

Translating Queer and Queerly: Carmen Maria Machado's In the Dream House

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Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2023

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-11-24**



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Petra Marčić

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Zadar, 2023.



Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Zadar, 5. lipnja 2023.

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1 Introduction

With the evolution of translation studies, more attention is starting to be paid to covert, implicit and often overlooked ideologies ingrained in literary works, their translations, and the mechanisms that influence their circulation. One of such ideologies might be queer, which, in addition to a variety of postmodern non-normative sexualities and genders, also refers to a vast range of political and theoretical mediations that have their roots in the sexual but are not restricted to it (Epstein and Gillet). Translation too, although seemingly simple and straightforward, proves to be much more layered and complex. Might there be a connection between the two? Baer and Kaindl point out that “despite its claim of interdisciplinarity, translation studies have been slow to integrate fully the concepts and theoretical instruments of queer theory” (1) but it is undeniable that queer literature in general is currently going through a ‘boom’ – popularity of Machado’s memoir *In the Dream House* only a further proof of it – and that it inevitably influences translation (the process and the product) as well as the structure of world literature. It is thus important to research such aspects and thereby also give attention to the context in which the literary work is produced and reproduced in order to see how it is received and perhaps censored.

Prompted by all of that, this study will focus on translating queer, on what it means to translate queerly and on studying translation from a queer point of view, i.e., on the relationship between queer theory and translation studies. It will examine how heteronormative societies might affect choice, reading, interpretation and translation of works and how such heterosexism can be subverted, and queerness concealed, repressed, overlooked, or rendered invisible in translation, as well as how queer (or homophobic) implications of a text might be highlighted or revealed. Through a translation of Machado’s work, it will also analyse how theory and practice are intertwined, what cultural issues might arise from translation of certain literature from one culture to another and whether translation has a role in breaking stereotypes and in

generating more understanding of queer identity and relationships. This research will firstly take on more of a theoretical approach with the analysis of relevant literature and with the aim of establishing the relationship between queer theory and translation studies, and the second part will involve the translation of a selection of chapters of Carmen Maria Machado's memoir *In the Dream House*.

2 Queer Literature

Literature – an artistic expression of a variety of themes and topics, a collection of written works in different forms, done by someone, for someone, representing someone. It is certainly nothing new, in some way it has been around for as long as there have been humans, who seemingly turn to it for an assortment of reasons, with an array of possible goals, future accomplishments and consequences. And while the existence of literature as a whole likely has not and will not ever change, what is popular, most read or at times most controversial and even banned, does.

Permeating book lists and recommendations online lately, being all over social media and web pages dedicated to reading and reviewing books, seems to be queer literature. What *is* queer literature? And is it truly going through a ‘boom’ right now? In its essence, queer literature is any type of literary work dealing with issues of queerness – the symbols and themes related to LGBTQIA+ sexualities, identities, and characters. In an introduction to *Poqueerene priče*, editors Nataša Bodrožić, Gordan Bosanac and Zvonimir Dobrović note that queer is “much more than sexual orientation” (Bodrožić et al. 7) and characterize queer stories as those told from the margins, from the outskirts and formally or content-wise “either too brutal, or too weird, or too simple, or incomprehensible” (7) and thus often rejected by publishers (Stepanović 53). While it may appear to us that there are more of them now than some forty, fifty years ago, the truth is that queer literature too, is nothing new. It has long existed, and yet, the way it was perceived and received some decades or centuries ago might be different from the way it is perceived and received today. If its online and market popularity is to be trusted, readers (young adults in particular) seem thirsty for such content, perhaps because they find it relatable and helpful to come to terms with their own realities, perhaps because they want to educate themselves or for a myriad of other reasons. And while certainly this is not only happening in

the US, the West does seem to be the centre of this ‘novelty.’ What about other parts of the world though? What about Croatia?

2.1 Croatian Queer Literature

Lately, Croatia too seems to be catching on when it comes to queer theory and movement. Be it scientific publications, newspaper articles or popular literature, LGBTQIA+ themes often seem to be present in a variety of today’s writing. And while finding out much about LGBTQIA+ population in Croatia seems almost impossible, if just the talk in the media is anything to go by, it certainly is no longer something that can be overlooked. The fact that people are talking about it alone, and that more and more activists are stepping up to make some changes, including within the literary space, means *something*.

Increasingly, Croatian blogs, magazines and columns, Instagram and Facebook posts seem to be talking about queer issues and with them, about queer literature, too. They offer different takes. The title of one such article reads: “Homosexual and Lesbian Love That Knows no Bounds: Gay Literature Shocks Croatia” (“Homoseksualna i lezbijaska ljubav bez granica: gay literatura šokira Hrvatsku”). The article talks about how lately a number of novels and short story collections have been published in Croatia, texts that in a completely honest and open way explore themes of homosexuality and lesbianism, which is allegedly a complete novelty in Croatian literature. Up until recently, this was pretty much taboo (perhaps in some parts of Croatia and among some folks it still is), but after the publication of what is deemed the first Croatian gay novel – *Berlinski ručnik* (*Berlin Towel*) by Dražen Ilinčić, which largely caused outrage when it first appeared due to its explicit descriptions of homosexual (emphasis on sexual) relationships – things changed. It appears this novel and its potential contemporaries in a way set the path for writers that followed, opened up possibilities for ‘new’ types of literature, new themes, new authors/activists. Mentioning feminist queer stories by Mima Simić, lesbian poetry by Aida Bagić and Sanja Sagasta and descriptions of a gay couple in Miljenko Jergović’s

An Angel, You Say, the author of the article says how there is a new trend being born – gay literature.

Way back in the ‘70s and ‘80s of the previous century, Milko Valent published a male-male romance *Lunarni Rectum*, which is considered to be the first prose description of homosexual love in Croatian literature, and Borivoj Radaković, too, writes of male-male romantic and sexual relationship and its unfortunate and tragic end” (“Homoseksualna i lezbijska ljubav bez granica: gay literatura šokira Hrvatsku”). All this is to say that queer literature in Croatia is not in fact that new and unheard of (and this is only speaking of Croatian authors, not of the translations); Stepanović says how Croatian queer literature has a surprisingly long history. All this is to say that, perhaps following the Western trendy footsteps or perhaps taking a few steps of its own in a progressive direction, in Croatia too, there is a market for queer literature. There is a need for queer voices to be written, read, and heard, and a need for new, autochthonous experiences in (non-)fiction. And yet, there are undeniably still so many homophobic, bi-phobic, queer-phobic, misogynistic attitudes present as well, which can then also of course have influence on the literary system. So, how well would Machado’s *In the Dream House* fare in the Croatian context? How well did it fare in its original context anyway?

2.2 Progressive and Liberal, or Maybe Not Just Yet?

In the Dream House tells a story of a queer relationship gone wrong, of abuse at the hands of a woman, done *to* a woman. And while this somewhat experimental and deeply personal account delivered by Machado that can serve as a cautionary tale, hard-hitting poignant read or as an educational insight into queer relationships and abuse in them, was praised by many both for its writing and for its bravery and openness, the book was banned in several Texas schools (Abraham), likely solely because of its queerness, leaving us to question how progressive the literary world exactly is nowadays. Maybe a better question would be, how

progressive is the world the book is being delivered to, in general? While the West, the US, in particular, often seems to be the hub of all things progressive and liberal, that might not really be the case. And this is then just reflected onto the writing, translating, and publishing industry.

So, apparently, queer books, both those written about queer issues and characters and those written by authors identifying as queer, are getting banned (Machado, “Banning my Book”) across the country, seemingly synchronous with certain anti-LGBTQIA+ censorship laws (e.g., the passing of the so-called “Don’t Say Gay Bill” in Florida) happening right now. As already mentioned, the topic of this paper, Machado’s *In the Dream House* was banned in several schools in Texas. Nonetheless, the fact that this (type of) book was in the schools’ libraries in the first place, that it is being read and loved *or* criticised by many, just goes to show that queer books can now be found more often, more easily. It shows that the readership for queer literature is growing and expanding (and writership too), and that it does not necessarily include only those identifying as LGBTQIA+ (and the number of those seems to be on an uprise too), but also cis and straight readers. In other words, “the very fact that [queer sections in the bookstores] began to appear around the country suggests that queer novels were selling to populations broader than the small number of people who openly self-identified as sexual minorities” (Angles 96).

It is apparently becoming “increasingly important for non-marginalized people to understand marginalized people’s lives” (Howard, qtd. in Abraham). Generating more understanding and educating people aside, queer literature does not always need to be all about the trauma (of coming out and coming to terms with one’s identity, sexuality, and relationships). It does not always need to be sad and hard-hitting because non-queer literature is not always either. It is healthy and ‘normal’ (for a lack of a better word) to have representations of queer people in literature that go beyond that, to see them going about their everyday lives and activities, to see them having sex and enjoying it without a dramatic backstory to it all, as

Howard says that “publishers are giving readers more options than sad books about queer people that traffic in trauma – we’re getting joy, queer sex and dysfunction” (qtd. in Abraham). Yet, why do we still view straight sex and romance in literature as ‘normal’ and not bat an eye at it and we do not view the same-sex scenes the same? Is the key to overcoming that by having more books like this and thus getting more accustomed to it all?

3 Queer Literature in Translation

When readers cannot find proper and satisfying queer representation in literature in their native language, they often turn to foreign one. They turn to translations. Very often these are Western novels which people relate to in different ways. They always gain something from them, allow them to shape parts of their realities, “even when their own experiences [do] not necessarily mirror Western experiences in all respects” (Angles 101). For example, a lot of queer Japanese readership “learned a great deal about gay identity and life in the West from translations of foreign novels” (Angles 100) and Fujita says how foreign books about gay life were very helpful to him as a young man (qtd. in Angles 100).

Harvey talks about his own experiences as a young gay man in Britain, reading translations of French authors like Proust and Genet because without them, he probably would have had a hard time finding “homosexual voices” (Harvey, “Gay Community”). It is Proust though and authors alike, those that we may regard as belonging to ‘world literature’, those that have a “canonical status” (Harvey, “Gay Community”) and thus may appear as more legitimate or respectable. He continues by saying that “translated text was queer in every sense of the word,” which was useful to him “in the formative process of imagining a community above language and cultural differences” (“Gay Community” 150). Translations are then also important in that sense, especially for queer readers, as they can offer “models of otherness” (Harvey, “Gay Community” 159) that can be helpful in the construction of one’s own identity and creation of one’s imagined community (Harvey, “Gay Community” 159). Here come the

possible dangerous consequences of queer writing not being properly represented in translations across cultures, or having a “translation deficit” (Harvey, “Gay Community”). According to Harvey, however, this is not an impossible task for translators to accomplish, so long as they do not shy away from explicit queer scenes, experiences, and struggles (“Gay Community”).

3.1 Sexuality in Translation

One of the crucial parts of most queer literary works is the representation of sexuality, sexual identities, queer ones of course, or as was/is often regarded, any aspect of ‘otherness.’ We must wonder whether translation can have any influence in mediating sexuality, or the construction of the latter. According to Bauer, “translation ... serves as a framework for analysing how sexuality travelled across linguistic boundaries, and the politics of this process, [and] it can also help to conceptualize the construction of sexual desires and bodies” (8).

What does sexuality look like in translation? Is it different in any way, inevitably changed by the new ‘writer’? Especially in a case such as this one where there is a translation of a non-fictional work, a memoir with an honest and open recall of establishing and dealing with one’s sexual identity (among a variety of other things, of course). In any case, sexuality plays a big part in the original text. It is enough to mention that it is a book by a writer who identifies as a lesbian and who talks a lot about her sexual identity and relationships throughout the text. Translating Machado obviously immediately means translating queer and it is a “formidably difficult task” (Gillet 107). How to keep that aspect in translation? Especially if done by someone who identifies differently or has not had similar experiences? How to make sure “a remarkably straight translation” (Gillet 115) of a queer text is not produced? How to keep it true and real and deserving of the original? How to keep Machado’s voice, voice she finally got to be able to tell her story, to free herself from the shackles of trauma, but also make it my own work? Are changes according to the context it is being delivered to also necessary?

