond zwevend (een verfijnd geval van fysiologisch evenwicht vergelijkbaar met sommige kunsttechnieken) zei ik haar telkens toevallige woorden na - armen, alarmen, erbarmen, mijn carmen, ahahamen - als iemand die praat en lacht in zijn slaap terwijl mijn gelukkige hand langs haar zonnige been omhoog kroop zover de schijn van het fatsoen het toeliet. De vorige dag was ze opgebotst tegen de zware kast in de gang en 'Kijk, kijk!' - zei ik met stokkende stem - 'kijk wat je hebt gedaan, wat je jezelf hebt aangedaan, kijk toch'; want ze had, ik zweer het, een gelig paarse blauwe plek op haar lieflijke nimfjendij die door mijn reusachtige

harige hand werd gemasseerd en langzaam omsloten - en dankzij haar zeer plichtmatige ondergoed leek niets mijn gespierde duim te beletten om te reiken tot de wame holte van haar lies - zoals je misschien een giechelend kind zou kietelen en strelen - meer niet - en: 'O, dat is niks,' riep ze met een plotselinge schrille noot in haar stem, en ze wiegelde, en kronkelde, en wierp haar hoofd naar achter, en haar tanden rustten op haar glinsterende onderlip terwijl ze zich half afwendde, en mijn kreunende mond, heren van de jury, raakte bijna haar blote hals toen ik tegen haar linkerbil de laatste stoot uitperste van de langste extase ooit door monster of mens gekend.

Atonement

Ian McEwan

He put his hands on her shoulders, and her bare skin was cool to the touch. As their faces drew closer he was uncertain enough to think she might spring away, or hit him, movie-style, across the cheek with her open hand. Her mouth tasted of lipstick and salt. They drew away for a second, he put his arms around her and they kissed again with greater confidence. Daringly, they touched the tips of their tongues, and it was then she made the falling, sighing sound which, he realised later, marked a transformation. Until that moment, there was still something ludicrous about having a familiar face so close to one's own. They felt watched by their bemused childhood selves. But the contact of tongues, alive and slippery muscle, moist flesh on flesh, and the strange sound it drew from her, changed that. This sound seemed to enter him, pierce him down his length so that his whole body opened up and he was able to step out of himself and kiss her freely. What had been self-conscious was now impersonal, almost abstract. The sighing noise she made was greedy and made him greedy too. He pushed her hard into the corner, between the books. As they kissed she was pulling at his clothes, plucking ineffectually at his shirt, his waistband. Their heads rolled and turned against one another as their kissing became a gnawing. She bit him on the cheek, not quite playfully. He pulled away, then moved back and she bit him hard on his lower lip. He kissed her throat, forcing back her head against the shelves, she pulled his hair and pushed his face down against her breasts. There was some inexpert fumbling until he found her nipple, tiny and hard, and put his mouth around it. Her spine went rigid, then juddered along its length. For a moment he thought she had passed out. Her arms were looped around his head and when she tightened her grip he rose through it, desperate to breathe, up to his full height and enfolded her, crushing her head against his chest. She bit him again and pulled at his shirt. When they heard a button ping against the floorboards, they had to suppress their grins and look away. Comedy would have destroyed them. She trapped his nipple between her teeth. The sensation was unbearable. He tilted her face up, and trapping her against his ribs, kissed her eyes and parted her lips with his tongue. Her helplessness drew from her again the sound like a sigh of disappointment.

At last they were strangers, their pasts were forgotten. They were also strangers to themselves who had forgotten who or where they were. The library door was thick and none

of the ordinary sounds that might have reminded them, might have held them back, could reach them. They were beyond the present, outside time, with no memories and no future. There was nothing but obliterating sensation, thrilling and swelling, and the sound of fabric on fabric and skin on fabric as their limbs slid across each other in this restless, sensuous wrestling. His experience was limited and he knew only at second hand that they need not lie down. As for her, beyond all the films she had seen, and all the novels and lyrical poems she had read, she had no experience at all. Despite these limitations, it did not surprise them how clearly they knew their own needs. They were kissing again, her arms were clasped behind his head. She was licking his ear, then biting his ear lobe. Cumulatively, these bites aroused him and enraged him, goaded him. Under her dress he felt for her buttocks and squeezed hard, and half turned her to give her a retaliatory slap, but there wasn't quite the space. Keeping her eyes fixed on his, she reached down to remove her shoes. There was more fumbling now, with buttons and positioning of legs and arms. She had no experience at all. Without speaking, he guided her foot onto the lowest shelf. They were clumsy, but too selfless now to be embarrassed. When he lifted the clinging, silky dress again he thought her look of uncertainty mirrored his own. But there was only one inevitable end, and there was nothing they could do but go towards it.

