

# THE PERFORMATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE SITE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN *CALL ME BY YOUR NAME* Translating queer *fuck* into Chinese

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**Abstract** – André Aciman’s highly acclaimed English queer novel, *Call Me by Your Name* (Call 2007), won the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Fiction in 2007. The novel has been translated into four Chinese editions; two editions in simplified Chinese published by two publishing houses in the Chinese mainland and two in traditional Chinese issued by a Taiwanese publisher. Applying the descriptive framework of verbal camp (Harvey 2000) and incorporating the three modes of translation proposed by Marc Démont (2017) in queer literary texts, the article conducts a textual comparative study of the term *fuck* across six instances in the four Chinese editions published in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in 2009, 2012, and 2018. This article seeks to answer the following questions: How is the term *fuck* rendered differently in the four translations? In what ways are these translations shaped by social and political contexts? What are the socio-political implications of these renditions? The comparative study will highlight shifts in translations across various cultural and political contexts and discuss their ideological implications.

**Keywords:** *Call Me by Your Name*; verbal camp; translating queer texts; socio-political implications.

## 1. *Call Me by Your Name* and its Chinese translations

Set in northern Italy during the summer of 1983, *Call Me by Your Name* unfolds retrospectively through the first-person perspective of Elio, a 17-year-old precocious American-Italian Jewish boy with a strong sense of curiosity. It chronicles the development of same-sex desires between Elio and Oliver, an older American-Jewish academic guest, who is seven years Elio’s senior. Oliver is welcomed as a summer guest by Elio’s father, Professor Perlman, for a six-week homestay, during which Perlman assists the young scholar in revising his manuscript about Heraclitus.

*Call Me by Your Name*, authored by André Aciman, was first published in 2007 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Notably, the novel received the Lambda Literary Awards (LLA)<sup>1</sup> for Best Gay Fiction in the same year of its

<sup>1</sup> Established in 1989, the Lambda Literary Awards (LLA) serves as a platform dedicated to identifying and celebrating LGBTQ books and their authors. To honor exceptional LGBTQ

publication. Additionally, it was nominated as a bestseller by major publications such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Since its initial publication, the novel has been republished several times both in the United States and in the UK. On Book Marks, an American review aggregator, the novel received overwhelmingly positive reviews, with no “mixed” or “pan” ratings, indicating a consensus of “rave” and “positive” reviews.<sup>2</sup> The novel holds a rating of over four stars out of five on both Goodreads and Amazon,<sup>3</sup> with the former at 4.1 from 501,170 ratings and the Kindle version on Amazon at 4.6 from 42,268 ratings. Its popularity is further evidenced by its extensive global circulation, having been translated into multiple languages by renowned publishers worldwide.

Among them, *Call Me by Your Name* has attracted critical acclaim and commercial success across Chinese-speaking communities. Figure 1 sets out the publication details of the novel and its four Chinese translations. For the convenience of this comparative study, *Call Me by Your Name* will be referred to as the ST (source text) or “*Call*” in this article. Its Chinese translations will be indicated as follows:

TT1: 《以你的名字呼唤我》(*Call Me by Your Name*) (2009) by Rye Field Publishing Company (Taiwan);

TT2: 《以你的名字呼唤我》(*Call Me by Your Name*) (2018) by Rye Field Publishing Company (Taiwan);

TT3: 《请以你的名字呼唤我》(*Please Call Me by Your Name*) (2012) by China Friendship Publishing Company (Chinese mainland);

TT4: 《夏日终曲》(*The Summer Finale*) (2018) by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (Chinese mainland).

Publishing Year	Place of Distribution	Author / Translator	Publishing Houses	Book Title (my back translation)
2007	US	André Aciman	Farrar, Straus and Giroux	<i>Call Me by Your Name</i>
2009	Taiwan	Wu Yanrong	Rye Field Publishing Company	以你的名字呼唤我 ( <i>Call Me by Your Name</i> )
2012	The Chinese mainland	Quan Jing (pseudonymous)	China Friendship Publishing Company/ Everight Book	请以你的名字呼唤我 ( <i>Please Call Me by Your Name</i> )
2018	Taiwan	Wu Yanrong	Rye Field Publishing Company	以你的名字呼唤我 ( <i>Call Me by Your Name</i> )

literary works, the LLA seeks to enhance the visibility and recognition of these works within the broader literary landscape.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bookmarks.reviews/reviews/call-me-by-your-name/>, last accessed on May 24, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Goodreads is a subsidiary of Amazon, both of which offer book reviews and recommendations to book lovers worldwide.

2018	The Chinese mainland	Wu Yanrong	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press/ Shanghai Yazhong Culture Communication Company	夏日终曲 ( <i>The Summer Finale</i> )
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Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, the first Chinese translation of *Call* (TT1) was published by the Taiwanese publisher Rye Field Publications (RFP), a division of Cité Publishing Limited, one of the leading publishers in Taiwan. The title, 以你的名字呼唤我, was by Taiwanese translator Wu Yanrong, who holds degrees in diplomacy, communication and philosophy from the US and Taiwan. Her academic background demonstrates her strong competence in intercultural and bilingual communication. Wu has produced numerous translations, including works on Christianity, world religion, fiction, autobiography, and art. Following Wu's translation, the first Chinese mainland translation (TT3) was produced by the pseudonymous translator Quan Jing, whose identity is not substantiated in the publisher's introduction. This translation was published in 2012 by China Friendship Publishing Company (CFPC) and distributed by Everight Book, a privately owned book distributor in Guangzhou, China. Although CFPC lacks an official website, a brief introduction on Baidu Baïke<sup>4</sup> describes it as a publisher that helps people in the Chinese mainland understand the social development and customs of Hong Kong and Taiwan, thus promoting cultural exchanges across the areas.

Lured by the global commercial success of the film adaptation of *Call* in 2017, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland recognized the pink economic gains<sup>5</sup> and released two editions with new cover designs based on the film, both translated by Wu Yanrong. This echoes what Rahul Rao (2015) has termed as “global homo-capitalism” in the post-neoliberalist era. To capitalize on the film's success, the new Taiwanese edition (TT2) was released in January 2018, followed closely by the Chinese mainland version a month later. The quick release of the Taiwanese edition was achieved without changing the original publisher, distributor, or translator. Due to the successful film adaptation and the positive market response to the 2009 edition, along with Taiwan's inclusive LGBTQ+ culture and support from the

<sup>4</sup> “Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi”, Baïke, Baidu, last modified November 27, 2022, <http://baïke.baidu.com/item/中国友谊出版公司/10748943>.