We may also wonder why any sort of instances and notions of sexuality are often “(mis)understood, under- or over-represented” (Santaemilia 11) in translation, in different languages. Masiello, too, questions whether sexuality can even be properly translated and represented. Does my biology and my own sexuality, the fact that I am a female, that I identify as one, results in me translating in a certain way, in a way I would not be translating if I identified as a male or queer? When it comes to erotica, why is it “more or less daring depending on the language/culture into which it is translated” (Santaemilia 11)? Is it permissible to make it so or should we strive to keep it as explicit and ‘daring’ as it is in the original, regardless of the context into which it is being reproduced? Renditions of originally queer texts in other languages are sometimes “less descriptive, more scholarly and detached” (Flotow 22). Why? Might there be censorship or self-censorship, especially when it comes to more explicit scenes, and how might it influence the overall translation of sex? Why might the erotic parts of the text be important anyway, as a representation and insight into the sexuality? Or as a way of letting the voice of the author shine through (Loffredo, qtd. in Baer and Kaindl)? According to Bauer, translation can provide us with “compelling new insights into how sexual ideas [are] formed in different contexts via a complex process of cultural negotiation” (2), and sometimes, dependent on the culture it is being translated in, queer writing may have a “translation deficit” (Harvey, “Gay Community”). It may be unclear whether a production of milder, softer, and less explicit translation is due to censorship or self-censorship but analysing the latter can help in uncovering and understanding some “unspoken personal or social beliefs, values, and prejudices related to gender/sexuality identity construction and the representation of pleasure and desire” (Santaemilia 17).

The fact is that sexuality – something that is so omnipresent and everywhere around us, part of who we are – is (surprisingly) not easy to translate, oftentimes due to cultural and generational differences (Flotow). Santaemilia claims how this has significant “rhetorical and

ideological implications” (12), revealing translator’s stance on gender and sexual identities as well as sexual behaviour in general and that which is considered morally wrong, i.e., right. Gillet also says that the translations provide a “paradigmatic instance of the possibilities and impossibilities of rendering queer material into a foreign, specifically a European language” (107) and that “the way in which the translations [are] presented” (107) to the readers offers a glimpse into the way decisions related to translation can mirror “political positionings along [a] complicated continuum” (108). Historically speaking, sexuality has been creating or attributing to a variety of discourses (e.g., erotic, or pornographic texts, swearwords), moral phenomena (e.g., obscenities, taboos), and pragmatic reactions (e.g., (self-)censorship) that are made stronger or “silenced, confirmed or perverted” in translation (Santaemilia 13). Hennessy goes on to emphasise the importance of queer theory as it challenges the conventional conceptions of sexual identity and deconstructing them and everything that underlies them and makes them what they are. Perhaps they are in fact made-up, contingent, and even performative (Butler).

4 Queer Theory and Translation Studies

Certainly, there are interconnections between queer theory and translation studies that go beyond the obvious – translating a text with queer themes or characters. And as more attention is given to queer *everything*, writers, and subsequently translators, might find themselves at a sort of a turn, a crossroads, wondering: Do I make all my texts (more) queer? The answer to that is: No. At least not in a typical sense of the word one might have in mind. That is not what all of this is about. It is not about sprinkling the text with a couple of gay characters here and there, as if they were garnish, so as to make the text more representative, more in tune with what is popular today (or seems to be that way anyway) or what sells. It is more so about having this new sort of approach, a new perspective to writing in general, and especially to translating. Queer theory can offer us new insights, teach us new valuable lessons applicable to a variety of areas in life, and so to translating as well. It can be helpful in offering

“a greater awareness of the limitations of identity categories and of the culture-specific contingency in the representation of accepted public sexualities” (Santaemilia 17).

The crossover between queer theory and translation studies has not yet been explored enough, but there have still been several studies concerning gay/lesbian in translation (e.g., Keenaghan; Mira; Harvey “Translating Camp”, “Gay Community”) in order to make such an identity and characters visible in/through translation and through the analyses of translations. The goal is to “address queer phenomena, that is, phenomena that are typically ignored, marginalized, or domesticated by the dominant regime(s) of knowledge/power, and to do so queerly” (Baer and Kaindl 3). The choices made while translating can be very impactful, they can even go so far as to disrupt stable social hierarchies, especially when it comes to images of masculinity, femininity, queer identities, categories, and sexualities (Santaemilia 18). According to Santaemilia, this issue can be approached from two perspectives – we can analyse the “projection of translation onto queer texts, i.e., the critical exploration of alternative or subversive identities and sexualities” or “translation as a queer practice” (18). Moreover, in this context, we may view translation as being motivated by or having two objectives, the first of which is the problematization of sexual identities and the second one a development of queer politics through translation (Santaemilia 18). In other words, the first of the two research directions concerns the investigation of the way queerness, i.e., queer sexualities are translated, with the focus mostly on the linguistic, ideological, and political aspects, and the second one analyses the theoretical possibilities that the sexualization of translation offers (Santaemilia). There is the translation of sexuality on the one hand and the sexualization of translation on the other (Santaemilia). We may consider the latter to be dating all the way back to the 17th century France, where the famous *belles infidèles* paradigm claimed how translations, just like women, could either be beautiful or faithful, but never both (Santaemilia). Furthermore, translations are very often compared to women in a sense that they are both subordinate, whereas the original

texts, just like men, are dominant and superior (Chamberlain), which then seems to be one of the biggest motivating factors for feminist approaches to translation. In any case, queer translation research gives rise to new forms of detailed analyses, ones which take into account both sexuality and translation, and the possible/probable crossover between them.

‘Otherness’ is a term often mentioned in various studies (and in this study too), one that has a rather long history. From Levinas’ alterity and Lacan to Simone de Beauvoir and Foucault, it originated in the fields of philosophy and sociology but it quickly took on a new, very fruitful life of its own. All the different takes on this topic usually come down to the same thing though – there is ‘the subject’ and there is ‘the other’, the latter of which is defined by difference and is often viewed as inferior. It is a way of distancing oneself, of establishing one’s identity and selfhood in opposition to others. And in the same sense that Simone de Beauvoir regards women as ‘the other’, so we can regard those identifying as queer as ‘the other’. In other words, within the context of this discussion, we may view it as referring to anything non-straight in terms of sexual identification or orientation. It seems to encompass all the non-heteronormative identities. But just as anything non-heteronormative is considered to be the ‘other’, different, subordinate, worse even, so the translations often are to the original texts (again the connection to men-original vs. women-translation and feminist theories in translation studies that then motivate the queer ones too). Mazzei finds another sort of linkage, claiming that if queer studies deal with “representation of otherness,” translation studies emphasize “the otherness of representation” (qtd. in Palekar). The importance and the subsequent effect of the interconnection between the two lies in undermining and diminishing the traditional models of representation, authors’ voices, and their own points of view (Mazzei, qtd. in Palekar). Baer and Kaindl mention something similar when they say the following: “to the extent that queer theory problematizes the representation of otherness, and translation studies highlights the otherness inherent in representation, bringing together queer theory and translation studies

should productively destabilize not only traditional models of representation, understood as mimesis, reflection, and copying, but also the authorial voices and subjectivities they project” (1).

Larkosh commends the queering of translation and says that by “re-engendering the study of translation” (4) we could perhaps also detect and reveal that translation might have always already been gendered and that gender/sexual identifications in translation are “poised for an extended discussion which points toward their relevance across the limits of a single gender or sexual identity” (4). A queer translation then (both the process and the product) offers the possibility of challenging and even resisting that what is known, accepted, and deemed ‘normal’ (or ‘moral’), all the “conventions, traditions, forms of identification, forms of analysis and forms of translation” (Santaemilia 19). Finally, Giustini offers a pretty comprehensive and encompassing definition of a queer translation and says that it is “a literary expedient that explores the parameters of queer experience in order to validate an identity position and create an interactional space for formulation and reception of queer voices through language” (18).

5 How to Translate Queer and Queerly?

Margaret Sönsler Breen calls translation a “recurring trope for queerness in Anglophone LGBTQ literature” (64). As such, it is essential in shining light not only on the existing literary and cultural customs and practices, but also on the queer people in general, who have for so long been “criminalized, derided and marginalized” (Breen 64), and thus it almost serves as a tool for demolishing or at least acting against homophobia. How can translation help in unmasking and portraying queer identities and sexualities and giving them the podium so to speak, without any alterations and reduction and erasure, softening or embellishments? How does translation help queer study (and people)? Additionally: translations are not created in a sort of a vacuum. In most cases, they are not produced, published, or sold by the translators themselves alone. There is a whole string of people who play a very important role in all of that

coming to fruition, including publishers and patrons and advertisers, to name a few. All of these can influence the way a translator approaches a queer text and the way they perhaps censor it. As Epstein says, although translators can make choices relevant to queer issues, they may also “be encouraged by the publisher to choose – strategies that remove or downplay queer sexualities, sexual practices, gender identities, or change queerness to the straight/cis norm” (121) and doing this he calls “eradicalization” that “eradicates the radical nature of queerness” (121). The process of “de-queering” (Assab 31) is thus taking place. There may be many reasons for this: being uncomfortable with it, not knowing how to translate certain things, feeling like it is inappropriate, etc. It often all comes down to the cultural, local specificity of queer issues or biases one might not even be aware of having.

5.1 None of It Unbiased

As translation studies continue to develop, more attention is being paid to certain biases inherent in the works of literature themselves, in the underlying ideologies, all of which affect or are related to which texts people pick, how they read them, why they perhaps translate and publish them, etc. (Epstein). In the same way that we view “queer theory [as challenging] the status of dominant regimes of knowledge/power as natural and universal by focusing on the constructedness of those models, on their historical contingency, and on the politics of those models (who is empowered by them and who is left out?)” (Baer and Kaindl 3), we may also view translation as having power, as not being innocent. It can have the power to give control to certain groups, to free the oppressed ones, to give voice to those less heard, to shine light on the under-represented ones. And just as it can do all of that, so it can do the opposite – hide them. In the case of queer translation, this may have the potential to conceal or at least diminish queerness. As Epstein says, to view and analyse translation in this way means “to question who has power, how they use it, and against whom, and to work against it is to attempt to give control back to under-represented or otherwise less powerful groups” (120).

Feminist translators too employ certain strategies and techniques to reveal misogynistic and sexist aspects or to further (author's) feminist ideologies. For example, Luise von Flotow and Sherry Simon came up with the idea of "supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking as feminist translation strategies" (qtd. in Epstein 121). Queer translators may do something similar, naturally, in terms of queer studies and theories. They may analyse how "the heteronormative society in which we live influences how we write and translate" (Epstein 120) and they may try to find ways to struggle against this, to "subvert this heterosexism" (Epstein 121). By translating queerly, we may emphasize author's own queer identity or approach, i.e., their own heterosexism and queerphobic stance (Epstein).

5.2 Translating Queerly

It is therefore possible for the translators to, through the way that they write and transfer ideas as well as through the choice of words they use, sort of accept and celebrate queerness and illuminate it more, but also to do the opposite – to reject it, dim it, cover it, erase it completely, usually in favour of heterosexuality (the reason for that might be any of the multiple ones discussed previously). Translators can choose to emphasize certain aspects of the text, add some and erase others, all to further their queer-positive or anti-queer stance. They can choose to fixate more on the character's or situation's queer nature or they can nudge a reader into noticing and analysing mistreatment of a queer character (perhaps even by the authors themselves) or they can in general put issues related to sexuality and gender at the forefront (Epstein). Epstein calls strategies such as these "acqueering" since they "emphasize or even increase queerness" (121). Translators have the choice to put in more queerness, in terms of sexual activities, gender identities and otherwise, to alter straight into queer, to remove or emphasize queerphobic language and situations so as to have readers think about them and question them, and perhaps their own past and present actions in the face of such issues, to make adjustments to spelling, grammar, lexicology, add footnotes, endnotes and various other

kinds of paratextual details to highlight or start a discourse on queerness, i.e., on the translation of queerness and on translating queerly (Epstein).

Sometimes, especially when it comes to terminology, translators will leave the words as they are, in the original foreign language, most often in English. And sometimes this might be done out of lack of knowledge or ideas on how to translate said terms, or because there has been no precedent and there just is not an equivalent word in the language that they are translating in, that is often used and well-known. Sort of in terms of linguistic determinism, it may also suggest that there is none of that non-normative, non-heterosexual thinking developed in the target culture yet. But sometimes, it can also serve as a way of distancing themselves, and their culture, their literature, from this ‘otherness’, this ‘foreignness’, as if saying: “This is theirs. This is not ours. Not part of our culture. Not even part of our *language*.” This “selective translation” (Breen 66) might be doing then the exact opposite of shining light on and aiding the visibility and respectability of queerness. But, at the same time, the fact that the same terms are sometimes used, like *queer* instead of *kvir* in Croatian, may suggest this sort of global interconnectedness, queerness as a globally shared construct and not necessarily just a locally and culturally specific phenomenon. These terminological issues are symptoms of “more fundamental problems connected to the intercultural circulation of ideas about and expressions of queerness: between (often politically and strategically useful) identity politics and the performative and anti-essentializing tendencies of queer thought” (Bachner 78). Queerness then sort of becomes a problem of terminology, “one that involves questions of inclusion and exclusion” (Bachner 83).