Supported against the corner by his weight, she once again clasped her hands behind his neck, and rested her elbows on his shoulder and continued to kiss his face. The moment itself was easy. They held their breath before the membrane parted, and when it did she turned away quickly, but made no sound - it seemed to be a point of pride. They moved closer, deeper and then, for seconds on end, everything stopped. Instead of an ecstatic frenzy, there was stillness. They were stilled not by the astonishing fact of arrival, but by an awed sense of return - they were face to face in the gloom, staring into what little they could see of each other's eyes, and now it was the impersonal that dropped away. Of course, there was nothing abstract about a face. The son of Grace and Ernest Turner, the daughter of Emily and Jack Tallis, the childhood friends, the university acquaintances, in a state of expansive, tranquil joy, confronted the momentous change they had achieved. The closeness of a familiar face was not ludicrous, it was wondrous. Robbie stared at the woman, the girl he had always known, thinking the change was entirely in himself, and was as fundamental, as fundamentally biological, as birth. Nothing as singular or as important had happened since the day of his birth. She returned his gaze, struck by the sense of her own transformation, and overwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime's habit had taught her to ignore. She whispered his

name with the deliberation of a child trying out the distinct sounds. When he replied with her name, it sounded like a new word - the syllables remained the same, the meaning was different. Finally he spoke the three simple words that no amount of bad art or bad faith can ever quite cheapen. She repeated them, with exactly the same slight emphasis on the second word, as though she were the one to say them first. He had no religious belief, but it was impossible not to think of an invisible presence or witness in the room, and that these words spoken aloud were like signatures on an unseen contract.

Boetekleed

Ian McEwan

Hij legde zijn handen op haar schouders en haar blote huid voelde koel aan. Toen hun gezichten dicht bij elkaar kwamen was hij onzeker genoeg om te denken dat ze misschien wel weg zou springen of hem zou slaan, als in een film, met haar vlakke hand op zijn wang. Haar mond smaakte naar lippenstift en zout. Even weken ze terug, toen sloeg hij zijn armen om haar heen en kusten ze elkaar nog eens, met meer zelfvertrouwen. Gedurfd beroerden ze elkaars tongpunt en op dat ogenblik maakte zij het dalende, zuchtende geluid waarvan hij later beseftte dat het een overgang markeerde. Tot dan had het nog steeds iets belachelijks om een vertrouwd gezicht zo dicht bij dat van jezelf te hebben. Ze voelden zich bekeken door hun verwaasde kinder-ik. Maar het contact van tongen, levend en glibberig spierweefsel, vochtig vlees tegen vlees, en het vreemde geluid dat dit haar ontlokte, bracht daar verandering in. Dat geluid leek hem binnen te dringen, hem over zijn volledige lengte te doorboren zodat zijn hele lichaam openging en hij in staat was buiten zichzelf te treden en haar vrijelijk te kussen. Dat wat verlegenheid had gebracht was nu onpersoonlijk, bijna abstract. Het zuchtende geluid dat ze maakte was begerig en maakte ook hem begerig. Hij duwde haar hard in de hoek, tussen de boeken. Terwijl ze kusten trok ze aan zijn kleren, plukte vergeefs aan zijn overhemd, zijn broeksband. Hun hoofden rolden en draaiden tegen elkaar naarmate hun kussen een geknaag werd. Ze beet hem in zijn wang, niet echt speels. Hij week terug, kwam toen weer naar voren en ze beet hem hard in zijn onderlip. Hij kuste haar hals en duwde haar hoofd naar achteren tegen de planken, en zij trok aan zijn haar en duwde zijn gezicht omlaag tegen haar borsten. Na wat onhandig gestuntel vond hij haar tepel, klein en hard, en sloot er zijn mond omheen. Haar ruggengraat verstijfde en sidderde toen over de hele lengte. Even dacht hij dat ze buiten kennis was. Haar armen lagen om zijn hoofd en toen ze haar greep weer verstevigde hapte hij wanhopig naar adem en rees in zijn volle lengte omhoog, omarmde haar en perste haar hoofd tegen zijn borst. Ze beet hem weer en trok aan zijn overhemd. Toen ze een knoopje tegen de vloerplanken hoorden tikken, moesten ze de andere kant op kijken en moeite doen om niet te grinniken. Humor zou hun noodlottig zijn geweest. Ze knelde zijn tepel tussen haar tanden. Het gevoel was ondraaglijk. Hij hief haar gezicht op en knelde haar tegen zijn ribben, kuste haar ogen en duwde met zijn tong haar lippen van elkaar. Haar hulpeloosheid ontlokte haar opnieuw dat geluid, als een zucht van teleurstelling.