<sup>5</sup> The pink economy encompasses the economic activities and consumer spending associated with the LGBTQ+ community, including goods, services, and entertainment tailored to their needs. As a recognized market segment, it garners attention from businesses, marketers, and policymakers who seek to tap into the economic potential of this queer community.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), this reprint translation became a bestseller.

It is important to note that the new Chinese edition (TT4) is not an original mainland translation; it is based on the Taiwanese translation and retains the same translator but features a new title (夏日终曲 – *The Summer Finale*, my translation) on the cover. This decision likely reflects a strategic choice by the publisher to acquire the copyright rather than seek a new local translator, ensuring that they did not miss out on the market boom created by the film. The book has enjoyed great popularity in the Chinese mainland since its release and reached its 24<sup>th</sup> printing by November 2022. This popularity indicates the publisher's ability to accurately identify the homo-capitalist opportunity and predict the profitability of the book. Moreover, this second edition in the Chinese mainland represents a collaboration between Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) – one of the most important state-owned publishers of foreign language books and audio-visual products based in the Chinese capital Beijing – and its private partner publisher, Shanghai Yazhong Culture Communication Company (YCCC) which originally proposed and curated the translation project and also holds the exclusive right to publish this edition and the right to use the cover image. In the Chinese mainland, joint publishing partnerships between private publishers and state-owned publishers are quite common and typical. In this case, FLTRP serves as the gatekeeper, as state-owned publishers are the only legal and qualified entities authorized to apply for the International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) issued by the National Press and Publication Administration (administered by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee since 2018). This reliance on state authorization means that private publishers' ability to publish is heavily influenced by the government. Consequently, books circulating publicly in China are subject to strict government distribution rules and government control, including government censorship and self-censorship. Thus, the publication of the new translation edition of *Call* in the Chinese mainland is not only a profit-driven project but also an endeavor that operates within the framework of state censorship.

Applying the descriptive framework of verbal camp (Harvey 2000) and incorporating the three modes of translation proposed by Marc Démont (2017) in queer literary texts, the article conducts a textual comparative study of the term *fuck* across six instances in the four Chinese editions published in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in 2009, 2012, and 2018. It seeks to answer the following questions: How is the term *fuck* rendered differently in the four translations? In what ways are these translations shaped by social and political contexts? What are the socio-political implications of these renditions? The comparative study will highlight shifts in translations across various cultural and political contexts and discuss their ideological

implications.

## 2. The performative and transformative use of camp

As Butler (2009) points out, gender performativity refers to the enactment of gender. In other words, gender is not an inherent characteristic but is performed by individuals, especially in an exaggerated form, as illustrated by drag, which Butler ([1990] 2006) uses to demonstrate gender performativity within the dominant cisgender heteronormative regime. Butler ([1990] 2006, 1993) challenges the notion of fixed and essentialized gender and sexuality, deconstructing binary gender identities. She posits that gender identity is an ongoing process of “doing” gender in multifaceted, unstable ways that are subject to regulatory forces. Inspired by Butler’s concept of gender performativity, queer theorists further develop the theory to interpret queer performances as intentional actions that are “self-reflexively constituted to unsettle heteronormality” (Meyer 1994, as cited in Waitt, Gorman-Murray 2008, p. 187). Moreover, queer performances subvert the straight/gay binary, offering a framework to explore gender and sexuality as “fluid, discontinuous, and improvisational” (Waitt, Gorman-Murray 2008, p. 187). This perspective allows for a re-evaluation of camp as a gay language.

An early attempt to understand ‘camp’ can be traced to Christopher Isherwood’s novel *The World in the Evening* (1954), in which two characters discuss the nuances of camp. One character, Stephen Monk, suggests that camp can be viewed as a mannerism that carries “an underlying seriousness”, “expressing what is basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance” (Isherwood 1954, p. 125). In other words, queer individuals do not make fun of what matters to them; they *have fun with* what matters to them. Susan Sontag, in her *Notes on Camp* (1999), claims that “the essence of camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (p. 53). Camp thus becomes associated with “a certain mode of aestheticism”, “one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon” and is “simultaneously marginal as well as apolitical which prioritizes style over content” (Sontag 1999, p. 54). Both Isherwood and Sontag portray camp as an exaggerated form of enjoyment or aesthetic expression embraced by queer communities. However, as Booth rightly notes, their conceptualizations of camp are somewhat loosely defined and come with limitations. Isherwood’s definition is “suggestive rather than limiting” (Booth 1999, p. 66), and his novel “never quite put its finger on camp” (1999, p. 67), while Sontag “cast[s] the net too wide” (1999, p. 68). Booth redefines camp as a form of self-representation “committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits” (p. 69).

To explore the political implications and potential subversiveness of camp, I turn to Babuscio, who emphasizes the potential political function and subversive agency of camp persona. In *The Cinema of Camp*, Babuscio investigates the interwoven connection between camp and gay sensibility. He defines gay sensibility “as a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream; a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression” (Babuscio 1999, p. 118). Camp, in this context, embodies “elements in a person, situation, or activity that express, or are created by a gay sensibility” (Babuscio 1999, p. 118). Significantly, due to homosexual deviation from the dominant hetero-patriarchal culture, camp serves to “challenge the status quo” (1999, p. 120) and is considered “something of a proto-political phenomenon” (1999, p. 127).

To further explore the politics and agency of camp, I also reference Harvey’s critique of Sontag and Booth, which argues that they neglect a crucial facet by confining camp solely to aesthetic evaluation, thereby overlooking the potential of gender and sexual discourses to convey political points (Harvey 2000, p. 241). Harvey provides a framework for interrogating the political valences and disruptive possibilities inherent within camp aesthetics, moving beyond a narrow focus on aesthetic judgment. He emphasizes the need to distinguish between surface and identity, deconstructing the cultural aestheticism of camp that Sontag particularly engages with. Harvey highlights the agency of the camp persona as an “intent-driven performer” with subversive political potential, applying the concept to literary and translation studies. He views fiction as a medium for expressing camp and examines the translation of camp to highlight boundaries and priorities across different cultural contexts. His research describes camp as a linguistic phenomenon evident in “fictional representations of homosexual men’s speech” (Harvey 1998, p. 295). More specifically, it is seen as “a typical semiotic resource of gay men in their critique of straight society and in their attempt to carve out a space for their difference” (1998, p. 311). In this sense, camp talk represents a distinctive use of language among homosexuals that is closely linked to their identity construction.

Following this line of inquiry, I will draw on Harvey’s (2000) descriptive framework for verbal camp, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. This framework describes a unique way of using language that “allows speakers the potential to manipulate the language system and discourse context” (Harvey 2000, p. 243). Building on Babuscio’s (1999) four characteristics of camp – theatricality, humor, irony, and aestheticism – the verbal camp strategies outlined in Harvey’s framework are strategically employed by homosexuals to politically deconstruct the entrenched dichotomies of “homosexuality” versus “heterosexuality” and “natural” versus “unnatural”.