5.2.1 Ways of Translating Queer and Queerly

When it comes to the act of translating queer literary texts itself, Marc Démont highlights three ways, three modes: misrecognizing translation, minoritizing translation and queering translation. The first of these apparently ignores any aspects of queerness. Such an

example would be Alvaro Armando Vasseur's 1912 *Poemas*, a translation of poems by Walt Whitman dedicated to love between men (Démont). As one can imagine that love is misconstrued, presented differently in Vasseur's work. At work here is the so-called normalizing and 'straightening' power of translators (Démont). Being a translator certainly comes with many challenges and requirements, and in a way one of them is also this sort of "ethical contract of trust" (Démont 158). In other words, readers are usually not going to have both the translation and the original text in front of them, reading simultaneously and checking whether all is right and nothing is missing or out of place. No, reading a translation, we expect that to already be true. We trust the translator to have provided us with an accurate rendition of the original, and so there is this "ethical contract of trust" (Démont 158) between the reader and the translator. This goes for all queer aspects of the original, i.e., the translation, all the sexual/gender identity awakenings, queer talk, intimate, erotic scenes and much more. So, what happens when the translator does not do that, does not honour the ethical contract of trust for whatever reason, justified or otherwise? What happens when they succumb to the systematic erasure of queer sexualities and queer subjects, as would be the case with misrecognizing mode of translation? Certainly, a sort of an inadequate translation is produced and presented to the readers, which may lead to dire consequences. And misrecognizing translation does not just have to include the content but the context too, different cultures and all (Démont). This kind of translation attempts to rewrite the original, produce a new text, from a particular hegemonic standpoint (Démont), i.e., by hiding the queerness of a literary work, it tries to "suppress the text's disruptive force" (Démont 163).

And while another mode of translation – minoritizing one – does not strive to do the same, it still alters this disruptive force, it assimilates it, changes it into a fixed explicit form (Démont). In other words, this translation "congeals queerness's drifting nature by flattening

its connotative power to a unidimensional and superficial game of denotative equivalences” (Démont 157).

Finally, the queering translation recognizes and sort of accepts the disruptive force and recreates it through translation in a new language (Démont). Within this translation, which shines light on the queerness of the text, Démont distinguishes two types of queering practices, the first of which includes uncovering the original’s unique embodiment of queerness by critiquing the suppression or assimilation efforts of the earlier translation(s). The second type is concerned with developing certain ways of representing the queerness in the translation as well (Démont). Of course, reading in general is a very subjective thing, the way we understand and *read* the text in front of us is dependent on many things and so our judgment of whether a translation is adequate or not is too (Appiah, qtd. in Démont). A queering translation includes not only the translation of the semantic or “literal” content (Appiah, qtd. in Démont), but also one that “preserves the web of virtual connotative associations and, therefore, the text’s ambiguities and potentially disruptive content” (Démont 168), all with the goal of offering new ways of reading. Through the resistance to domination or appropriation this queering translation always keeps in mind the queerness of the text by willingly and readily declining to present an “ultimate” translation (Démont 168). Whatever the kind of translation one considers, it all comes down to the decisions and techniques translators make and use to “conceal, congeal, or to leave open a disruptive queer content” (Démont 168).

6 Queer Literature Across Cultures and Spaces

Shalmalee Palekar notices the interconnection between (Western) queer theory and translation studies by investigating the way the former is being “translated and retranslated” (8) throughout different cultures in order to structure and systemize “a kind of globalized queerness” (8). Moreover, she analyses the attitude of certain repressive societies and cultures toward queer works in terms of censorship. All of this seems very Western, US-centric, in a

sense that that context probably would not be considered repressive, and yet, as already mentioned, US has been engaging in not just censoring parts of books but going so far as to ban them. Motion to ban *Handmaid's Tale* for example in certain schools made a lot of noise recently, particularly over social media with the hashtag #letamericaread trending.

Very often what is considered global is just in fact US-related and -centric. Mizielinska critically analyses the inquiries of the dominant American branch of queer theory and asks why it continues to be the leading one, even across Europe, in countries seemingly more 'progressive' and liberal when it comes to sexual minorities. This might be related to the dominance of the English language (Palekar). But American notions and representations of queerness, queer identity and sexuality may very well differ from the rest of the world and cannot or should not be considered global. In any case, how do we go about retracing queerness in a different culture and community when doing a translation? How do we do that "without setting up simplistic binaries of foreign/native, Western/non-Western" (Palekar 8) and while also disregarding the consequences and impacts of "neo-imperial and neoliberal forces" (Palekar 8)? A common expectation may be that when any sort of queer literature is translated from a more liberal, open culture into a more conservative, traditional one, it goes through certain 'adjustments', changes, and alterations, and not in favour of non-heterosexuality, which consequently influences the way that literature is read, conceptualized, and understood (Epstein and Gillet). But this might not necessarily be the case.

6.1 Not Just the Language

Translation, of course, does not concern just the languages or transference of the content and meaning from one linguistic system into another. It also includes something more, additional knowledge or meaning or connotations. Baer calls this "cultural translation" (41). So, each literary work that we read and comprehend, we do so through our own cultural lens, and we also compare the foreign work, i.e., the culture it originated in and that influenced it,

with our own. Perhaps our entire perception and understanding of the text is shaped by this cultural lens of ours, subconsciously or consciously. And this is why translation can be such a complex thing to do and produce. It reveals “cultural codes of meaning” (Breen 66) and as such, regulates and decides which ones will “pass, and be deemed acceptable and legitimate” (Breen 66), and which will not, i.e., which will be “barred, discarded and termed illegitimate” (Breen 66). Baldwin too recognizes the importance of concepts other than just the language producing the meaning, and highlights the interwovenness of race, class, ethnicity, and culture in this process (qtd. in Breen).

6.2 Culturally Specific or Globally Shared?

Queering translation may signify actively constructing queer identities through different cultures (Palekar 9). Mazzei talks about an important aspect to consider – the way we can and do take into consideration e.g., in the case of this paper, lesbianism and its presence in translation as opposed to some other cultures, i.e., how sexual identity might be culturally specific (especially in terms of Western vs. non-Western). Moreover, just as grammar and style are not apolitical (Butler) so the translation is not. As already mentioned, it is not “an innocent nor a powerless act” (Weißegger, qtd. in Palekar 9). Gillet speaks of the “intercultural blockage” (115) and says how it is not guilt-free, in a sense that it is a reflection of a real struggle over who gets to have their voice heard, over who owns and controls the discourse in all the branches or fields of the LGBTQAI+ studies. And this is a struggle that for the most part occurs among those that have some sort of interest in a certain identity, e.g., lesbian publishers, and those that regard identity as a result of oppression, e.g., queer theorists (Gillet).

According to Harvey, texts with themes of homosexuality and queerness in general are in translation more often than not altered slightly to fit the expectations of the culture into which they are being translated (*Intercultural Movements*). For example, a Japanese translation of the original English text portrays (and alludes to deeper cultural, societal, national, regional)

differences in the relationship between sexual preference, sexual practice, and identity (Angles). Moreover, these, perhaps at first not that noticeable, differences in languages also suggest different ideas of formation of identity in relation to queer desire between the States and Japan (Angles). For example, adopting a “self-identifying sexual identity” (Angles 93) is not as common in Japan and queerness is essentially more described in terms of sexual activities, practices, and emotions rather than identification or anything social, political, or cultural (McLelland, qtd. in Angles). This is then reflected in language and so in writing and literature too, as, e.g., the language used in translation, which deals more with feelings than identity, might be regarded as “reflecting non-American attitudes toward identity” (Angles 93) and showcases how “attitudes might be subtly reconfigured in the act of translation” (93). All this is not to say that a translation is a ‘failure’ or not successful. It just means that through language and a way of writing, we may gain an insight into deeper differences between nations, cultures, etc., into attitudes toward queerness, and in that way possible differences between the ideologies present in two or more different socio-political-cultural spheres. The translated text (or rather the translator behind the text) offers this to the readers sometimes subconsciously and sometimes consciously (Angles). Harvey says that “the translator has (inevitably, one might say) produced a text that harmonizes with the prevailing view of human subjectivity that obtains in his – the target – culture” (“Translating Camp”). The translation then seems to be a “fine-tuned version” (Angles 94) of a text that contains or deals with just as much of both cultures – the original and the target one. This is no easy task. Paying attention to both and achieving this balance that is.

And as I write my own translation, I wonder: how do I go about it? It obviously is not right to completely alter the book to make it more appropriate for my own culture (and what *is* ‘my own culture’ at this point; heavily Westernized and Americanized the way everything seems to be these days, but it might not be right to leave it ‘all American’ either. Is this book

'all American' anyway? How important is the culture, at its basic notion, for this piece of literature? In a way, the book has both concepts previously mentioned in terms of Japanese and American literature: queerness as a way of self-identification, political and cultural activism, as well as desire, emotions, and sexual acts. Is it the same in Croatia? Does it really matter? These are the things I sometimes consciously think about, yet the product might be one largely born out of my subconscious beliefs and attitudes, my own identity, upbringing, and circumstances. And interestingly enough, while translating I might have to manage my own individuality versus the context I live in and for which I am producing the book. My own worldviews and attitudes may to a great extent differ from those of the general Croatian public and culture and may play a role in how I approach the translation.

Gillet says that although there are many things that would be understood if not translated (properly), there are also those that would not. Some of them he claims are "so important that failure to translate them runs the risk of symptomatic misrepresentation" (110), and these are "details that impinge directly on American queer history" (110). Sometimes (as Gillet gives examples of German and English), at the centre of translating queer and queerly is the fact that the terminology utilized to define and, consequently, conceptualize and understand the histories of queerness in different contexts, different countries is not the same (Gillet). Experience of those identifying as queer is largely described but also determined by the language that they are being referred to in, by others and themselves (Gillet). Both of these – the language and the experience that is – are "equally inflected by particular histories" (Gillet 115), which, even if not occurring in isolation, "are nonetheless not transferable" (115). And so, for example, a lot of American queer culture and subsequently literature is often focused only on that American context, the US of it all. What Gillet terms as "gaps" (115) between [the] translation and the original text are never just "mistranslations" (115) but are usually connected to certain problems of cultural transfer.

While it is not untrue that queerness and queer literature are not just Western or American concepts, Bachner still talks about the “importing of texts and theories about non-normative sexualities” (77) and says that they were mostly based on Western ones and then, as her study shows, translated into Chinese, i.e., that the contemporary and non-heteronormative ideas of sexualities and queer politics are originally Western and only then imported into Sinophone world sometime in the early 20th century. Moreover, she claims that this circulation of queerness has been “an interculturally sensitive issue, both terminologically and politically” (77), an issue implying several translation processes, and that to talk about queerness in Chinese-speaking contexts in general means to talk about translation.

Firstly, the scientific sort of translations from the West influenced and altered Chinese understanding and worldview of sexuality and of the same-sex relationships and sexual acts (Bachner). Perhaps, they are no longer a disease, to be analysed and repressed and cured. Perhaps, they are not *bad* or abnormal. Perhaps, this change in the way of thinking can lead to cultural, theoretical, and political changes, to activism challenging heteronormative traditions and practices and advocating for non-normative sexualities, and perhaps, in a context such as Chinese, Western precedents can serve as an inspiration, a motivation. Something to look up to, to help jumpstart the whole process and then balance it with locally and culturally specific circumstances (Bachner). What better way than to turn to Western literature, fiction and non-fiction, scientific texts, and novels?

And yet, even if general ideas of queerness are imported, they do not stay the same in the cultures they are imported into. The same way that the translation does not. From the terminology to a variety of other more complex issues, queerness can get “reappropriated, refracted, even twisted” (Bachner 78). Judith Butler in “Critically Queer” deems queer as “never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage” (228). Is queerness in its essence then a global construct? A construct that thus has translation

at its core? It may or may not be so, it appears, as queer studies are split between two branches: one advocating queer universalism, i.e., a sort of global, uninterrupted character of queerness, and the other advocating cultural particularism, i.e., particularities of queerness on each local and cultural level (Bachner). This “global circulation of queerness” (Bachner 79) as well as local, regional, cultural, linguistic and many other peculiarities, seem best approached through the topic of translation, i.e., through the analysis of translation as a “circulation of ‘queer’ knowledge and expressions” (Bachner 79) and of the way queer works are translated and subsequently placed again into the “global circulation of queerness” (Bachner 79).