Eindelijk waren ze vreemden en was hun verleden vergeten. Ze waren ook vreemden voor zichzelf, die niet meer wisten wie of waar ze waren. De bibliotheekdeur was dik en geen van de gewone geluiden die hun geheugen hadden kunnen opfrissen, die hen hadden kunnen weerhouden, kon tot hen doordringen. Ze waren buiten het heden, de tijd voorbij, zonder herinneringen en zonder toekomst. Er was niets anders dan de verwoestende gewaarwording die trilde en zwol, en het geluid van stof op stof en huid op stof waarmee hun ledematen langs elkaar streken in die rusteloze, zinnelijke worsteling. Zijn ervaring was beperkt en hij wist alleen uit de tweede hand dat ze niet hoefden te gaan liggen. Wat haar betrof: buiten alle films die ze had gezien en alle romans en lyrische gedichten die ze had gelezen, had ze geen enkele ervaring. Ondanks die beperkingen verbaasde het hen niet hoe duidelijk ze hun eigen behoeften kenden. Weer kusten ze, en haar armen waren achter zijn hoofd geklemd. Ze likte zijn oor en beet toen in zijn oorlel. Al met al wond dat gebijt hem op en maakte het hem kwaad, hitste het hem op. Hij voelde onder haar jurk naar haar billen en kneep hard, en draaide haar half om wraak te nemen met een klap, maar daar was niet genoeg ruimte voor. Ze hield haar ogen op de zijne gericht toen ze met haar hand omlaag ging om haar schoenen uit te trekken. Er volgde nog meer gestuntel, met knopen en de plaats van armen en benen. Zij had geen enkele ervaring. Zonder iets te zeggen geleidde hij haar voet naar de onderste plank. Ze waren onbeholpen, maar te onzelfzuchtig om nu verlegen te zijn. Toen hij de nauwsluitende zijden jurk weer optilde meende hij dat haar blik van onzekerheid de zijne weerspiegelde. Maar er was maar één onontkoombaar einde en ze konden niets anders doen dan dat tegemoet gaan.

Ondersteund tegen de hoek door zijn gewicht klemde ze nogmaals haar handen achter zijn nek, leunde met haar ellebogen op zijn schouder en begon zijn gezicht weer te kussen. Het moment zelf was eenvoudig. Ze hielden hun adem in voordat het vlies scheurde en toen dat gebeurde keerde ze zich vlug af maar gaf geen kik - dat leek een kwestie van trots te zijn. Ze kwamen dichterbij, dieper en toen, secondelang, hield alles op. In plaats van een uitzinnige vervoering was er stilte. Ze verstilden niet door het verbazende feit van een aankomst, maar door een eerbiedig besef van een terugkeer - ze bevonden zich vlak bij elkaar in het donker en tuurden in het weinige dat ze van elkaars ogen konden zien, en wat nu wegviel was het onpersoonlijke. Er was natuurlijk niets abstracts aan een gezicht. De zoon van Grace en Ernest Turner, de dochter van Emily en Jack Tallis, de jeugd vrienden, de bekenden van de universiteit, zaken in een staat van euforische, vredige vreugde de gedenkwaardige verandering onder ogen die ze teweeg hadden gebracht. De nabijheid van een vertrouwd