Harvey identifies four strategies of verbal camp: paradox, inversion, ludicrism, and parody. Each strategy can generate various textual features, such as double-entendre, motivated naming practices, “high” culture, and “low” experience, expected gender markers, and parody of aristocratic mannerism through foreign languages.

Strategy	Surface features
Paradox <i>through</i>	incongruities of register explicitness and covertness ‘high’ culture and ‘low’ experience
Inversion <i>of</i>	gendered proper nouns grammatical gender markers expected rhetorical routines established value system
Ludicrism <i>by</i>	
Heightened language awareness <i>through</i>	motivated naming practices puns/word-play
Pragmatic force <i>through</i>	double-entendre
Parody <i>of</i>	
Aristocratic mannerism <i>by</i>	use of French
Femininity <i>by</i>	innuendo hyperbole exclamation vocatives

Figure 2  
A descriptive framework for verbal camp (Harvey 2000, p. 243).

Harvey notes that, since the 1960s, the connection between camp and homosexuality has been evident in both heterosexual and non-heterosexual works. This connection distinguishes between semiotic resources/linguistic practices and homosexual identity and “binds homosexual men together sub-culturally and allows them to articulate a critique of hegemonic structures and values” (Harvey 2000, p. 243). Thus, language can be understood as a site of gender performativity, where specific usages serve as the means through which gender is performed.

To explore how homosexuality is represented in the source text through verbal camp and how it is reframed in the Chinese-speaking communities through translation, I will focus on the renditions of the term *fuck* as case studies for this article. The novel’s central character, Elio, engages in self-exploration of sexuality, including gender inversion and parodies of femininity, through his camp uses of *fuck*, which serve as both performative and transformative sites of male homosexuality. I will first conduct a descriptive analysis, followed by a comparative study of the camp

features of *fuck* in the four Chinese editions, using Marc D  mont’s model of three modes of queer translation to examine how the translations reinforce or challenge the dominant ideologies in the target cultures.

### 3. Marc D  mont’s three modes of translating queer texts

To facilitate analysis, I draw on Marc D  mont’s discussion in his work *On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts* (2017), where he proposes three modes of translating queer texts: misrecognizing, minoritizing, and queering translation (see Figure 3 below). D  mont posits that a queer text can be misrecognized in terms of either content or context. Through his case study of a translation of a Spanish poem into English, he identifies two features of misrecognized content: either homosexual desire is transformed into homosocial desire, or gender identifications are normalized and straightened. In either case, queer desire becomes non-recognized. Both features aim to camouflage homosexual affection, replacing it with “bromance”, or brotherhood romance. The misrecognition of context involves neglecting the different semantic connotations that a word or phrase can evoke in a cross-cultural setting. D  mont illustrates this with the translation of “bear culture” from English into Italian. In American gay culture, “bear” implies a burly, often hairy man embodying untamed masculinity, while in Italian culture this meaning is decoupled and replaced with chauvinism. D  mont concludes that a “close” translation, by which he means a literal translation, “unleashes a chain of unanticipated associations in the receiving culture... it does not bring us ‘closer’ to the original” (D  mont 2017, p. 159). In summary, the misrecognition mode either ignores homosexual expressions of affection by rewriting them beyond recognition or by disregarding cross-cultural differences.

The minoritizing mode should not be confused with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1986) notion of minoritization. According to D  mont, the minoritizing mode loses connotations in translation by focusing exclusively on denotation. In other words, the multi-layered connotations of queerness embedded in the source text are lost, reduced to a unidimensional text. Focuses are rendered to only one dimension of the text, thereby attenuating the “potential discontinuity, associations, and uncouplings around which the original text, and its own sexual rhetoric, are organized” (D  mont 2017, p. 162). Whereas the misrecognition mode suppresses queerness, the minoritizing mode assimilates it by “transforming it into a fixed explicit form” in order to “serve the goal of identity politics at the expense of queerness” (D  mont 2017, p.163).

Queering translating, in contrast, does not suppress or assimilate but rather acknowledges and recreates queerness, aiming as it does to “respect the



queer meaning potential of a text” (Démont 2017, p. 166). This is achieved through acknowledgment, meaning the full disclosure of queerness in the source text, rather than its removal, rewriting, or reduction to denotations in the target text. To acknowledge queerness, translators can draw on the connotative semantic web of a queer word or phrase to achieve a fuller rendering, rather than limiting themselves to denotative equivalence. This involves acknowledging the multiple levels of meaning in a queer text, including both the denotative and connotative semantic webs that encompass literal meaning, homosexual undertones, and cultural shifts. Moreover, Démont argues that queerness can be recreated through a translator’s note to counteract the reductive or essentializing effects of the misrecognizing and minoritizing approaches. By acknowledging and recreating queerness in translation, the latent potential queerness embedded in the source text becomes more visible and explicit for target readers.

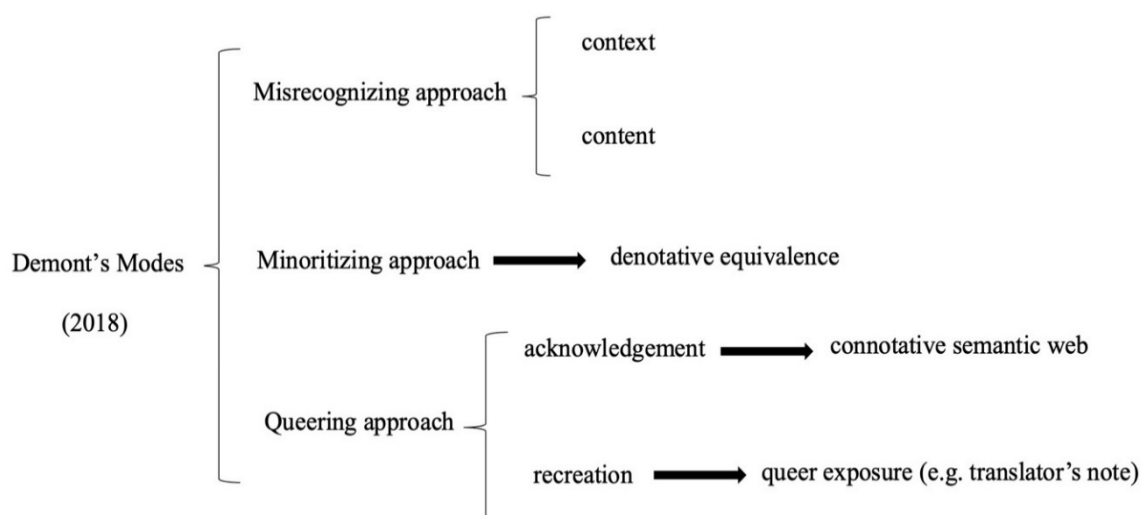


Figure 3  
Marc Démont’s modes of queer translation.