Why even turn to queer literature in translation? Perhaps to find similar people with shared experiences in other places, other cultures, to create an “affective connection” (Dinshaw 21) across them and increase the “resources for self- and community-building” (Dinshaw 21), to see how other people in different places deal with similar feelings, those perhaps impermissible in their own country or culture. Translations of queer texts in general just go to show how widespread and shared queer identities and experiences are worldwide. It is exciting and exhilarating – this mix, this idea of queerness as a “shared sensitivity across different nations and cultures, augmented by the global circulation of commodities” (Bachner 82), everything the same and perhaps not quite. So, perhaps the two branches of queer studies are not on the opposite sides of the tree, separated completely and never to touch. Perhaps they intertwine, both with their own little spurts of knowledge and ideas, all of which help shape field of queer studies as a whole. Intercultural references in the books can help get that point across (Bachner). Translators have a lot of weight on their shoulders. Those cultural, linguistic, and other peculiarities may just as easily become limitations and a point of separation, difference and distancing oneself, but queerness is “already multiply refracted” (Bachner 84) and translated even before the actual translation (Bachner). There is already “mediation, fragmentation, and multiplication of meaning itself” (Bachner 84). Queer texts from foreign

countries, especially non-Western ones, non-Anglophone ones, leave behind their own circuits and step into a different one, an “Anglophone global trajectory” and they are thus a proof of constraints and “(in)visibility of certain world literary contexts” as well as of the “challenges of the transcultural circulation of queerness” (Bachner 84). The “affective turn” (Clough and Halley) in the field of queer studies has led to more attention being paid to how identification across time and culture may affect the construction of ideas about sexuality (Angles). And although such identification includes languages too, translation’s influence on affective identification has not been investigated enough (Angles). It is important to also analyse the role of translators because their mediation and interventions are the tools with which the affective links are created (Angles). Moreover, it is crucial to not only regard translations as a way of getting a glimpse into another culture. Sure, that is a big part of it. But we must also look at the translators themselves, who is translating this, what is ‘this’, in what way, etc., in order to assess how they form these “cross-cultural affective links” (Angles 88).

6.3 The Role of Translators

Palekar mentions the role or the significance of having queer translators translate queer texts, as they can potentially draw out and showcase some new opportunities out of them. But what about non-queer translators engaging in such a process? Can they still perform and do a decent job, or will they miss something, something that might not be obvious to non-queer readers and might be to queer ones. How much of ourselves do we inscribe in the translations? And in what way do we do that? How might my own sexual identity, my upbringing, my ideologies, the circumstances that I am producing this body of work in, affect the final product? O’Driscoll claims that “the nature of translatorial self-inscription and creativity may include an original deconstruction of a source text, indeed, a radical reinterpretation of the same” (1). And it certainly does. We can just go back to the notion of readings mentioned earlier. Different understandings, emerging from or under the influence of our own circumstances are at the

essence of consuming any piece of art, literature in particular, and when translating, they may and very well do lead to different texts. And so, sometimes, with all that in mind, translation can bring about “an erasure of the queerness of both texts and authors, sometimes due to direct censorship and sometimes due to queerphobic biases of a particular translator” (Palekar 12). Translators have a lot of power – to bring out the queerness, to break the stereotypes and taboos, or to strengthen them even further (Giustini). Not only can they help shape (right) images of queer identity and sexuality in readers’ minds, but they can also play an activist role, create literary works linked to certain movements, like gay liberation (Angles).

7 Carmen Maria Machado’s *In the Dream House* – Translation of Select Chapters

7.1 In the Dream House

Although it deals with a somewhat familiar topic – domestic violence, psychological and physical abuse, Machado’s memoir is a brave and innovative account of a relationship gone wrong in which she attempts to understand how everything that happened to her shaped the person she has become. The book is divided into many short chapters, each different from the following one, through which Machado looks back at her religious adolescence, debunks stereotypes about lesbian relationships and in an essayistic way explores the history and reality of abuse in queer relationships. Despite the difficult subject matter and the vulnerability she expresses through language, her writing style is often imbued with wit and playfulness. It is an experimental, gripping and oftentimes hard-hitting body of work that belongs to queer literature and through translations might become part of world (queer) literature too. In what follows, I present a translation of a selection of short chapters from the book.

7.2 Kuća snova kao *Palača uspomena*

Ovo je ta ulica. Ovo je ta kuća. Ono su ulazna vrata, ali nikad se njima ne koristiš.

A ovo je na prilazu: svi dečki kojima si se sviđala kao djevojčica. Colin, zubaričin sin, koji ti je tihim glasom rekao da imaš lijepu haljinu. Spustila si pogled kao da se i sama želiš u to uvjeriti, a onda veselo odskakutala dalje. (Diva, čak i onda! Mama ti je ovo ispričala; bila si tako mala da se ne sjećaš.) Seth, koji ti je u šestom razredu kupio novi novcati primjerak *Animorphs* – onaj na čijim se koricama Cassie preobražava u leptira – i koji je natjerao mamu da ga vozi do tebe kako bi ti je poklonio. Adam, tvoj dragi prijatelj koji je radio u lokalnom kinu i kući donosio vreće za smeće pune starih kokica kako biste mogli gledati filmove koje ti roditelji nikada ne bi dopustili da gledaš: *Memento* i *Ples u tami* i *Pakleni šund* i *Mulholland drive* i *I tvoju mamu također*. Adam ti je spržio toliko CD-ova. Neki su bili previše čudni za tebe. Na jednom se čulo samo razbijanje instrumenata, na što si zakolutala očima i rekla: „Ovo je glupo.“ Ali onda vas je u siječnju Adamova mama odvela u Philadelphiju na koncert benda Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Svirka je počela kasno pa ste se ti i Adam stiskali jedno uz drugo pod njegovom hudicom. Glazba je bila kompleksna, kaleidoskopična, neopisivo lijepa. Nisi znala što uopće reći o toj mješavini zvukova, o načinu na koji te simfonija svega tog jednostavno preplavila, oživila svaki dio tvog tijela, učinila da zatitra i zaigra. Jednom je Adam o tebi napisao priču, a poslije, kad si otišla na fakultet, i pjesmu. Nisi znala što s njegovom ljubavi, tom stalnom, smirenom i stabilnom privrženosti koja ništa nije tražila ni zahtijevala. Zatim, Tracey, koja je imala brata blizanca, Timmya. Njih su dvoje bili mormoni i predragi. Tebi se sviđao Timmy, ali Tracey si se sviđala ti. Jednom si prilikom s interneta naručila besplatnu Knjigu mormona pa zaglavila u dvosatnom razgovoru s nekim dečkom – po glasu ti se činio zgodan – iz Salt Lake Citya, koji te nazvao kako bi procijenio tvoje zanimanje za njihovu religiju. Nisi mogla reći: „Naručila sam knjigu jer sam zaljubljena u jednog mormona, a njegova je sestra zaljubljena u mene.“ Umjesto toga si dva sata s njim raspravljala o teologiji

prije nego što si mu nažalost napokon morala poklopiti slušalicu. Uglavnom, svi ti dečki. Njihovi osjećaji, njihova ljubav i privrženost uvijek su ti bili sumnjivi jer ni sama sebe nisi voljela, ni svoje tijelo ni svoj um. Pa kako bi onda netko drugi mogao? Odbila si toliko nježnosti. Što si tražila?

Stražnja terasa: fakultet. Toliko neuzvrćene ljubavi i konačno – grozan seks. Jednom si vozila kroz četiri različite države kako bi usred crne zime spavala s tipom iz sjevernog New Yorka. Bilo je toliko hladno da ti se tvoj jeftini gel za pranje lica smrznuo u tubi. Seks je očito bio loš, ali dobro se sjećaš što si *htjela* od te noći. Htjela si tu požudu toliko snažnu da odlučiš prijeći četiri države. Htjela si da netko bude opsjednut tobom. Kako to ostvariti? Čitavu si noć bila budna i zurila u svjetlo parkirališta ispred njegove sobe. Zašto muškarci nikad nemaju zastore? Što učiniti da onaj kojeg želiš želi tebe? Zašto te nitko ne voli?

Kuhinja: OkCupid, Craigslist. Život u Kaliforniji i pokušaji izlaženja sa ženama – neuspjeli pokušaji jer se pokazalo da lezbijkama iz Zaljeva ta cijela biseksualna priča i nije napeta. I tako, parada muškaraca: onih dragih i onih groznih i onih starijih. Profesori i studenti. Astrofizičar, nekoliko programera. Jedan tip s brodom u marini u Berkeleyju. A onda, preseljenje u Iowu i previše užasnih spojeva, uključujući i onaj s tipom kojeg si poslije stalno vidala u čekaonici kod svog psihijatra. Svirao je klavir. Student medicine, možda? Više se i ne sjećaš.

Dnevna soba, ured, kupaonica: dečki, ili nešto blizu toga. Casey i Paul i Al. Casey je bio najgori. Al je bio najbolji. Paul je bio savršen, pred njim bi ti klecala koljena; ševio te i hranio i pokušavao te naučiti kako zavoljeti Kaliforniju. Bilo je to sve što si željela. Bio je tako lijep. Obožavala si njegovu guzicu prekrivenu mekim dlačicama, kao paperjem, nevjerojatno mekan zatiljak, snagu njegovih ruku. Imala si se potrebu zavući u njega i pustiti ga da se on zavuče negdje duboko u tebe. Zbog njega si se osjećala i posebno i seksi i pametno. Ostavio te jer te nije volio. To je sasvim dobar i valjan razlog, premda si tada htjela umrijeti.

Spavaća soba: tamo nemoj.

7.3 Kuća snova kao *Putovanje kroz vrijeme*

Jedno od pitanja koja te muče: Da si znala, bi li postupila isto? Da se jednog dana u tvojoj sobi otvorio bjeličast portal i da si starija ti išetala i rekla ti ono što sada znaš, bi li je poslušala? Kažeš si da bi, ali vjerojatno lažeš; nisi slušala svoje pametnije, mudrije prijatelje kada su ti priznali da su zabrinuti za tebe pa zašto bi onda pobogu poslušala verziju sebe koja si je poput novorođenčeta prokrčila put kroz rupu u vremenu?

Jedna od teorija o putovanju kroz vrijeme zove se Novikovljevo načelo o samodosljednosti u kojoj Novikov ustanovljuje da, kada bi putovanje kroz vrijeme i bilo moguće, svakako ne bi bilo moguće vratiti se u prošlost i izmijeniti događaje koji su se već odigrali. Kada bi se sadašnja ti mogla vratiti u prošlost, sigurno bi primijetila nešto *novo* – jer bi znala ono što tada nisi – ali ne bi mogla na primjer spriječiti roditelje da se upoznaju jer se to očito već dogodilo. Tako je nešto nemoguće, kaže Novikov, baš kao što je nemoguće skočiti kroz cigleni zid. Vrijeme – njegov slijed – je zacrtano.

Ne, Novikovljeva je putnica tragično nasamarena naivčina koja prekasno shvati kako joj je put u prošlost zapečatio upravo onu sudbinu koju je pokušavala spriječiti. Možda si svoj budući glas koji odzvanja kroz zidove zamijenila za nešto drugo: zvuk srca koje tiho kuca a onda stane udarati od požude, tek drhtaj.

7.4 Kuća snova kao *Déjà vu*

Ona te voli. Vidi sve ono nenametljivo i neizrecivo na tebi. Za nju postojiš samo ti. Vjeruje ti. Želi te čuvati i paziti. Želi s tobom ostarjeti. Misli da si lijepa. Misli da si seksi. Katkad pogledaš mobitel i vidiš da ti je poslala nešto tako opsceno i bestidno i među bedrima osjetiš trzaj želje, požude. Ponekad joj uhvatiš pogled i osjećaš se kao najsretnija osoba na svijetu.

7.5 Kuća snova kao *Kuća na Floridi*

Posjećujete njezine roditelje negdje dolje na samom jugu Floride. Čitavim ste se putem svađale – rasplakala te u restoranu u Zračnoj luci Dulles, točno pod svjetlećom reklamom piva Sam Adams, i nekoliko se ljudi okrenulo i prostrijelo je pogledom dok si pritiskala ubrus na lice kao da patiš od tuberkuloze – i lakne ti što ste napokon stigle.

Ima prastaru mačku koja te odmah pokuša ugristi. Majka joj je poput ptičice, premršava i krhka i zabrinuta si – za nju, za sebe. Otac joj se pojavi poslije i natoči si popriličan koktel. Obitelj joj je smiješna i zlobna. Drukčija od tvoje koja, tako ti se čini, nikada nije cijenila ono što misliš. I samo ih je troje i ti si ljubomorna; ljubomora, eto što je to.

Hrane te. Piletinom i izraelskim kus-kusom i keksićima i kalamata maslinama i grah salatam s previše kopra. Plodovima mora i rižotom i svježim voćem. Smiješ se. „Možda se trebamo ovamo preseliti“, kažeš, na što joj se mama blistavo nasmiješi i na trenutak se osjećaš kao dio scene u filmu, dečko kojeg majka one koju voliš časti svim svojim kulinarskim vještinama. Nikad joj nisi vidjela majku da jede, ni jedan jedini put.