gezicht was niet lachwekkend, ze was wonderbaarlijk. Robbie tuurde naar de vrouw, het meisje dat hij altijd had gekend, met de gedachte dat de verandering geheel in hem had plaatsgevonden, en even wezenlijk, even wezenlijk biologisch was als een geboorte. Sinds de dag van zijn geboorte was er niet meer zoiets bijzonders of belangrijks gebeurd. Zij beantwoordde zijn blik, getroffen door het besef van haar eigen metamorfose en overweldigd door de schoonheid van een gezicht dat ze uit levenslange gewoonte had leren negeren. Ze fluisterde zijn naam met de omzichtigheid van een kind dat de verschillende klanken uitprobeert. Toen hij antwoordde met haar naam, klonk die als een nieuw woord - de lettergrepen bleven hetzelfde, de betekenis was anders. Ten slotte sprak hij de vier eenvoudige woorden waaraan geen enkele hoeveelheid slechte kunst of kwade trouw ooit echt afbreuk aan zou kunnen doen. Zij herhaalde ze, met precies diezelfde lichte klemtoon op het tweede woord, alsof zij degene was die ze het eerste zei. Hij was niet gelovig, maar het was onmogelijk om niet te denken aan een onzichtbare verschijning of getuige in de kamer, en dat die hardop gezegde woorden net handtekeningen onder een ongezien contract waren.

Red-hot and reckless

Tori Carrington

The sound of metal teeth ratcheting then the feel of cold metal encircling his wrist where he had his arm stretched above his head let him know he was no longer alone.

“Mmm. Penny for your thoughts,” Nicole whispered against his ear. Her hair teased the skin on his shoulder as she tested the soundness of the handcuffs she’d just fastened around his wrist.

Alex didn’t open his eyes immediately. Instead he breathed in the spicy scent of her.

She’d come back.

In that moment, it didn’t matter where she had been, or what kind of trouble she might have gotten into, or even whether or not she had broken the law. What emerged as important to him just then was that they use every last one of the condoms she’d left behind in his office.

He felt fingertips walk over his erection through his snug cotton boxers and groaned.

“Did you miss me?” she whispered, gripping him in her hand. “I think you did.”

How could he miss what he hadn’t had yet? Instead, he was driving himself crazy thinking about getting it.

Alex heard the sound of material rasping against skin and cracked his eyelids open, to find her stripping from the boots, blouse and dress she’d had on earlier. The moonlight kissed her pale skin and turned her dark hair into a black cloud, making her look almost ethereal. Which was definitely not a word he’d generally use to describe Nicole Bennett. Sinfully sexy, unabashedly bold, uninhibitedly decadent, but never ethereal.

He swallowed as he realized he’d been right about her not wearing a bra earlier. Her breasts were well shaped, not too large, not too small, and were pert and full, in perfect proportion to the rest of her body.

Then there was that underwear...

Alex tried to reach for her, only to find that she’d handcuffed his right hand to the headboard. Using his left would be awkward at best, and make him look desperate at worst.

She flashed him a knowing smile as she drew a finger around and around his right nipple, then tweaked a bit of flesh. “I figure after last night, turnabout is fair play.”

Alex wanted to pen his mouth to object, to remind her that he hadn’t abused the opportunity provided by her being handcuffed to the bed. But the truth was there was

something dangerously excitingly about being shackled to his own bed, unable to move. He'd been a cop for eight years and had heard his co-workers talk about the ways they'd used cuffs that you wouldn't find in any procedural manual, but it had never occurred to him to use them himself outside of what was dictated by his job.

He watched as Nicole climbed on top of the bed then straddled him, her hot bottom resting against the tops of his legs. Good God, she was going to end him right there and then. She gathered her hair over on one side of her head then leaned forward to tantalizingly brush her lips against his.

"Mmm... I've been thinking about this all day," she murmured, dipping her tongue between his lips and taking inventory before darting back out again.

He cleared his throat, thinking he should say something that didn't make him sound like a lustful moron. "And what did that day entail, exactly?"

She pulled back a bit and smiled down at him. "there was this really hot, really uptight guy that I spent a good part of the time with."

He didn't have to ask if she was talking about him. Uptight was his middle name.

"And I've come to a conclusion about him."