#### 4. *Fuck* as a site of homosexual gender performativity in the ST

The word *fuck* serves as a significant element of verbal camp in the novel, allowing Elio to manipulate language to performatively express his gender inversion and parody femininity as he navigates his sexual identity. This Section analyses the Chinese translations of Elio’s use of *fuck*, which appears

six times in the source text.<sup>6</sup> These instances include Elio's homosexual fantasies, explicit homosexual acts, and the famous scene where he fantasizes about Oliver masturbating with a peach.

The ST uses Elio's first-person narrative to directly engage with his reflections, feelings, and emotional experiences. By using the word *fuck*, the text not only showcases Elio and Oliver's homoerotic behavior but also appropriates the term in performative ways that shift it away from its reductive, essentializing, dichotomizing associations of the top/bottom duality<sup>7</sup> in same-sex relationships. This Section will focus on analysing the linguistic features of the examples where *fuck* is used. The analysis will explore how Elio's use of *fuck* destabilizes gender roles in his homosexual relationship with Oliver. In these cases, language is used to challenge established norms regarding gender relationships, such as Elio's real-life sexual behavior and sexual fantasies involving the peach. Furthermore, Elio's parody of femininity is examined through emphatic utterances that include repetition, italics, exclamation marks, and vocative terms. I will discuss in detail the effects of the term *fuck* and its significance, including homosexual bonding and parody of femininity (examples 1 and 2); heightened homoerotic desire compared to heterosexual intimacy (example 3); and the clandestine, passionate nature of the homosexual desire experienced by Elio and Oliver (examples 4 and 5).

### Example 1

I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". (p. 144)

Here, Elio expresses his desire for Oliver outside the post office the day after their first lovemaking. In a soft, intimate, whispering voice, Elio addresses Oliver as "Elio" and asks Oliver to penetrate him. Addressing each other by first name, initially suggested by Oliver, is now adopted by Elio in an erotic plea. On the one hand, he seeks Oliver's attention; on the other hand, he aims to establish their erotic relationship. The use of the vocative expresses intimacy and is a textual feature that attracts "the attention of an addressee, in

<sup>6</sup> All the examples analysed in this study are compiled in the attached Annexes at the end of this article. Annex 1 presents a parallel corpus consisting of the ST, alongside TT1 and TT3, accompanied by my back-translations to facilitate comparative textual analysis. Annex 2 offers a similar parallel corpus comprising the ST, TT2, and TT4, with my corresponding back-translations. Within the TT columns, the Chinese mainland and the Taiwanese editions are juxtaposed to enable direct comparisons between the respective translations.

<sup>7</sup> Top/bottom duality refers to the identities characterized by the preferences of penetration in gay anal intercourse and homosociality. Top and bottom are the dominant versus submissive role-plays, with top for the dominant penetrator/the castrating and bottom for the submissive penetrated/the castrated. The essentialized and reductive duality corresponds to the stereotypical male/female gender roles.

order to establish or maintain a relationship between this addressee and some proposition” (Lambrecht 1996, p. 267). Moreover, “Fuck me, Elio” subverts the conventional image of the male aggressor in sexual intercourse, suggesting that Elio, as a biological male in the patriarchal-heterosexual context, is not merely the one asking to be “fucked”. This inversion of male virility into female submissiveness disrupts established gender norms.

Additionally, *fuck* serves as a site of camp performance for Elio’s parody of femininity, challenging the prevailing heterosexual gender value system. This can be illustrated through Harvey’s framework, where the parody of femininity is achieved by, among other means, using “an emphatic style of utterance” such as “hyperbole, exclamation and vocative terms” (2000, p. 253), marked by typographical devices such as italics and punctuation.

### Example 2

...till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn’t there a character who had turned into a peach... (p. 147)

In this instance, the camp use of *fuck* reflects Elio’s strategies for achieving gender inversion and parodying femininity. It arises in Elio’s stream of consciousness as he masturbates with a pitless peach, imagining sexual intimacy with Oliver while referring to him as “Elio”. This echoes the title of the novel, suggesting that they are each other’s lost halves. As he penetrates the peach, Elio imaginatively transforms himself into the peach, which symbolizes the female genitalia. As an object of queer aesthetics, the peach becomes a vehicle for Elio’s parody of the female experience. At the same time, the peach, which is performatively penetrated and figuratively castrated by Elio, serves as an incarnation of Oliver, with whom Elio becomes one.

Elio’s parody of femininity is achieved through exclamations and typographic features. The italicized sentence “*Harder, I said!*” mimics an affectionate feminine moan, reinforcing Elio’s transformation into the feminine role in his fantasy. Additionally, Elio’s masochistic propensity as a performer of femininity manifests in his repeated commands (“*Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!*”), followed by an exclamation mark suggesting an orgasmic moan. This barrage of commands reveals an “intensity” that is “identified as feminine” because it is fundamentally “reactive” (Harvey 2000, p. 255).

### Example 3

Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia. (p. 145)

Throughout the novel, the term *fuck* is used when referring to Elio's homosexual desire. Here, Elio's intense homosexual desire for penetration by Oliver is highlighted through the vulgar verbal camp of "fuck me", contrasting with the more tender "make love to" regarding his heterosexual relationship with Marzia. This juxtaposition suggests that Elio uses his heterosexual encounters as a cover for his strong homosexual desires, reinforcing his spirited homosexual impulses.

#### **Example 4**

I said a drink, not a fuck. (p. 236)

#### **Example 5**

*Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)

Examples 4 and 5, both from the novel's final section, entitled "Ghost Spots", show Elio's responses to learning about Oliver's heterosexual family in the United States years after their separation. The term *fuck* expresses the clandestine yet passionate bond with Oliver, contrasting the fierce emotions of same-sex intimacy with the subdued articulations of heterosexual desire. The term *fuck* evokes Elio's (and Oliver's) memories of their shared homosexual past, heightening homoerotic desire through inversion of gender roles and parody of femininity.

Elio's camp parodies, expressed through his performative use of *fuck*, constitute "an exhibition of stylized effeminacy" (Booth 1999, p. 69) that "diverge[s] from the supposed male verbal norm" (Harvey 2000, p. 53). These examples illustrate that *fuck* serves various purposes in a queer context: fostering homosexual bonding, subverting gender norms, intensifying non-normative desire, and articulating the fervent nature of homosexual desire. As Harvey (2000) posits, these intent-driven acts of political subversion challenge hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality.