„Ako ćeš ići u šetnju“, kaže ti njen otac između gutljaja već trećeg martinija, „pripazi na aligatore.“

„Aligatore?“ zabrinuta si.

„Ma vjerojatno te neće napasti“, kaže. Čaša je odjednom prazna. „Vjerojatno.“

Sutradan u krevetu u kojem je nekada spavala kao dijete, posvađate se oko najveće gluposti. Odlučiš se maknuti, otići do kuhinje i ondje sjediti. „Idem čitati“, kažeš, i to i učiniš – čitaš gotovo sat vremena. Majka joj je tamo, sjecka nešto mirisno i veselo razgovara s tobom.

Ona ušeta u kuhinju i upita, „Što čitaš?“ dok te hvata za ruku. „Pa...“ započneš, ali njezini ti se prsti stegnu oko ruke.

Njena majka, koja još uvijek sjecka, kaže: „Idete li poslije na plažu?“ Nož udara o dasku uznemirujućom preciznošću.

Stišće te sve jače, sad već počinje boljeti. Nije ti jasno; toliko ti ništa nije jasno da ti mozak poskakuje, preskače, vraća se natrag. Uzdahneš, tiho, najtiše, jedva čujno. Ovo je prvi put da te ne dira iz ljubavi i ne znaš što učiniti. *Ovo nije normalno, ovo nije normalno, ovo nije normalno.* Mozak ti se bori naći nekakvo objašnjenje, i boli sve više i više, ali ne možeš se pomaknuti. U glavi ti zvoni zvono za uzbunu i toliko si usredotočena na njega da uopće ne čuješ njezin odgovor.

Sat vremena poslije na plaži, samo vas dvije. „Idemo u vodu“, kaže.

Poslušaj jer ne znaš što drugo napraviti. Ocean na Floridi potpuno je drukčiji od svega što znaš – topao kao kupka, a pun opasnosti. Oceani tvog djevojaštva, onako hladni kao led bili su opasni po život; svašta može vrebati u ovoj prelijepoj, mlakoj vodi. Kada vam voda dođe do vrata, kaže ti: „Dođi ovamo!“

Samo je prostrijeliš pogledom.

„Koji si kurac takva?“ upita te. „Nadrkana si otkad smo izašle.“

„Moramo razgovarati“, izustiš. „Kada si me maloprije zgrabila za ruku – to je bilo tako strašno. Dodirnula si me i taj dodir nije bio ni iz brige ni iz ljubavi. Bio je iz ljutnje.“ Osjećaš se kao jebeni hipi, ali ne znaš koje bi druge riječi upotrijebila, za te linije panike tetovirane na tvom srcu. „Stiskala si i stiskala i...“ Podigneš ruku iz vode, pogledaš mjesto gdje ti se polako stvara modrica. „Zašto? Zašto si to radila?“

Nekih pola sekunde izraz lica joj se ne mijenja, a onda joj brada krene drhtati, „Molim te oprosti mi“, kaže. „Nisam htjela. Znaš da te volim, zar ne?“

Ništa se posebno ne dogodi tijekom ostatka vašeg posjeta, osim jedne noći pred kraj kada obje dođete s bazena nakon zalaska sunca. Otvorite klizna vrata i dočeka vas klima i glasovi koji postaju sve glasniji. Dok prolazite kuhinjom, ugledate njenog oca kako prilazi njenoj majci. U ruci mu je piće i galami o – nečemu. Ona se stisnula u kutu. Bez obaziranja, tvoja djevojka nastavi svoj put, ali ti zastaneš i pogledaš. Njena te majka ošine pogledom, a zatim malo zabaci glavu ne bi li srela pogled svog muža, kaže, „Moram završiti večeru“, i okrene mu leđa. Trenutak se čini prepun – nečega, ali kao što je došao tako i prođe i muž ljutito ode.

U sobi tvoje djevojke, treseš se. Vani se u zraku osjeća onaj pritisak pred oluju. Ona skine sve sa sebe i stoji pred tobom naježena. „Ne želim biti kao on“, kaže, „ali nekad se bojim da jesam.“ Kao da i ne govori tebi.

Kada oluja napokon počne, grom je glasan poput pucnja.

7.6 Kuća snova kao *Odaberi svoju pustolovinu*[®]

Budiš se i sve oko tebe je bijelo i sjajno. Unatoč kutijama, odjeći i posuđu, soba kao da blista i vrije zadovoljstvom. Pomisliš: *na ovakva bih se jutro lako mogla naviknuti.*

Kada se okreneš, ona zuri u tebe. Od blještave nevinosti svjetla prevrće ti se želudac. Od sna do straha – ne sjećaš se kada je granica bila tako tanka.

„Cijelu si se noć okretala“, kaže. „Dirala si me rukama i mlatila laktovima. Nisam mogla spavati.“

Ako je moliš za oprost, idi na stranicu 40.

Ako joj kažeš da te sljedeći puta kada je u snu dotakneš laktovima probudi, idi na stranicu 41.

Ako joj kažeš da se smiri, idi na stranicu 43.

„Stvarno mi je žao“, kažeš joj. „Nije namjerno. Ne mogu si pomoći, u snu mlatim rukama.“
Trudiš se ublažiti situaciju. „Znaš li da je takav i moj tata, vrti se kao uspavana ljepotica? Skroz čudno. Vjerojatno sam...“

„Je li ti stvarno žao?“ upita. „Mislim da nije.“

„Je“, odgovoriš. Želiš da ti se vrati onaj prvi dojam dana, ona svježina, ono svjetlo.

„Stvarno mi je žao.“

„Dokaži.“

„Kako?“

„Prestani to raditi.“

„Ali rekla sam ti, ne mogu.“

„Jebi se“, kaže i ustane. Pratiš je do kuhinje.

Idi na stranicu 45.

„Ljubavi, ako se ovo još jednom dogodi, samo me probudi i otići ću na kauč, obećavam. Stvarno to ne radim namjerno. Ni ne sjećam se. Ne mogu kontrolirati što radim u snu.“

„Koja si ti jebena pizda“, kaže. „Nikad ni za što ne preuzimaš odgovornost.“

„Samo me moraš probuditi“, moliš, neka vrsta nesuvislog očaja siječe ti lubanju. „Samo to. Probudi me i reci mi da se pomaknem ili da odem spavati na kauč i napraviti ću to, kunem ti se.“

„Jebi se“, kaže i ustane. Pratiš je do kuhinje.

Idi na stranicu 45.

Evo te; na stranici na kojoj ne bi trebala biti. Ovdje si mogla završiti samo ako si varala. Osjećaš li se zbog toga dobro, zato što si varala da dođeš ovamo? Kakva si ti to osoba? Jesi li čudovište? Možda jesi.

KRAJ.

Šališ se? Nikada to ne bi napravila. Nemoj niti pokušavati uvjeriti ove ljude da bi se i na trenutak zauzela za sebe. Koga zavaravaš?

KRAJ.

Ne bi trebala biti na ovoj stranici. Nemoguće je ovdje završiti izborom koji ti je dan. Završila si na ovoj stranici jer ti je dosadilo vrtjeti se u krug. Trebao ti je izlaz. Pametnija si od mene.

Idi na stranicu 48.

Doručak. Spremiš kajganu, napraviš tost. Ona jede mehanički i tanjur ostavi na stolu. „Počisti to“, kaže ti dok odlazi u sobu da se obuče.

Ako napraviš što ti je rečeno, idi na stranicu 46.

Ako joj kažeš da to napravi sama, idi na stranicu 43.

Ako nijemo zuriš u taj prljavi tanjur, i na pameti ti je samo Clara Barton, feministička ikona tvoje mladosti koja se sama naučila kako biti medicinska sestra i koja je trpjela zlostavljanje muškaraca koji su joj na svakom koraku govorili što da radi, i sjetiš se kako si bila toliko *ljuta* da si otrčala svojim roditeljima i pitala ih govori li se još uvijek ženama što je ispravno ili pristojno, i mama je rekla „Da“, a tata „Ne“ i po prvi si puta mogla naslutiti koliko je svijet zapravo kompliciran i grozan, idi na stranicu 48.

Dok pereš posuđe, razmišljaš: Možda bih mogla nekako zavezati ruku? Možda staviti pribadaču na čelo? Možda bih trebala biti bolja osoba?

Idi na stranicu 48.

Ne bi trebala biti na ovoj stranici. Nemoguće je ovdje završiti izborom koji ti je dan. Jesi li mislila da će ti biti lakše ako ovo poglavlje prelistaš linearno? Kako ne shvaćaš? Sve ovo sranje već se dogodilo, i ne možeš to promijeniti, štogod napravila.

Želiš li sliku srne? Hoće li to pomoći? U redu. Evo srna. Malena je i pjegava i klecavih nogu. Nešto čuje, ukipi se, a zatim pobjegne. Zna što treba napraviti. Zna da za nju ima i sigurnijih mjesta.

Idi na stranicu 48.

Te te noći jebe dok ti samo nijemo ležiš i moliš se da sve brzo završi, moliš se da ne primijeti da te nema. Napustila si svoje tijelo već toliko puta da ti je to sada gotovo navika, refleksno koliko i uzdah; sjetiš se svog prvog dečka koji te jebao dok je gledao pornjavu – gurao je i gurao i svako bi malo uzeo daljinski upravljač da opet pogleda nešto što ti nisi mogla ni vidjeti. (Jednom si okrenula glavu preko ruba kreveta i vidjela zapetljane, iskrenute udove koje ti mozak jednostavno nije mogao razumjeti; nikada više nisi pogledala.) Samo bi tamo ležala u tišini, gledala mu lice kako se pomiče nad tvojim. Raskrivena i ogoljena kao kad si bila mala i stajala pod kupolom planetarija: ubrzana rotacija zemlje, kretnja zvijezda nad tobom, nastajanje i propadanje zvijezda dok daleki, bestjelesni glas pripovijeda prastaru priču ne bi li sve to učinio razumljivijim.

Zadrhtiš i zastenješ baš u pravom trenutku. Ona ugasi svjetla. Gledaš tamu dok te tama ne napusti; ili ti napustiš nju.

Za spavanje, idi na stranicu 52.

Za snove o prošlosti, idi na stranicu 49.

Za snove o sadašnjosti, idi na stranicu 51.

Za snove o budućnosti, idi na stranicu 50.

Prvi put kad se to dogodilo – prvi put kada je vikala na tebe toliko glasno da si se rasplakala ni trideset sekundi nakon što si se probudila, rekord – rekla je: „Prvih deset minuta u danu nisam odgovorna za ono što kažem.“ To ti se učinilo tako poetičnim. Čak si to i zapisala, sigurna da ćeš negdje pronaći mjesta za te riječi: u knjizi, možda.

Idi na stranicu 52.

Sve će biti u redu. Jednoga dana, supruga će ti nježno pomaknuti ruku ako joj noću dotakne lice, izravnati i nježno je pomilovati i onda te poljubiti. Ponekad ćeš se prenuti, tek toliko da shvatiš što se dogodilo; drugi put će ti ona reći ujutro. Na takva bi se jutra lako mogla naviknuti.

Idi na stranicu 52.

Ne bi trebala biti ovdje, ali u redu je. Ovo je san. Ovdje te ne može pronaći. Za minutu ćeš se probuditi i činit će ti se kao da je sve isto, ali nije. Postoji izlaz. Slušaš li me? Ne smiješ zaboraviti kad se probudiš. Ne smiješ...

Idi na stranicu 52.

Budiš se i sve oko tebe je bijelo i sjajno. Unatoč kutijama, odjeći i posuđu, soba kao da blista i vrije zadovoljstvom. Pomisliš: *na ovakva bih se jutro lako mogla naviknuti.*

Kada se okreneš ona zuri u tebe. Od blještave nevinosti svjetla prevrće ti se želudac. Od sna do straha – ne sjećaš se kada je granica bila tako tanka.

„Cijelu si se noć okretala“, kaže. „Dirala si me rukama i mlatila laktovima. Nisam mogla spavati.“

Ako je moliš za oprost, idi na stranicu 40.

Ako joj kažeš da te sljedeći put kada je u snu dotakneš laktovima probudi, idi na stranicu 41.

Ako sa sebe zbaciš pokrivač i iskočiš iz kreveta i projuriš kroz kuću kao da je Pamplona, a kada dođeš do auta, ključevi su ti već u ruci i skačeš u auto i odlaziš uz teatralnu škripu guma, da se nikada više ne vratiš, idi na stranicu 53.

Nije se tako dogodilo, ali u redu. Možemo se pretvarati. Dopustit ću ti, samo ovaj put.