Alex swallowed the saliva collecting at the back of his mouth. "Oh?"

"Mmm-hmm." She sucked on her index finger then played with his nipple again. "I've decided that this guy, you know, that I met? Well, he needs to learn how to loosen up a bit. Cut loose. Act on his impulses instead of analyze them."

She slipped her finger into her mouth again and twisted it around, getting it good and wet before focusing her attention on his other nipple.

"You think so, huh?" Alex croaked.

"Mmm. You analyze things to death."

Okay, so he did do that. He liked to think it was a Greek trait. One wasn't raised knowing that the world's first great thinkers were Greek without feeling obligated to follow in the tradition.

But even as fire swept through his abdomen, Alex thought that his heritage wasn't the only thing behind his actions. When he was five he would take his weekly allowance to Old Man Mano's corner store and spend half an hour trying to decide what he wanted to spend it on. Mano used to tell him that one day his head was going to explode from the effort it took for him to buy a piece of nickel candy.

The only thing in his life he hadn't been hesitant about was his decision to go into law enforcement, then take the position as an insurance investigator.

Nicole wiggled her bottom so that she was closer to the area most in need of her attention. Alex's hips involuntarily bucked from the mattress. She laughed quietly as she rerouted her damp finger to the middle of his chest then slowly drew it down his stomach. Alex drew in a ragged breath and he trembled at the power of the tension growing inside his body. Not just in his groin, but all over. He was afraid that if he held his hand out he'd find it trembling.

"Nicole..."

She brushed her glorious hair to the other side of her face, sweeping the fresh-smelling, silken strands across his bare skin. He caught his breath, mesmerised. "Hmm?"

"Is your real name even Nicole?"

She gazed at him. "No."

"What is it?"

"If I told you then I'd have to kill you."

He started to chuckle then stopped as she tucked her finger into the waistband of his boxers and slowly tugged the material down until his erection sprang free. With the same finger, she began drawing lazy circles against his enflamed skin. He threw his head back against the pillow and gritted his teeth.

He heard her small intake of breath. "Mmm... wow."

"Hmm?" He was finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate on verbal conversation, but her comment intrigued him.

"Had many complaints?" she whispered.

He didn't understand. "Complaints?"

"About how... big you are."

He watched as she wrapped her fingers around the width of his erection, covering the knob of his arousal, then drawing her hand down over the length of him.

He honestly didn't know how he compared to other men. He'd never been the type to engage in that kind of one-upmanship. And none of the women he'd been with up until now had mentioned anything about his size.

"You look good enough to eat," she whispered.

Oh, yes, Alex thought in anticipation, pulling on the handcuffs, the thought of her wet, naughty mouth moving over him sending his blood pounding through his veins.

She bent over him, her hair trailing over his thighs as she flicked her pink tongue over the top of his arousal, then curved it partially around the width, her fingers tightly holding the base.

She slid her lips over the shiny dome and moved down over him, nearly sending him into cardiac arrest as her gaze rested solidly on his face, watching for his reaction.

Sweet Jesus, but she had an incredible mouth.

The hot texture of her tongue against his sensitive skin, the slick suction she applied and the squeezing of her fingers combined to send flames licking over every inch of his body.

Then just like that, her mouth and hand were gone.

Alex groaned, feeling his wrist growing raw from where he kept yanking on the cuffs. It was pure torture not to be able to touch her, not to be able to take control. Instead he was forced to lie back as she stripped off her skimpy panties then sat back down on his thighs, her skin nearly searing his.

He'd never seen a shaven pubis before up close and personal. There wasn't a lick of hair on her swollen flesh, nothing to impede his view of her engorged womanhood. And he found he'd very much like to return the favour of oral sex.

But all thoughts of that flew from his mind as she tore open a plastic packet then slowly, meticulously began rolling a condom down over him. Her dark eyes looked even darker as she finished rolling the lubricated latex down.

She scooted until her thighs rested on either side of his hips. He groaned. Finally, finally, she was close enough to touch. And he did. Running his fingertips down the line of her swollen folds, he lightly dipped them into her wetness, then drew them up again, gently parting her to his sight.

Beautiful...