## **5. Translating queer *fuck* into Chinese**

In this Section, I examine how the homoerotic term *fuck* is translated in the four Chinese editions in order to identify: (1) the translation shifts observed in the features of queer *fuck* between the ST and the TTs, (2) the different modes used in translating the queer *fuck*, and (3) the ideological implications of the translated texts in the contexts of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

### 5.1. Fuck as a site of homosexual gender performativity in TT1 and TT3

As discussed in the previous Section, the homosexual theme of the original text is highlighted by the use of the more vulgar and violent term *fuck* in reference to homosexual acts between the male protagonists, contrasting with the mild and “civilized” description of heterosexual intercourse. Through the rhetorical use of *fuck*, Elio unobtrusively subverts the stereotypical gender role of the ‘offensive’ male in sexual activity and transforms himself into the feminine, submissive, and masochistic ‘bottom’ role in his same-sex erotic life.

In TT1, the term “fuck” is retained and rendered closely in register and other stylistic features, though the translation strategy is also shaped by queer politics in Taiwan. In all but one instance, “fuck” is translated as “操”, a polyphonic character in Mandarin, pronounced as either cāo or cào. According to the *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary*<sup>8</sup> published by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, 操 (cāo), as a verb, means “to take or hold”, “to master”, “to drive”, “to speak a certain language or to use a certain accent”, “to practice or exercise”, while, as a noun, it can mean “moral” or “an exercise designed to build physical strength” (Note: words in quotation marks are my back-translations). Moreover, the word 操 can be pronounced alternately as cào, particularly when it is used to refer to integrity or moral principles in a person’s conduct. However, in modern spoken Chinese, the original meaning of the pronunciation 操 cào is frequently repurposed as a homophone for 禽 cào (“to penetrate” or “to fuck”) to circumvent the direct use of the latter, which is deemed excessively vulgar and graphic in its lexical form, i.e., the upper part of the character 入 means “to enter or to penetrate” while the bottom means “the flesh”. Noteworthy, it is particularly pointed out by 《中国现代汉语大词典》 (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*) (2018) that 禽 cào is commonly used to suggest male-initiated sexual behavior towards females, which indicates a cisgender heterosexual perspective in lexicography. The re-appropriated homophone 操 cào, while less vulgar in its lexical presentation than 禽 cào, is used as either profanity or a curse in spoken Chinese. I contend that translating the English term *fuck* into the Chinese 操 cào not only retains the explicit and vulgar connotations related to sexual activities but, more importantly, also acknowledges the performativity embodied in the term *fuck* in the ST. This strategy represents Elio’s homoerotic gender inversion and parodies of femininity as he navigates

<sup>8</sup> <https://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=9774&la=0&powerMode=0#col4>.

sexual becoming. The performativity of 操 cào lies in its subversive and queering power, challenging cisgender heterosexual agenda when used in the context of Elio's homoerotic fantasies.

### Example 1

ST: I said a drink, not a fuck. (p. 236)

TT1: 我是說喝一杯, 不是說上個床 (p. 240)

(Back-translation: I meant a drink, not getting on the bed with you)

In this instance, the translator opts for a more literary and euphemistic approach by using “上個床” (back-translation: “to get onto the bed” or “to have sex”). Although this translation recognizes the queer sex implied by *fuck*, it lacks consistency with the recurrent queering of *fuck* translated as the performative 操 cào. By reducing the performative *fuck* to a uni-dimensional meaning of simply having sex, this minoritized translation ignores Elio's endeavor to revisit his homosexual history with Oliver through the queering of *fuck* employed as a recall in this specific context.

However, TT1 also adds layers of connotations. Traditional gender dynamics of a dominant male versus a submissive female in heterosexual relationships are transposed onto the homosexual roles of top and bottom.

### Example 2

ST: I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, “Fuck me, Elio”. (p. 144)

TT1: 就在他進郵局前, 我湊近他耳邊輕聲說: “操我吧, 艾里歐。” (p. 147)

(Back-translation: Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, “Fuck me, Elio”)

In this example, the ST “fuck me” is rendered into a plea “操我吧” in TT1. The modal particle “吧” in the imperative can serve as a euphemism, prompting the listener to affirm what the speaker has said and inviting the listener to engage in the dialogue as an active participant (Xu 2003). By transforming an imperative into an inviting plea, TT1 not only acknowledges the top/bottom dynamic between Elio and Oliver but also reinforces stereotypical portrayals of a ‘weak’ bottom and a ‘strong’ top, thereby parodying traditional gender roles of a dominant male and submissive female.

### Example 3

ST: ...till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach... (p. 147)

TT1: ...直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說: 操我, 艾里歐, 用力操我。又過了一會兒, 我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像, 這時又聽到: 我說了, 給我用力一點! 不是有這樣一個故事嗎? 故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。(p. 149)

(Back-translation: ...Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: **Fuck me, Elio,**

**fuck me harder.** After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, **I said, harder!** Isn't there a story about that? There is a story where the character turns into a peach)

A similar translation strategy of both acknowledging and recreating queerness can be observed in Example 3, where Elio has sexual fantasies about Oliver while masturbating with a peach. In terms of queer acknowledgment, the typographic features such as italics and capitalization – analysed earlier in the ST – contribute to Elio's parody of femininity during his imaginary dialogue with Oliver. To capture the queer essence, TT1 substitutes the typographic elements of the ST with the stylistic conventions of the target language, notably altering the font style within the sentence to evoke comparable parodic effects. Meanwhile, the back translation underscores its recognition and faithful representation of the feminine sexual commands and proactive reactions present in the ST.

Regarding the recreation of queer representation, Elio's mental search for "images from Ovid" is notably reframed in Example 3 as "我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像" (p. 149), meaning "I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver" (my back-translation). The ST draws an analogy between Elio's homosexual desire for Oliver and his Ovidian fantasy of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne. In Greek mythology, the nymph Daphne swears to remain chaste and flees from Apollo, who pursues her relentlessly. When Apollo almost catches her, Daphne prays to her father to destroy her face, and she is soon transformed into a laurel tree. However, Apollo continues to long for Daphne and passionately kisses the tree bark. Similarly, while masturbating, Elio fantasizes about the peach substituting Oliver, just as Apollo fantasizes about Daphne as the laurel tree. In this case, TT1 subverts the heterosexual desire depicted in the Ovid myth by replacing the name "Ovid" with "Oliver", the object of Elio's homoerotic fantasies. This queering of the original myth transforms the heterosexual encounter into homosexual eroticism. Additionally, this queer rewriting enhances the accessibility of the ST analogy for the target audience, particularly for those unfamiliar with the Ovidian narrative from Greek mythology, by overtly inscribing queer connotations into the reference. Thus, the queer visibility rendered in the target text has not only been preserved but also enhanced by acknowledging and recreating potential or existing homosexuality in literary texts. Significantly, TT1 offers another possibility of explicitation for improving homosexual visibility beyond the translator's note. Explicitation is defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995, p. 9) as a "procédé qui consiste à introduire dans LA des précisions qui restent implicites dans LD, mais qui se dégagent du contexte ou de la situation" (English translation: the process of introducing into TT what remains implicit in ST, but which emerges from the

context or situation). For example, the externalization of Elio's queer fantasies about Oliver in the peach scene.