7.7 Kuća snova kao *Znanstveno-fantastični triler*

Jedne večeri John i Laura pozovu te da dođeš s njima gledati film: *Tanka linija smrti*. Julia Roberts, Kiefer Sutherland, Oliver Platt, Kevin Bacon: studenti medicine koji se igraju s granicom smrti. Tako si uzbuđena; sjećaš se da si ga kao tinejdžerka gledala na TV-u i sada si spremna za nalet nostalgije. Uzmete si svatko po piće, sjednete jedno pored drugoga.

Film još nije ni počeo, a ti zaspeš, s nogama prebačenima preko naslona kauča.

Umorna si. Umorna, a soba je topla i mračna i tu su John i Laura, nježno dišu pored tebe. Sjećaš se početka: obris tijela u polusvjetlu sumraka i dugački, dramatični napjev zbora, i Kiefer Sutherland koji najavljuje kako je dobar dan za umiranje. Zatim ništa. Ne sanjaš. Kad se probudiš, film je gotov; sve si propustila. Ali ipak se osjećaš tako zadovoljno tamo, u tom prostoru, u tom trenutku nakon buđenja i prije nego što se sjetiš svog mobitela.

Uletiš u svoju sobu i eno ga tamo – nepomično i izdajnički leži na kraju svog punjača. Kada ga uzmeš u ruku, vidiš propuštene pozive, poruke. Nazoveš je i treseš se, tvoje prsne mišiće stežu šake anksioznosti.

„Halo.“ U njenom glasu tinja bijes.

„Molim te oprosti“, počneš objašnjavati, zadihana. „Samo smo...“

„S kim si se jebala?“

Osjećaš kako ti se prsa stišću.

„Ni s kim“, kažeš. Zatim, „Stani, stani, mogu ti...“

Otrčiš u dnevnu sobu, gdje John i Laura leže na kauču, zadovoljni poput mačaka. John ti vidi izraz lica, ustane.

„Mogu ti dokazati“, kažeš joj. „John i Laura su ovdje, mogu im dati mobitel, neka ti oni kažu da sam bila s njima, nije bilo nikoga drugoga, samo smo gledali film...“

Da živiš do kraja vremena, da živiš dok se sunce ne sudari sa zemljom, nikada nećeš zaboraviti Johnovo lice, njegovo tijelo koje se pogiba i tone pred naletom tuge. Vrlo lagano

odmahne glavom, premda nije jasno odbija li taj zadatak ili odbija stvarnost gdje mu se taj zadatak uopće nudi.

„Ne“, ona kaže. Dim u glasu odmah joj se raščisti. „Ne, ne treba.“

Nakon toga još razgovarate, gotovo si sigurna, ali ne sjećaš se. Trenutak kad si se probudila na tom kauču – prije nego što si se sjetila mobitela, sjetila svog čitavog života – bio je jedan od najslađih te godine. Taj maleni džep sigurnosti i zaborava. Viski, disanje, tijela. Odjavna špica koja se vuče u mraku.

7.8 Kuća snova kao *Erotika*

U kasno proljeće iznenadiš samu sebe kada je zamoliš da ti stavi ruku na usta dok svršavaš. Poslušaj te, njezin snažan dlan protiv tvog sve glasnijeg stenjanja, kao da pokušava suzbiti tvoje zvukove, natjerati ih negdje nazad u tvoje tijelo ne bi li oblili svaku molekulu koja čini tebe. Kada sve krene jenjavati i pokušaš udahnuti, a ne možeš, ona te pusti, ali kao da ostaje dodir svega onoga neizrecivoga. Sporo nestajući trnci tog nejezika.

Nakon ovoga, moliš je da ti priča tiho, onim svojim dubokim, hrapavim glasom, dok te jebe i poslušaj te: bez napora i muke mijenja engleski i francuski, nad uhom ti mrmlja o svom kurcu i kako si ga puna, rukom ti pritišće lice i grabi arhitekturu čeljusti, okreće je ovamo i onamo. Brije svoju pičku i glatka je, sjaji poput unutrašnjosti spiralne školjke. Voli nositi dildo s remenom, popušiš joj ga tako i ona svrši kao da je pravi, gura, savija se i podiže s madraca.

Ne znaš čemu se više diviti: njenom tijelu, ili njevoj ljubavi prema tvom tijelu. Proganja tvoju erotsku maštu. Objete vječno vlažne. Jebete se, čini se, posvuda: na krevetima i stolovima i podovima; preko mobitela. Kada ste fizički jedna pored druge, voli se čuditi vašim različitostima: kako je njena koža blijeda poput obranog mlijeka, a tvoja maslinasta; kako su njene bradavice roze, a tvoje smeđe. „Sve je tamnije na tebi“, kaže.

Dala bi joj da te proguta cijelu, kad bi mogla.

7.9 Kuća snova kao *Špijunski triler*

Nitko ne zna tvoju tajnu. Sve što radiš (palcem prelaziš po čeljusti u potrazi za plavim i bodljikavim dlačicama, zakopčavaš teške čizme, mokrom spužvom kružiš po obrubu visoke čaše, udaraš po vrućem pisaču koji smrdi na toner, mašeš crnom bocom vina na ulazu, dižeš i spuštaš znojnu majicu s grudi dok traka za trčanje usporava, otvaraš novčanik kako bi platila brokule i papirnate maramice, okrećeš leđa vatri, ruke držiš prekrižene na grudima ispred svoje učionice, zapisuješ zbijene redove bilješki dok drugi pričaju, smiješ se glasno na što se okreću glave) pojačano je onim što ti znaš, a oni — svi ti obični ljudi — ne.

7.10 Kuća snova kao *Inventar*

Traži da joj kažeš što s tobom nije u redu. Ovo je omiljena aktivnost; čak draža od one da ona tebi kaže što ne valja s tobom. Godinama poslije, teško se riješiti te navike.

Ponekad si nepopravljivi snob. Više cijeniš inteligenciju i smisao za humor od drugih osobina vrjednijih divljenja. Mrziš kada netko baljezga. Tvoj ego je velik: misliš da ti dobro ide ono čime se baviš. Neurotična si i anksiozna i sebična. Postaneš nestrpljiva ako drugi ne shvaćaju nešto dovoljno brzo kao ti. Definitivno si napravila neke gluposti jer si bila napaljena – sramotne stvari. Ponizila si se pred mnogima. Potajno želiš biti muškarac, ne jer sumnjaš u svoj spolni identitet, već zato što želiš da te se ozbiljnije shvaća. Voliš stiskati prištiće. Izabrala bi orgazam umjesto mnogih drugih stvari. Ponekad – i često bez upozorenja – nisi sposobna pretvarati se da te boli kurac pa postaneš beskorisna svima koji te trebaju. Imala si seksualne fantazije o većini svojih prijatelja. Voljela bi da te netko nazove genijem. Varala si u društvenim igrama. Jednom si na Božić otišla na hitnu jer si mislila da imaš herpes, a zapravo je to bio samo prištić. Kao dijete si bila tužibaba i ostaješ nepokolebljivi sljedbenik pravila. Ponašaš se kao časna kad su droge u pitanju. Hipohondar si. Tijekom duge meditacije možeš se koncentrirati jedino ako razmišljaš o orgiji. Voliš dobru svađu.

7.11 Kuća snova kao *Déjà vu*

Kaže da te voli, katkad. Vidi tvoje osobine, i trebaš ih se sramiti. Da barem si jedina za nju. Čuvala bi te, ostarila bi s tobom, samo kada bi ti mogla vjerovati. Nisi seksi, ali seksat će se s tobom. Katkad pogledaš mobitel i vidiš da ti je poslala nešto zapanjujuće okrutno i među lopaticama osjetiš udarac straha. Ponekad joj uhvatiš pogled i osjećaš se kao da razmišlja kako te najbolje može uništiti.

7.12 Kuća snova kao *Gradnja svijeta*

Mjesta nikad nisu samo mjesta u književnim djelima. Ako jesu, autor je podbacio. Okolina nije inertna. Pokreće se tvojim pogledom na svijet.

Poslije ćeš otkriti da je često obilježje obiteljskog nasilja „premještanje“. To bi značilo da se žrtva upravo negdje preselila, ili je negdje gdje ne govori jezik, ili je općenito iščupana iz kruga onih koji su joj podrška i oslonac, udaljena od prijatelja ili obitelji, bez mogućnosti komunikacije. Njezine okolnosti i izoliranost čine je ranjivom. Zlostavljač je jedini kojeg ima – dakle nema oslonca. I tako se mora boriti protiv nepromjenjive okoline koju je skovalo samo vrijeme; protiv kuće koja je prevelika da bi se razrušila rukom; protiv situacije previše kompleksne i nadmoćne da bi njome sama vladala. Okolina učini svoje.

Ovaj je svijet jednako tako mogao biti otok, okružen vodama kojima se ne smije i ne može proći. S jedne strane, golf teren – u vlasništvu fakulteta, kao i kuća u kojoj ste živjele – gdje su pijani studenti teturali poput zombija, samo obrisi tijela na brdu. S druge, red drveća nalik šumi, tajanstvenoj i ispunjenoj tamom i divljim životinjama. U blizini, kuće nepoznatih ljudi koji ili nikada nisu čuli ili se nisu htjeli miješati. Konačno, cesta, ali tip ceste koji vodi do druge, veće ceste. Opasne za pješake. Ceste kojom se uopće ne bi trebalo ići. Kilometrima od centra grada.

Kuća snova nikad nije bila samo Kuća snova. Bila je samostan obećanja (vrt s biljem, vino, pisanje jedna nasuprot druge), jazbina bluda (jebanje uz otvorene prozore, buđenje usnama na usnama, tihi, neprestani i uporni žamor fantazije), ukleta kuća (*ovo nije stvarno ovo nije stvarno*), zatvor (*moram izaći moram izaći*), i konačno, tamnica uspomena. U snovima je iza zelenih vrata – zašto? Nikad ti nije bilo jasno. Vrata nisu bila zelena.

7.13 Kuća snova kao *Unutarnje svetište*

Često razmišljam kako je lijepo kada djeca imaju svoje sobe; tu nužnu svetost privatnog prostora (tijela, uma). Prijatelji mi kažu da sam po tome tipični rak: volim se gnijezditi, činiti mjesta svojim.

Kao dijete imala sam sobu za sebe, ali majka bi mi uvijek brzo naglasila kako to nije *moja* soba, već *njena*, a ja sam je samo dobila na korištenje. Time je htjela reći da su naravno ona i otac sve to sami zaradili i da ja samo posuđujem taj prostor, i premda je to možda istinito, zapanjujuća je šteta koju je ta jedna mračna misao nanijela: moje je postojanje bilo samo dug i ništa drugo, koliko god malo, nije bilo moje. Nijedno mjesto nije bilo zaista privatno i sve ono „moje“ netko mi je lako mogao oduzeti, samo tako, iz hira.

Jednom kad sam htjela pobjeći od svojih nakon svađe, zatvorila sam i zaključala vrata svoje sobe. Majka je natjerala oca da skine kvaku. I premda sam sigurna da se oni ovog užasnog trenutka prisjećaju vrlo drukčije, *ja* se sjećam samo osjećaja hladnoće u tijelu dok se kvaka – savršena mala sprava koja je svoj posao obavljala nepristrano vjerno – migoljila van svog doma svakim vijkom koji je padao na pod. I krug svjetla koji se pojavio kada se kvaka nagnula u jednu stranu. Kako sam kada je pala, shvatila da je sačinjena od dva dijela, i da tako mala stvar drži moja vrata zatvorenima.

Imala sam sreće u tom trenutku što je razaranje mojih vrata bilo samo narušavanje moje privatnosti i neovisnosti, a ne opasnost za moju sigurnost. Vrata su se otvorila i ništa se nije dogodilo. Bio je to samo podsjetnik: ništa, pa ni ova četiri zida koja me okružuju, nije moje.

7.14 Kuća snova kao Čehovljeva okidač

Nekoliko dana nakon incidenta u kuglani i dan prije nego što se moraš vratiti u Iowu, pita te želiš li na koncert u lokalni bar. Ne želiš – godinama već mrziš živu glazbu, i sve što ona zahtjeva od tvog tijela i odlaska na spavanje – ali bojiš se to priznati pa odeš. To ti je prva pogreška tog dana. Tamo se nađete s prijateljima. Uzmeš pivo, ali pijuckaš ga samo ponekad jer želiš moći sjesti u njeno auto i otići čim poželiš. Nastupa bend iz Chicaga, JC Brooks & the Uptown Sound, i čak ne zvuče loše. Poslušas svirku, ali se nakon nje počneš osjećati iscrpljeno. To što se osjećaš iscrpljeno ti je druga pogreška.

„Moram doma“, kažeš joj nježno na uho. „Tako sam umorna, a let mi je rano ujutro.“

Čini se iznenađujuće smirena. „Želiš da idem s tobom?“ upita.