He heard her gasp as he flicked his thumb over her fleshy core. Then she was moving his hand away and manoeuvring herself so that her bare womanhood hovered mere millimetres above his ramrod-straight erection.

Then she was moving down over him.

Shockwaves rushed through Alex. So tight. So wet. So... mindblowingly phenomenal.

He grasped the flesh of her hip with his free hand and held her still for a long moment, revelling in the feel of being buried deep within her. In the sweet sensation of Nicole Bennett connected to him in the most intimate way.

She made a tiny sound of frustration. "Too slow," she murmured.

Inge van Balgooi - 3113981

He blinked his eyes open to see what she was talking about, only to close them again as she began moving, stroking him with her slick flesh.

Alex groaned as the momentum of her movements increased, then watched as her hands joined above his head, her bottom slapping against his thighs as she rode him as if he were a galloping horse and she the jockey intent on pushing him to the finish line first. Her face was drawn in utter concentration, her gaze grimly on his as she went down again and again, her breasts swaying, her heat growing hotter still.

His mouth watered with desire to pull one of those breasts in his mouth even as his blood steam-rolled through his veins. The sound of flesh against flesh, harsh, labored breathing and his own quickening heartbeat filled his ears. Then Nicole moaned.

The sound was soul deep and long, and wound around and around him, urging him toward a conclusion he didn't want to reach yet. He stiffened and his hips bucked upward violently. Seeming to catch on to his condition, Nicole instantly removed her heat and sat back, staring at him in the dim light.

Alex stopped breathing altogether as she grinned at him wickedly.

"A lesser woman might, um, leave you hanging. Pay you back for having kidnapped me last night," she whispered, appearing to have trouble finding air to fill her lungs with.

Alex yanked so hard on the cuffs he was afraid he'd dislodge the headboard and the bed would collapse beneath them. "But you won't," he said quietly.

She remained silent for a long moment, then shook her head. "Oh, no." She slid her earring from her left ear, then within ten seconds flat had unlocked the cuffs binding him. "I want to see if my theory's correct."

The words drifted through Alex' mind, but didn't register as he tackled her, pinning her against the other end of the mattress. She gasped, then giggled, then moaned as he bulled each of her breasts deep into his mouth and curved his hand down over her hip and under her bottom, parting her further.

"Mmm, I guess--"

The rest of her sentence exited on a ragged breath as Alex filed her.

In his entire life, he couldn't remember a time when he felt this way. He was consumed by his need for this enigmatic woman. This woman who alternately teased him and surprised him. This woman who stoked his passion to such a fevered pitch he wondered if he was too turned on to come.

He slid into her to the hilt, then stopped.

Inge van Balgooi - 3113981

She made a sound of frustration. "Please..."

"What's your theory?" he asked, her words a moment ago finally taking root.

She smiled up at him shakily, then smoothed her palms against his jaw. "That once all pretense is stripped away, we're very much alike, you and I." She swallowed hard, drawing his gaze down the length of her long neck where sweat coated the skin of her chest. "What we feel, we feel strongly." She moved her hand to his buttocks. "And when we have sex, it's with no holds barred."

She ground her hips hungrily against his.

Alex groaned then drove into her like nobody's business, unsure how he felt about her words but knowing one thing as he dove for home. Sex with Nicole Bennett was out of this world.

Opwindend en avontuurlijk

Tori Carrington

Een droge klik en het gevoel van een koude metalen band die om de pols van zijn boven zijn hoofd gestrekte arm werd gesloten, verstoorde zijn gedachten. Meteen hoorde hij nog een tweede klik.

‘Een dollar voor je gedachten,’ fluisterde ze in zijn oor. Haar haar kriebelde in zijn gezicht toen ze controleerde of de handboeien goed dichtzaten.

Alex opende niet onmiddellijk zijn ogen, maar snoof genietend haar kruidige geur op.

Ze was terug.

Opeens kon het hem helemaal niets meer schelen waar ze geweest was of wat ze uitgevoerd had, zelfs al had ze de wet overtreden. Er was nu nog maar om één ding belangrijk, namelijk zo snel mogelijk die condooms uit te proberen die ze voor hem had achtergelaten.

Haar vingertoppen wandelden luchtig over zijn erectie onder de katoenen boxershort. ‘Heb je me gemist?’ fluisterde ze. ‘Het lijkt er wel op.’