#### Example 4

ST: *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)

TT1:

喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。(p. 247)

(Back-translation: *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out*)

TT1's explicitation is in its more graphic representation of sexual intercourse, rendering "fuck our brains out" as "操到腦汁都流出來了", meaning "fucked until our brain juice flowed out" (my back-translation). This translation goes even further than the ST in representing same-sex carnal desire, thus underlining the novel's queer theme. TT1's queering approach extends upon Gideon Toury's concept of the adequacy norm, which emphasizes the accurate rendering of the ST (Toury 1980). As demonstrated in the preceding analysis, TT1 acknowledges the inherent queerness of the ST by retaining Elio's linguistic features of gender inversion and his parodic performance of femininity. Furthermore, TT1 operates on a second level of queering translation, recreating queerness through the strategic use of a modal auxiliary device, typographical techniques, and explicitation strategies, thereby reinforcing the queer intimacy shared between the protagonists. This two-pronged approach adheres to the adequacy norm by preserving the source text's queer valences and extending them through a supplementary queering of the translation process itself. TT1's queering approach reconstitutes Toury's norm of adequacy by foregrounding queer representations not merely as elements to be accurately rendered, but as catalysts for a queering of the translational apparatus itself. Translation has thus become a transformative site that not only refracts queer modes of signification but also constitutes a mode of queer world-making in its own right.

In contrast, TT3, published in the Chinese mainland, adopts a drastically different approach, where the translation of Elio's queer attempts at gender inversion even pushes the boundaries of Démont's definition of misrecognition. According to Démont (2017), misrecognition refers to a



translation approach that either transforms same-sex desire into homosocial desire or straightens and normalizes gender identifications. TT3 entirely leaves out the translation of the queerness embedded in the previously mentioned examples: “*Fuck me, Elio*” (p. 144) and “*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder, and after a moment, Harder, I said!*” (p. 147). This indicates that the subversive strategy that challenges the power relation embedded in heteronormativity is entirely erased in this edition, within the context of strict censorship mechanisms in the Chinese mainland.

Censorship in China, according to Tan (2015), regulates translation practices in several ways, including total blocking or preventing, partial blocking, and reduced censorship, as a form of state and non-state interference with the influx of global knowledge and ideas. Based on the three forms of information surveillance, Tan (2017) proposes three translation typologies corresponding to the means of regulation in the Chinese context: non-translation, partial translation, and full translation. The non-translation strategy used in the above cases represents the extreme end of the three typologies. Non-translation, as defined by Tan, refers to “‘translations’ that have not been made, or ‘translations’ that do not exist at all” (Tan 2017, p. 48). According to the *Provisional Regulations concerning Appraising Obscene and Sexual Publications* (my translation) (1988)<sup>9</sup> (hereafter *Regulations*), the term “obscene publications” refers to those that propagate obscene acts or arouse people’s sexual desires. Such publications are deemed sufficient to deprave and degenerate ordinary people, lacking any artistic or scientific value. Item 6 Article 2 of the *Regulations* lists publications of sexual perversion, including those with homosexual content, as one of the statutory offenses, those which are “salaciously and concretely describing the sexual acts of homosexuals or other perverted acts, or concretely describing violence, abuse or humiliating acts related to perversion”. Although homosexuality was decriminalized in 1997 and de-pathologized in the Chinese mainland in 2001, this provision is still in force and controls the Chinese publishing industry to this day. It can be argued that TT3’s non-translation of “*Fuck me, Elio*” (p. 144) and “*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder, and after a moment, Harder, I said!*” (p. 147) is a case of either state censorship or self-censorship by translators, publishers, editors, or commissioners, as content related to homosexuality and gender norm violations is likely to be viewed as “politically subversive”, “ideologically reactionary”, “morally unhealthy” and “obscene” in the Chinese mainland (Tan 2017, p. 49).

Alongside the misrecognized subversive gender performance in the above expressions, the thematic vocative term “Elio”, through which Elio

<sup>9</sup> <https://law.pkulaw.com/Readbugui/863cdb56cb85845bbdfb.html/>

addresses Oliver by his own name, diminishes the narrative's resonance with the novel's queer undertone. For TT3, a more significant consideration is that in order to publish the translation in the Chinese mainland, the publisher must comply with stringent censorship regulations, often at the cost of toning down or even removing the ST's portrayal of homosexuality and gender inversion. The legislation concerning censorship is subject to varying interpretations by the authorities due to the vague boundaries drawn between obscenity and non-obscenity within the *Regulations*, coupled with the lack of legal clarification as to why homosexuality is considered obscene (Wang, Bao 2023). Given this vagueness, the following example illustrates TT3's ambivalent treatment of homosexual and heterosexual desire in translation.

### Example 5

ST: Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia. (p. 145)

TT3:

不到半小时前，我还渴望着奥利弗，这会儿我却准备跟玛琪雅做爱。(p. 136)

(Back-translation: Less than half an hour ago, I was longing for Oliver, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia)

TT1:

不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我，這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛。(p. 148)

(Back-translation: Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia)

TT3 does not omit this passage but dilutes the explicit homosexual desire into homosociality,<sup>10</sup> misrecognizing the queerness embedded in the ST. The misrecognition strategy adopted by TT3 becomes evident when comparing its translation to TT1's rendition: the term 操我 ("fuck me") in TT1 is replaced and toned down by 渴望 ("long for") in TT3. In contrast to the completely erased stronger homosexual desire of Elio, TT3 acknowledges and preserves his heterosexual eroticism. In essence, the translation diminishes Elio's homoerotic longing for Oliver while amplifying his heterosexual desire. Interestingly, the strategy of removing homoerotic elements in translation is not uniformly applied in TT3. The following example (Example 6) in TT3 illustrates the maintenance of the explicitation approach, the same strategy adopted in TT1.

### Example 6

ST: *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ*

<sup>10</sup> The concept refers to a "social preference for members' of one's own gender, but does not necessarily imply erotic attraction" (Britton 1990, p. 423).