Opustiš se – taj odgovor zvuči tako normalno. Ovo ti je treća pogreška.

„Svejedno“, kažeš. „Ako ti je lijepo, mogu ja uzeti tvoj auto i ostaviti ti novac za taksi.

Ili možeš sa mnom. Kako god želiš, ljubavi.“

„Svejedno ti je?“ upita.

„Pa da“, odgovoriš. „I jedno i drugo mi odgovara.“

„Znači boli te kurac za mene. Nije te briga idem li ne.“

„Nisam tako mislila. Samo...“

„Nije te briga jesam li živa ili mrtva“, kaže.

U tebi nešto dotetura do ruba litice, bezdana, i padne.

Kod auta traži da je pustiš da vozi.

„Ne“, kažeš. „Ne. Pijana si. Ne dam.“

„Daj mi ključeve ili ću te ubiti“, uporna je. Šali se, vjerojatno. Nije ti više do šala.

„Ako ti dam ključeve, ubit ćeš i mene i sebe.“

Sjedne na suvozačevo mjesto. Čitavim putem kući očekuješ da će posegnuti preko pregrade između vas i zgrabiti volan. Ali umjesto toga, ona zatvori oči.

Ušetaš u kuću dok ona za tobom vrišti. Sada si mirna. Naučila si od prošlog puta. Već si snažnija.

U sobi skineš sve sa sebe, odeš u kupaonicu, zaključaš vrata. Pod tušem, voda je vrelija nego što možeš podnijeti. Odmah te ugrije; zvuk te podsjeća na oluju.

Onda je ona tamo. Možda nisi dobro zaključala vrata, možda ih uopće nisi zaključala – i još uvijek vrišti. Strgne tuš zavjesu s prstenova. Ustukneš. Nemaš naočale pa je ona pred tobom samo jedna mutna, blijeda masa, a usta joj crvena rupa. Voda pada između vas.

„Mrzim te“, kaže ti. „Oduvijek sam te mrzila.“

„Znam“, odgovoriš.

„Želim da odmah odeš iz ove kuće.“

„Ne mogu. Nemam auto. Let mi je tek sutra.“

„Otiđi ili ću te natjerati da odeš.“

„Spavat ću na podu. Otići ću najranije što mogu. Nećeš ni znati da sam tu.“

Klizneš na pod kade, jecaš, i ona ode. Sjediš tamo dok se voda koja ti udara po tijelu ne pretvori u led. Nakon nekoliko minuta tako, kada već kreneš drhtati, zatvoriš slavinu.

Ponovno uđe u kupaonicu. Kada ti se približi i pruži ruku prema tebi, shvatiš da je gola.

„Zašto plačeš?“ upita te tako nježnim i slatkim glasom da ti se srce rascjepi poput breskve.

7.15 Kuća snova kao *Sapunica*

Ne sjeća se, kaže ti prije nego što zaspete. Sjeća se da ste bile u baru i da je zatim gola čučala pred tobom. Sve između je tama.

7.16 Kuća snova kao *Komedija zabuna*

Sutradan se probudiš pored nje. Spakiraš se i pokušaš je natjerati da se pokrene, jer ona ima auto, a ti moraš na avion. Mrzovoljna je, ljuta, odbrusi ti kada je podsjetiš da do aerodroma treba više od sat vremena. Ne žuri. Šminka se. Vozi, po prvi put u svom životu, jako polako.

Kada stigneš na aerodrom, red za sigurnosnu provjeru je dug i zaposlenik osiguranja ti zaplijeni metalnu bocu za vodu, koju si zaboravila isprazniti. Dok vučeš teški kofer kroz zračnu luku, počneš plakati zbog svoje boce, ali zapravo uopće nije bitna boca, i ljubazna zaposlenica s mini valom – u 2012.-oj! – te zaustavi i upita jesi li dobro. Osjećaš se grozno što si to pomislila o njenoj kosi; i nekako ti dođe da je zagrliš. I plače ti se i želiš joj objasniti kako ti je tip na kontroli ukrao najdražu bocu za vodu jer ti nije dao da popiješ ono što je u njoj, jer je možda mislio da je u boci tekućina za bombu i da bi se kada bi je popila i ti pretvorila u tu istu bombu, ili se vjerojatno samo pali na to da ima tu moć jer mu se izraz lica nije promijenio kada si ga molila da ti dopusti da zadržiš ono što već posjeduješ, i bojiš se da ćeš propustiti let jer ti je djevojka tog jutra predugo stavljala novo lice, izraz koji ti je dotad uvijek bio nekako smiješan, a i koji si smatrala pomalo seksističkim, ali koji ti se sada čini užasavajuće sudbonosnim, jer sugerira da ona ima jedno lice i treba staviti drugo, i sinoć si vidjela što se krije ispod njega, kada si se šćućurena toliko bojala, a ona je vrištala, a ti se skrivala od nje, skrivala od žene koja ti je jednom rekla da te voli i da želi s tobom imati djecu i nazivala te najljepšom i najseksi i najgenijalnijom ženom koju je ikada upoznala, i morala si se od nje skrivati u kupaonici iza zaključanih vrata, i kada bi tvoja obitelj sve ovo saznala, vjerojatno bi im to samo bio dokaz svega onoga što su mislili o lezbijkama, i da je barem muškarac jer bi onda ovo moglo samo

utvrditi sve što ljudi već misle o muškarcima, i kako vjerojatno to ne shvaća, ali zadnje što *queer* žene trebaju loša je jebena reklama, a onda se osjetiš krivom jer tko zna, možda je i ova zaposlenica aviokompanije *queer* i možda bi i ona razumjela.

Srušiš se u svoje sjedalo par minuta prije polaska, zadnja osoba koja se ukrcala. Znojna si od trčanja i plačeš i stalno šmrcaš i šmrklje navlačiš u nosu. Do tebe sjedi biznismen u tamnosivom odijelu, koji definitivno žali što nije potrošio malo više i letio prvom klasom, i stalno te pogledava. I dok se zemlja sve više i više udaljava kuneš se sama sebi da ćeš nekome jednom reći koliko je loše, da ćeš se prestati pretvarati da se ništa od ovoga ne događa, ali zemlja ti se opet približava i ti već opet dotjeruješ svoju priču.

7.17 Kuća snova kao *Toplinska smrt svemira*

Otkad pamtim uvijek sam bila opsjednuta fizičkim i vremenskim granicama. Početkom, krajem. Prvim, posljednjim. Rubom. Jednom, kada sam bila dijete, stajala sam na onom divnom pijesku točno na rubu vala – na pijesku mokrom i gipkom ili tvrdom poput vlažnog kukuruznog škroba – i doviknula roditeljima da stojim na liniji karte. Nisu me razumjeli pa sam morala objasniti kako postoji jedna crta na karti između kopna i mora i ja sam točno *na njoj*.

Godinama poslije ronila sam s bratom negdje na južnoj obali Kube. Nakon kupanja oko koraljnih grebena blizu obale, brat je zatražio od našeg vodiča – preplanulog, polugolog hipi ronioca po imenu Rollo – da nas odvede dalje. I tako smo otišli, u dubinu, na otvoreno, gdje te, ako se skroz opustiš, ocean ljulja naprijed-natrag, toliko da ti se malo smuča. Rollo nas je odveo do mjesta gdje se dno naglo urušava. Jedan sam trenutak vidjela pijesak, a drugi se preda mnom prostiralo samo duboko, plavo-crno ništavilo. Sve smo troje izronili, a onda mi je Rollo rekao da ga gledam. Zatim je zaronio duboko i još dublje dok ga nije progutala tama.

Premda sam bila na sigurnom – leđa su mi bila van vode i samo su me centimetri dijelili od kisika – dahnula sam i podigla lice iz vode. Brat me pitao: „Što je? Što nije u redu?“, a ja

sam bezuspješno pokušavala objasniti. Nekoliko sekundi poslije i Rollo je izronio. Nasmijan je pitao: „Jeste li vidjeli?“

Teorija o kraju svega: toplinska smrt svemira. Entropija će zavladati i materija će se raspršiti i više ničega neće biti.

7.18 Kuća snova kao *Vježba vlastite perspektive*

Nisi ti uvijek bila samo Ti. Bila sam čitava, cijela – simbioza najboljih i najgorih dijelova – a zatim nekako rascijepljena: uredan je rez odvojio prvu osobu – tu sigurnu-u-sebe, samouvjerenu ženu, mladu detektivku, pustolovku – od druge, one uvijek anksiozne i pune nemirne energije kakvom su ispunjeni sićušni psi.

Otišla sam, i živjela: preselila se na Istočnu obalu, napisala knjigu, počela živjeti s prelijepom ženom, vjenčala se, kupila veliku i zapuštenu viktorijansku kuću u Philadelphiji. Štošta naučila: kako praviti koktele Manhattan i od škrobne vode u kojoj se prethodno kuhala tjestenina napraviti umake i kako sukulente održati živima.

Ali ti. Ti si prihvatila posao ocjenjivača standardiziranih testova. Ti si godinu dana svaki drugi tjedan vozila sedam sati do Indiane. Gotovo sve što si napisala tijekom studija bilo je sranje. Plakala si pred previše ljudi. Propustila čitanja, zabave, supermjeseć. Pokušala ispričati svoju priču ljudima koji nisu znali kako slušati. Prečesto pravila budalu od sebe.

Mislila sam da si umrla, ali dok ovo pišem pitam se jesi li zaista.

7.19 Kuća snova kao *Poticanje incidenta*

Upoznaš je jedne noći u tjednu, na večeri s prijateljicom koju obje znate, u Iowa Cityju, u zalogajnici gdje su prozori zidovi. Znojna je, upravo je došla iz teretane, a svijetla, plava kosa zavezana joj je u kratki rep. Ima blistavi osmijeh, hrapavi glas koji ima zvuk tački na kamenju. Baš je ona savršena mješavina *butch* i *femme*, koja te izluđuje.

Ti i prijateljica razgovarate o televiziji kada se ona pojavi; žalile ste se na muške priče, muške priče, kako su sve samo muške priče. Ona se nasmije, složi se s vama. Kaže ti da se nedavno preselila iz New Yorka i da prima naknadu za nezaposlene dok se prijavljuje na studij pisanja. I ona piše.

Svaki puta kad progovori osjetiš kako nešto u tebi poklekne, propadne. Pamtiš toliko malo od te večeri osim toga da, kad se približio kraj, nisi htjela da večer završi pa si od svega mogućeg naručila čaj. Piješ ga – puna su ti usta te topline i bilja, prži ti nepce – i pokušavaš ne buljiti u nju, pokušavaš biti šarmantna i nonšalantna, ponašati se kao da ti je svejedno dok ti požuda teče tijelom i skuplja se u svim udovima. Sve ženske simpatije koje si dotad imala kao da su lebdjele negdje predaleko od tebe, izvan tvog dosega, nedodirljive, a sada *ona* – ona ti dotakne ruku, ona te pogleda, pogleda ravno u oči i osjećaš se kao dijete koje po prvi put nešto kupuje svojim novcem.

7.20 Kuća snova kao *Predosjećaj*

Obje se u Pearsonu zaposlite kao ocjenjivačice standardiziranih testova, da zaradite nešto sa strane. Zgrada je niska i zdepasta, nalazi se u korporativnom parku, malo izvan Iowa Cityja gdje se grad pretvara u polja kukuruza. Podsjeća te na posao koji si imala s devetnaest godina kada si kao proslavljeni telemarketer zvala kućevlasnike u Lehigh Valleyju kako bi ih uvjerila da zamijene prozore.

Sjediš za dugim stolovima gdje svaka stolica ima svoj kompjuter. Voljela bi da možeš ocjenjivati eseje, ali vrijeme većinom provodiš na dugim matematičkim zadacima kojih si se kao tinejdžerica grozila i smiješ se drskoj djeci koja umjesto odgovora nešto nacrtaju ili pišu šale ili „Jebiga, nemam pojma“. Užasno je dosadno, ali i to je novac, i vas se dvije čak sprijateljite sa ženom s kojom odlazite na ručak i koju često vozite kući.

Radi se dokasno, pauze su kratke i do kraja dana obično jedeš Cheetose iz aparata i osjećaš se naduto i ukiseljeno od konzervansa. Često odlaziš na zahod, uglavnom da ti malo prokola krv i da ne zaspeš.

I tako jednom čuješ kako netko jeca u kabini do tvoje, onoj za hendikepirane. Piškiš – ali piškila si prije pola sata pa jedva kaplje – i nakon što opereš ruke lagano kucneš na vrata i pitaš je li sve u redu. Štucajući, vrata ti otvori vitka mala žena golemih tamnih očiju. Proživljava *traumatičnu epizodu*, kaže. Pristane izaći s tobom van, na zrak, pa sjednete na travu pored ulaza. Kaže ti da je bila silovana, davno, i da joj je teško naći nekoga tko joj vjeruje. Krenete razgovarati – točnije, ona govori; ti uglavnom slušaš i kimaš glavom.