Hoe kon hij iets missen wat hij nog nooit had gehad? En toch gek worden van verlangen?

Alex opende zijn ogen en zag haar de zwarte jurk, de blouse en de hoge laarzen uittrekken. Het maanlicht streelde haar blanke huid, en met het lange haar dat als een wolk om haar heen viel, leek ze bijna etherisch. Niet bepaald een woord dat paste bij Nicole Bennett. Zondig, sensueel, schaamteloos of wellustig, maar niet etherisch.

Het klopte dus dat ze geen beha had gedragen onder haar jurk. En die string...

Haar borsten waren werkelijk prachtig, perfect van vorm, niet te groot en niet te klein.

Alex rekte zich uit om haar aan te raken, wat natuurlijk niet lukte, omdat zijn rechterhand aan het bed vastgeketend zat.

Ze wierp hem een triomfantelijk lachje toe. ‘Jouw beurt vandaag. Eerlijk is eerlijk.’

Alex opende zijn mond om te protesteren en duidelijk te maken dat hij immers gisteravond geen misbruik van de situatie had gemaakt. Tot zijn verrassing vond hij het echter gevaarlijk opwindend om zo aan zijn eigen bed vastgeketend te liggen, gedwongen tot onderwerping. Hoewel hij acht jaar bij de politie had gewerkt, was het nog nooit in hem opgekomen zijn handboeien voor iets anders te gebruiken dan voor zijn werk.

Nicole kroop op het bed en installeerde zich schrijlings bovenop hem, met haar achterste tegen zijn dijbenen. Ze sloeg haar lange haar aan één kant naar achteren, boog zich voorover en streek verleidelijk zijn lippen met de hare.

‘Mmm, hier heb ik de hele dag aan lopen denken,’ fluisterde ze, waarna ze haar tong tussen zijn lippen duwde en ze na een korte heftige aanval op zijn mond weer terugtrok.

Hij schraapte zijn keel. Nu moest hij zijn best doen om niet direct over te komen als een wellustige idioot. ‘En wat is er zoal gebeurd vandaag?’

‘Nou,’ zei ze glimlachend, ‘er was bijvoorbeeld die aantrekkelijke maar zeer gespannen vent met wie ik een groot deel van mijn tijd heb doorgebracht.’

Hij hoefde niet te vragen of ze het over hem had. Gespannenheid was zijn tweede natuur.

‘En ik heb een besluit genomen over die man.’

Hij slikte. ‘O?’

‘Jazeker. Ik heb namelijk besloten dat deze man, je weet wel, die aantrekkelijke sexy kerel, moet leren zich een beetje te ontspannen. Zich te laten gaan. Zijn intuïtie te volgen in plaats van eerst eindeloos na te denken,’ teemde ze, waarna ze haar wijsvinger in haar mond nam, en vervolgens met het vochtige vingertopje over zijn tepel cirkelde.

‘Denk je?’ bracht Alex uit.

‘Jazeker. Jij denkt namelijk te veel en te lang na voordat je iets besluit.’

Het was waar wat ze zijn. Zelf zag hij die karaktertrek het liefst als iets wat deel uitmaakte van zijn Griekse erfgoed. De grootste denkers waren immers Grieken geweest.

Dat was echter niet het enige. Al vanaf zijn vroege jeugd was hij een twijfelaar geweest die alles eerst van alle kanten wilde bekijken voordat hij een beslissing nam.

Het enige waarover hij nooit had getwijfeld, was zijn besluit om het recht te dienen, eerst als politieman en daarna als verzekeringsinspecteur voor onderzoek naar dubieuze zaken.

Nicole verschoof haar billen over zijn dijen, terwijl ze haar vinger langzaam over zijn borst en zijn buik naar beneden liet glijden.

Hij kreeg bijna geen lucht meer van de opgekropte spanning in zijn lichaam. ‘Nicole...’ bracht hij getergd uit.

Met een zwaai sloeg ze haar prachtige haar over haar andere schouder, waarbij de zijden lokken over zijn blote borst streken. ‘Hmm?’

‘Is Nicole eigenlijk wel je echte naam?’

Ze keek hem aan. 'Nee.'