*each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)

TT3: 喔, 对了, 这个人当时跟你们差不多大, 大部分的时间, 他白天都静静地  
改编《耶稣临终七言》, 晚上却偷偷溜进我房间, 我们操到脑汁都流出来了  
◦ (p. 230)

(Back-translation: *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out*)

Given the aforementioned vagueness in the censorship legislation, mainland publishers, particularly private entities such as CFPC (the publisher of TT3), find themselves caught between state regulations and the lucrative market of the pink economy. In response to this situation, they tactically employ ambivalent coping strategies to leverage this vagueness to their advantage where possible. This argument will be further explored in the next Section through the analysis of the TT4 translation.

## **5.2. Fuck as a site of homosexual gender performativity in TT2 and TT4**

The two Taiwanese translations, TT1 and TT2, are entirely identical in content (see the full Annexes). Thus, the new movie tie-in edition (2018) should not be seen as a retranslation of the ST, but rather as a reprint by the same publisher, drawing from its 2009 edition. This reprinted translation is tailored to the target market's preferences, capitalizing on the success of the film adaptation of the novel. The favorable reception of the 2009 edition, which saw 14 printings as of April 2017, combined with Taiwan's inclusive LGBTQ+ culture under the DPP's governance, has ensured that the reprint translation remains a bestseller in the book market.

TT4 was published in China by the Beijing-based state publishing house FLTRP in collaboration with a private publishing house in Shanghai, during a time when state censorship concerning texts considered potentially queer was tightening in China since the mid-2010s (Wang, Bao 2023). Initially, the regulatory regime targeted audio-visual media, including online streaming platforms, TV shows, and cinematic releases. It was not until 2016 that homosexual romance began to be banned on Chinese TV screens. An official document from the China Television Drama Production Industry Association stipulated that “no television drama shall show abnormal sexual relationships and behaviors, such as incest, same-sex relationships, sexual perversion, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual violence, and so on”. The following year, the China Netcasting Services Association (CNSA), an organization supervised by the State Administration of Radio, Film and

Television (SARFT), implemented the *Guidelines for the Content Review of Online Audio-visual Programs* (my translation). The *Guidelines* impose stringent restrictions on the circulation of online audiovisual content, in which homosexuality is categorized as “obscene pornography”, “vulgar and low-level entertainment”, and showing an “abnormal sexual relationship”, juxtaposed with “incest, sexual perversions, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual violence”.<sup>11</sup> Given this context, it is not surprising that the film adaptation of the ST was banned from the official screening at the 2018 Beijing International Film Festival in March by the government authority, i.e., the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China.<sup>12</sup> This reflects the Chinese government’s tightening control over domestic cultural ideologies. Notably, the state publication of TT4 came only a month before the film screening was suspended, suggesting that the authorities are more worried about the easy accessibility and wider reach of this queer-themed film than the limited readership of the book release. Furthermore, the ISBN for the book is entirely controlled by the government. However, the fact that the Chinese mainland still permits state-run publishers to release translated novels with homosexual themes on the market indicates that the circulation of such themes has not been entirely halted. Instead, the government’s attitude appears vague, echoing the official stance of “no encouraging, no discouraging, and no promoting” homosexuality (Lavin *et al.* 2017, p. xvi).

This ambiguous regulation surrounding homosexual depictions allows for interpretive flexibility, enabling the authorities to apply it in equivocal ways. Translators, editors, and publishers may strategically leverage this ambivalence to enhance profit and influence, as seen in the treatment of queer representations in TT3 and TT4. While TT4 does not omit sentences like TT3, there is no uniform standard of censorship across the translated texts. Instead, TT4 adopts a hybrid approach to rendering same-sex desire. This situational response to societal structures and censorship regimes parallels how BL (Boy’s Love) fans have continually negotiated the Chinese government’s negative stance towards danmei/BL dramas and fiction. When adapted BL dramas (*dangai*) emerged, fans coined “socialist brotherhood” to refer to same-sex friendships framed within celebrated socialist values (Ge 2022), thereby cloaking the actual male homosexuality. The de-gayifying translation strategy of transforming queer content into bromance directly responds to *dangai* dramas’ use of “socialist brotherhood” to disguise gay male love.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cnsa.cn/art/2017/6/30/art\\_1505\\_26038.html](http://www.cnsa.cn/art/2017/6/30/art_1505_26038.html) (14.08.2023).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hk01.com/即时中国/173208/以你的名字呼唤我-中宣部掌权第一击-北京国际电影节突撤片> (04.02.2023).

### Example 7

ST: I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, “Fuck me, Elio”. (p. 144)

TT4: 就在他进邮局前，我凑近他的耳边轻声说：“来吧，埃利奥。” (p. 132)  
(Back-translation: Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, “Come on, Elio”)

The Chinese mainland translation in Example 7 demonstrates this pattern: “Fuck me” is mistranslated as the homosocial “come on”, failing to capture the gender performativity and homosexual undertone of the ST. This misrecognized content transforms Elio’s intense, non-normative desire into bromance. In addition to navigating censorship, some translations creatively respond to and are shaped by the dominant sexual ideology. By leveraging ambiguity and adopting hybrid strategies, translations negotiate restrictions while still subverting heteronormative frameworks. Though constrained by censorship and ideology, they find covert ways to represent non-normative desires. This nuanced discussion elucidates translations’ situational agency in navigating hegemonic structures and normative discourses. In addition to the misrecognized queer content, TT4 also misrecognizes the nuances of the target cultural context, overlooking the varied semantic implications that a word or phrase can carry in a cross-cultural scenario.

### Example 8

ST: ...till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn’t there a character who had turned into a peach... (p. 147)

TT4: ...直到我以为自己听到桃子对我说：埃里奥，用力。又过了一会儿，我在脑海中搜寻奥维德作品里的形象时，又听到了：我说过了，再用力点！是不是有一个角色最后变成了桃子？ (p. 135)

(Back-translation: ...Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Elio, harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Ovid, when I heard it again, I said, harder! Did one of the characters end up as a peach?)

The translation of the peach scene in Example 8 exemplifies this pattern. Unlike TT2, which explicates the homosexual undertone in the ST by replacing Ovid’s name with Oliver, TT4 completely ignores the target reader’s potential unfamiliarity with the Roman poet by transliterating his name into Chinese without any footnotes to explain its cultural relevance to Elio’s homosexual masturbation with the peach. Such transliteration “does not bring us ‘closer’ to the original” (Démont 2017, p. 159); rather, it distances the ST from TT4 readers and greatly increases the difficulty of comprehension experienced by readers. As Démont explains, the misrecognized context turns the “potential subversive content ... into a conservative strategy to hide a queer sexuality” (2017, p. 159). Despite this,

the censorship of homosexual content in TT4 is inconsistent. TT4 appears to adopt the queering approach used in the Taiwanese translations TT1 and TT2 when translating “I was asking Oliver to fuck me and “we’d fuck our brains out” simply by changing the Taiwanese “操” (cào) for “干” (gàn), which are semantically synonymous in Chinese vernacular.