'Wat dan wel?'

'Als ik dat zeg, moet ik je doden.'

Hij begon te grinniken, maar de adem stakte hem in de keel toen ze haar vinger onder de band van zijn boxershort schoof. Langzaam trok ze de stof weg, totdat zijn erectie tevoorschijn kwam.

Ze zoog haar adem in. 'Wow!'

'Wat?' Hij vond het steeds moeilijker om zich op het gesprek te concentreren, maar haar reactie intrigeerde hem.

'Veel klachten gehad?' fluisterde ze.

'Klachten?' vroeg hij niet-begrijpend.

'Over... je omvang?'

Hij had geen idee of hij zwaarder geschapen was dan de meeste mannen. En de vrouwen in zijn leven hadden er nooit iets over gezegd.

'Je ziet eruit om op te eten,' fluisterde ze.

De gedachte aan haar gulzige mond op die gevoelige plek deed het bloed bonzen in zijn aderen.

Getergd probeerde hij zijn geboeide pols los te rukken, die intussen rauw aanvoelde door het schurende metaal. Een pure kwelling was het om haar niet te kunnen beetpakken, niet in staat te zijn te doen wat hij wilde en gedwongen op zijn rug te moeten liggen en toe te kijken.

Intussen stroopte ze het flinterdunne reepje textiel af dat ze nog aan had gehad, waarna ze haar positie op zijn dijen weer innam.

Ze scheurde een plastic bakje open en begon zorgvuldig een condoom over hem af te rollen. Daarna schoof ze dichterbij.

Eindelijk, eindelijk was ze zo dichtbij dat hij haar aan kon raken. Zijn vingers speelden voorzichtig met haar vochtige plooien totdat ze hapte naar adem.

Ze duwde zijn hand weg en schoof over hem heen.

Alex wist niet hoe hij het had. Zo strak, zo glad, zo fantastisch.

Met zijn vrije hand pakte hij haar vast bij haar heup en hield hij haar lichaam een ogenblik stil, genietend van haar intieme warmte.

'Te traag,' fluisterde ze, en ze begon hem wild en haastig te berijden, steeds sneller, als een jockey die naar de eindstreep jaagt.

Nicole kreunde. Lang en intens.

Waarop ze zich terugtrok en hem van enige afstand aandachtig bekeek. Om haar lippen speelde een boosaardig lachje. 'Ik zou je nu natuurlijk vast kunnen laten zitten. Het zou je verdiende loon zijn voor die ontvoering gisteravond,' fluisterde ze hees.

Alex rukte zo hard aan de boeien dat hij bang was dat hij het hele bed uit zijn verband zou trekken. 'Maar dat doe je niet,' zei hij.

Ze zweeg even en zei toen: 'Nee.' Waarop ze een oorbel uit haar oor trok. Binnen tien seconden had ze de handboeien ermee opengemaakt. 'Ik wil namelijk weten of mijn theorie klopt.'

Hij hoorde haar woorden als door een soort mist. Zodra hij zich weer kon bewegen, greep hij haar vast en drukte hij haar tegen de matras.

Ze hapte giechelend naar adem, maar gaf zich uiteindelijk kreunend over toen zijn mond begerig op haar borsten aanviel en zijn hand haar benen spreidde.

Nog nooit had hij zo'n allesoverheersende begeerte gevoeld als naar deze mysterieuze vrouw. Deze vrouw die hem afwisselend uitdaagde, tergde en verraste.

Plotseling stakte hij.

'Alsjeblieft,' smeekte ze.

'Wat is dat dan voor theorie?' vroeg hij, nu pas beseffend wat ze had gezegd.

Ze keek hem glimlachend aan en nam zijn hoofd tussen haar handen. 'Dat wij onder ons uiterlijke masker heel veel op elkaar lijken, jij en ik.' Ze slikte. 'Wat we voelen, voelen we heel sterk. En als we vrijen is alles toegestaan.' Ze drukte haar lippen gretig op de zijne.

Alex kreunde en dook nu rechtstreeks op zijn verlossende hoogtepunt af.

Wat hij van haar woorden moest denken, wist hij nog niet zo goed. Eén ding wist hij echter wel zeker: seks met Nicole Bennett was niet van deze wereld.