## 6. Conclusion

As shown in this article, the Taiwanese translations consistently employ a queering translation approach when confronting verbal camp. These translations not only recognize the queerness of the source text but also preserve Elio’s linguistic nuances for gender reversal and femininity parody while enhancing queer visibility through explicitation. In contrast to the consistent queering translation approach followed by the Taiwanese translations, the two Chinese mainland editions, i.e., TT3 and TT4, adopt a hybrid approach that demonstrates an ambivalence toward queer gender performativity, inconsistent adherence to censorship mechanisms, and varying manipulation of queer content. However, TT3, published by the private publisher CFPC, seems to apply even stricter self-censorship regarding queerness than TT4, published by the state-run FLTRP. Given the strict but ambiguous legal boundaries defining pornography in the Chinese mainland and the increased state regulation over LGBTQ+ content, private publishers like CFPC bear greater responsibility for managing publication risks. For this reason, it is logical for CFPC to adopt stricter self-censorship measures to avoid potential violations of publishing laws. An extreme case can be found in TT3’s “non-translation” (Tan 2017, p. 48) of one of Elio’s queer attempts at gender inversion: “Fuck me, Elio” (p. 144) and “*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!*” (p. 147).

In contrast, TT4 does not employ such an extreme non-translation strategy for the same sentences. Instead, TT4 censors and manipulates its translations by either misrecognizing the homosexual content as homo-social interactions or misrecognizing the target cultural context, leading to a disconnect between the source text and its readers. This disconnect complicates the recognition of the original same-sex desire for the readers. Nevertheless, these strategies are not consistently implemented in both Chinese mainland editions. Rather, ambivalent coping strategies are adopted to leverage the vagueness to their advantage when possible. For example, TT3 does not always employ the non-translation strategy concerning queer representations. Case studies reveal that TT3 also adopts a similar misrecognizing approach as TT4, reshaping homosexuality into homo-social interactions. Paradoxically, both editions concurrently retain the strategy of explicitation seen in the Taiwanese version regarding the graphic depiction of

homosexual intercourse in the original text. The ambiguous regulations and censorship mechanisms concerning portrayals of homosexuality in the Chinese mainland provide room for interpretations, allowing authorities flexibility in their application. Translators, editors, and publishers can tactically exploit this vagueness to enhance profits and impact, as demonstrated in how queer representations are handled in TT3's and TT4's translations of verbal camp. The discovery that Taiwan tends to embrace a more "queering" approach, whereas Chinese mainland publishers oscillate between "misrecognizing", "minoritizing" and "queering" strategies, illustrates how social activism or governmental control can shape translation practices.

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## Annexes

### I. Comparisons between the ST, TT1 and TT3

Source Texts (ST)	(Target Texts) TTs	Back-translations (my translations)
I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio".	<b>Taiwan (2009)</b> 就在他進郵局前， 我湊近他耳邊輕聲說：“操我吧， 艾里歐。”	Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio".
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2012)</b>	
...till I thought I heard it say to me, <i>Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder</i> , and after a moment, <i>Harder, I said!</i> while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach...	<b>Taiwan (2009)</b> ...直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說： ：操我，艾里歐， 用力操我。又過了一會兒，我在心裡 裡搜尋奧利弗的影像，這時又聽到： ：我說了， 給我用力一點！不是有這樣一個故事 嗎？故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。	...Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, I said, harder! There is a story where the character turns into a peach.
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2012)</b>	
Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia...	<b>Taiwan (2009)</b> 不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我， 這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛。	Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia.
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2012)</b> 不到半小时前，我还渴望着奥利弗， 这会儿我却准备跟玛琪雅做爱。	Less than half an hour ago, I was longing for Oliver, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia.
I said a drink, not a fuck.	<b>Taiwan (2009)</b> 我是說喝一杯，不是說上個床。	I meant a drink, not a fuck.
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2012)</b> 我是说喝一杯，不是说上个床。	I meant a drink, not a fuck.
<i>Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.</i>	<b>Taiwan (2009)</b> 喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。	<i>Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.</i>
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2012)</b> 喔，对了， 这个人当时跟你们差不多大，大部分的时间， 他白天都静静地改编《耶稣临终七言》， 晚上却偷偷溜进我房间， 我们操到脑汁都流出來了。	<i>Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.</i>

## II. Comparisons between the ST, TT2 and TT4

Source Texts (ST)	(Target Texts) TTs	Back-translations (my translations)
I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio".	<b>Taiwan (2018)</b> 就在他進郵局前， 我湊近他耳邊輕聲說：“操我吧， 艾里歐。”	Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio".
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2018)</b> 就在他进邮局前，我凑近他的耳边轻声说：“来吧，埃利奥”	Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Come on, Elio".
...till I thought I heard it say to me, <i>Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder</i> , and after a moment, <i>Harder, I said!</i> while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach ...	<b>Taiwan (2018)</b> ...直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說： ：操我，艾里歐， 用力操我。又過了一會兒，我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像，這時又聽到： ：我說了， 給我用力一點！不是有這樣一個故事嗎？故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。	...Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, I said, harder! There is a story where the character turns into a peach.
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2018)</b> ...直到我以为自己听到桃子对我说，埃利奥，用力。又过了一会儿，我在脑海中搜寻奥维德作品里的形象时，又听到了：我说过了，再用力点！是不是有一个角色最后变成了桃子？	...Until I thought I heard peaches say to me, Elio, harder. After a while, as I searched my mind for images from Ovid's work, I heard it again, I said, harder! Did one of the characters end up as a peach?
Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia...	<b>Taiwan (2018)</b> 不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我， 這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛...	Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love with Marzia...
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2018)</b> 不到半小时前，我还在要奥利弗干我，这会儿我却准备跟马儿齐亚亲热...	Less than half an hour ago, I was asking Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make out with Marzia...
I said a drink, not a fuck.	<b>Taiwan (2018)</b> 我是說喝一杯，不是說上個床。	I meant a drink, not a fuck.
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2018)</b> 我是说喝一杯，不是说上个床。	I meant a drink, not a fuck.
<i>Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.</i>	<b>Taiwan (2018)</b> 喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。	<i>Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.</i>
	<b>Chinese Mainland (2018)</b> 喔，对了，这个人当时跟你们差不多大，大部分的时间，他白天都在静静地改编《十字架上的基督临终七言》，晚上却偷偷溜进我房间，我们干到脑汁都流出来了。	<i>Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.</i>