Popodne proleti. Stalno čekaš da šef primijeti da te nema, da izađe i krene vikati na tebe – ali on ili ne zna ili ga nije briga. U jednom se trenu zapitaš koliko je sati, ali bojiš se izvući mobitel da ne prekineš tijek njezinog monologa.

Kada to napokon učiniš, otkriješ dvije stvari: vani ste već gotovo dva sata i tvoja te djevojka zvala puno puta i poslala ti jednako mnogo poruka. *Gdje si, gdje si, gdje si*, pita, i baš kada prisloniš mobitel uhu da je nazoveš, hrpa ocjenjivača krene izlaziti, među njima i ona. Dadeš ženi s kojom si razgovarala svoj broj mobitela, kažeš joj da te nazove ako bilo što zatreba i požuriš preko travnjaka.

Djevojka te gleda ljutito. Vaša nova prijateljica trči pored nje, izgleda pomalo nervozno i zadihano, i stigne do tebe prva. „Samo je bila zabrinuta za tebe“, kaže, s toliko preventivne anksioznosti da si zatečena. Sjednete u auto, a tvoja djevojka zrači bijesom. U tišini voziš do prijateljičine kuće. Kada stignete, ona kao da oklijeva izaći, i kada to napokon učini, zadrži se, odlazi polako, kao da nešto želi reći. Ali onda ipak ode i uđe u kuću. Tek što opet kreneš, tvoja djevojka dlanom tresne o kontrolnu ploču.

„Jebenti, gdje si bila?“

Ispričaš joj za ženu iz zahoda, što ti je rekla, kako se nisi mogla javiti jer je pričala i nisi je htjela prekinuti. Očekuješ da će ovo objašnjenje smiriti njezin bijes – čak očekuješ da će se ispričati – ali ona je neobjašnjivo samo još ljuća. Nastavlja udarati po kontrolnoj ploči. „Ti si jebeno najbezobzirnija osoba koju znam. Nije mi jasno kako samo možeš tako išetati iz jebene zgrade bez ikakvog objašnjenja.“ Svaki put kad spomeneš ženu ona krene ponovno urlati. Nekoliko blokova od vaše kuće, zaustaviš se uz rub ceste.

„Ne obraćaj mi se tako“, kažeš. A onda se na tvoj užas, rasplačeš. „Morala sam donijeti odluku i uvjeren sam da sam donijela pravu.“

Ona otkopča pojas i unese ti se u lice. „O ovome ne smiješ pisati“, kaže. „Da ti nije palo na pamet ikada pisati o ovome. Je li ti to jebeno jasno?“

Nisi sigurna misli li na ženu ili na sebe, ali kimneš glavom.

Strah nas sve pretvara u lažljivce.

7.21 Kuća snova kao *Komedija napušenih*

U New Yorku je ljeto i vrućina je životinja koja te ne pušta. Kod njene ste prijateljice u Crown Heightsu, i ti i ona i Val pušite puno trave. Nikad nisi bila osobiti ljubitelj marihuane – zapravo si se nekako uvijek bojala droga; smiješno ti je i izgovoriti riječ *droge* – ali pušiš jer puši i ona i ljutit će se ako odbiješ. („Što, misliš da si bolja od svega ovoga?“ kaže ti kad to jednom učiniš; nakon toga, više ne odbijaš.) Kašlješ i kašlješ jer se nikada nisi naviknula na dim.

Slučajno se prepušiš. Toliko se napušiš da se gotovo ni ne sjećaš puta podzemnom do Little Russie, do tamošnje plaže. Samo nekoliko blistavih, dalekih djelića sjećanja preostaje. Ljekarna i kako si se osjećala kao žrtva Minotaura. Vreli pijesak. Hladni losion na leđima dok ti ga ona maže. (Kao dokaz da si stvarno bila tamo imaš slike na kojima ste sve tri. Nasmijana si i izgledaš nepodnošljivo mekano.)

Onda ti je rođendan. I zabava. Previše si napušena da bi stajala pa sjedneš, raširenih nogu i teške glave, naslonjena na štednjak. Ljudi stalno dolaze i sjedaju pored tebe i pričaju, a ti na neki polusvjesni, zakašnjeli način shvaćaš da su zabrinuti za tebe. Pokušavaš objasniti da si dobro, dobro si, samo si napušena, ali što god da u stvarnosti govoriš ljude ne uvjerava.

Val te posjećuje na podu, donosi ti komadiće sira. Staviš jedan u usta, uživaš u njegovom glatkom okusu i u toj orašastoj slatkoći. Jako ti se sviđa. Val. Tako je draga i iskrena i cijeniš snagu njezina duha. Još jedan komad, ovaj slan i mrvljiv, prija ti kako ti se raspada u ustima. Čime si zaslužila sve ove nove ljude u svom životu? Sljedeći komad je svježa mozzarella, i dok ti Val pomaže ustati razmišljaš kako je mozzarella zapravo vodeni sir, a zatim odeš u drugu sobu i zaspeš.

7.22 Kuća snova kao *Upoznavanje roditelja*

Tijekom vožnje iz New Yorka tvoja djevojka je napušena i tiha. Smrdi po travi i upravo će po prvi put upoznati tvoje roditelje. Nikada nisi bila ljuća na nju. „Naći ćemo se s mojima za nekih sat vremena. Ne razumijem zašto si ovo napravila.“

„Ne razumiješ jer *ti* nikada nisi morala upoznati roditelje nekoga kome si *prva djevojka*“, odbrusi ti. „Gledaju te na neki *poseban* način i to je nepodnošljivo.“

Šutiš.

„Neće primijetiti“, kaže.

„Sad mi ne možeš pomoći ni voziti“, odgovoriš. „Sve moram sama.“

I tako polako prolazite kroz New York, autom ispunjenim ovom tihom vrelinom vašeg bijesa koja kao da se u valovima širi kroz prostor .

U Allentownu, tvoji su roditelji tako dragi prema njoj.

7.23 Kuća snova kao *Apetit*

Pogriješiš još na početku, premda tada toga nisi svjesna. Priznaš joj da prema mnogima u svom životu gajiš i njeguješ malene simpatije. Nije to ništa ozbiljno i opasno, samo te mnogi ljudi privlače i daješ sve od sebe da se okružiš pametnim, duhovitim ljudima, i rezultat je gnjecavi, ljupki prostor negdje između filije i erosa. Takva si otkad znaš za sebe. Nikada to nisi doživljavala kao išta više od mušice u svom karakteru i ona se nasmije i kaže da joj je to slatko.

Tijekom vaše veze optužit će te da se jebeš ili da se želiš jebati ili da se planiraš jebati sa sljedećim ljudima: sa svojom cimericom, djevojkom svoje cimerice, nekolicinom prijatelja, sa studentima koje još nisi ni upoznala jer nastava nije ni počela, s nekolicinom njezinih prijatelja, s više od jednog od njezinih kolega u Indiani, njezinom bivšom, njezinim bivšim, svojim bivšim dečkima, s nekoliko svojih učitelja, voditeljem tvog diplomskog studija, s nekoliko tvojih studenata, jednim od tvojih doktora, i – u možda najporemećenijem trenutku ove vježbe – s njezinim ocem. Dodatno, s bezmjernom litanijom stranaca: ljudima u podzemnoj i kafićima, konobarima u restoranima, radnicima i blagajnicima u trgovinama i knjižničarima i kondukterima i domarima i posjetiteljima muzeja i onima koji spavaju na plaži.

Problem je u tome što njoj poricanje zvuči kao priznanje pa si prisiljena nositi taj teret dokaza. Kako bi je uvjerila da se ne jebeš s tim ljudima, postaneš vješta u pretraživanjima na mobitelu, nudiš dokaze da ni s kim nisi bila u kontaktu. Prestaneš pričati o jednoj studentici za koju misliš da je nadarena jer ona postane opsjednuta idejom da ti se sviđa devetnaestogodišnjakinja koja je tek naučila ravnotežu između ekspozicije i scene.

Jedan dan, dok ti prstima trlja klitoris i od užitka ti se sklapaju oči, zgrabi te za lice i okrene ga sebi. Toliko ti se približi da osjetiš nešto kiselo u njenom dahu. „O kome razmišljaš“, kaže. To zvuči kao pitanje, ali nije. Usta ti se pomiču, ali ništa ne izlazi i ona ti jače stisne čeljust. „Gledaj me dok te jebem“, kaže. Pretvaraš se da svršiš.

7.24 Kuća snova kao *Izgubljeno u prijevodu*

Njena hladnoća znači sljedeće: Zaokupljena je. Nezadovoljna je. Nezadovoljna je tobom. Nešto si napravila i sad je nezadovoljna i moraš otkriti što tako da ona ne bude nezadovoljna. Razgovaraš s njom. Jasna si. Misliš da si jasna. Kažeš što misliš i kažeš to nakon puno razmišljanja, ali kada ti ona ponovi što si rekla ništa nema smisla. Jesi li to rekla? Stvarno? Ne sjećaš se da si to rekla ili čak pomislila, ali ona ti kaže da si to rekla i da si definitivno tako mislila.

7.25 Kuća snova kao *Rijeka Lethe*

Poslije te jeseni, želi da joj se pridružiš na nogometnoj utakmici između Harvarda i Yalea. To joj je najdraža tradicija i za tu prigodu je tamo putovala avionom, ali mora biti nazad u Indiani ranije od očekivanog. „Ako dođeš ovamo autom, možeš me vratiti“, kaže. Voziš od Iowe do Connecticuta kako bi se s njom našla.

I tako, nakon cijelog dana jesenskih temperatura i gutljaja iz pljoske i ljudi u krznu i skupih boca šampanjca koje se valjaju po blatnjavom podu kao da su limenke Budweisera, duboko zaspeš na neudobnom hotelskom krevetu. Sljedećeg popodneva – nakon kašnjenja i ranog ručka s njezinim prijateljima i još kašnjenja – napokon ste spremne krenuti. Neoprezna je vozačica – ništa se nije promijenilo od onog puta do Savannahe – pa bez pitanja sjedaš za volan.

Malo radio, malo razgovor, malo tišina – tako se udaljavate od New Havena. Polako prolazite kroz Connecticut i New York. U Pennsylvaniji rano nestane sunca i kiša zasjaji pločnik. Negdje na pola ove brdovite države kojoj nema kraja, one u kojoj si odrasla, prekine samu sebe u pola rečenice.

„Zašto mi ne daš da vozim?“ upita. Glas joj ne odaje ikakve emocije, odmjeren je i promišljen, poput psa kojemu se ukočio rep; ništa se ne događa, ali nešto nije u redu. Strah ti se skupi među lopaticama.

„Nije mi problem voziti“, odgovoriš.

„Umorna si“, kaže. „Preumorna da bi vozila.“

„Nisam“, odvратиš, i nisi.

„Preumorna si i ubit ćeš nas“, kaže. Boja njenog glasa se ne mijenja. „Mrziš me. Želiš da umrem.“

„Ne mrzim te“, kažeš. „Ne želim da umreš.“

„Mrziš me“, uporna je, svakim slogom glas joj se penje za pola oktave. „Ubit ćeš nas i nije te ni briga, kravo jedna sebična.“

„Ne...“

„Sebična kravo.“ Krene udarati po kontrolnoj tabli. „Sebična kravo, sebična kravo, sebična...“

Skreneš na sljedećem izlazu i staneš na benzinskoj. Ona naglo otvori vrata, čak i prije nego što se auto zaustavi i ljutito stane hodati parkiralištem kao da je tinejdžer koji se pokušava ohladiti da šakom ne udari zid. Sjediš na vozačevu mjestu, gledaš je kako hoda. Nagon za plakanje tu je negdje, ali udaljen, kao da si napušena. Kada krene prema autu očiju uprtih ravno u tebe, žurno otkopčaš pojas i prebaciš se na drugu stranu. Ne želiš da ode bez tebe, a nisi sigurna da ne bi.

Nakon toga, vožnja je uokvirena mokrim, tamnim planinama. Sjećaš se kako si prošle godine u vrijeme Božića prolazila kroz Pennsylvaniju i uz rub ovih istih cesta vidjela velike prevrnutе kamione, motora crnih od ugašene vatre. I aute, na zaustavnoj traci, kako ležerno gore. Vozi osamdeset, devedeset milja na sat i moraš skrenuti pogled s igle koja se samo nastavlja penjati.

Sjenoviti oblici jelena promiču ti pred očima kroz zavjese kiše. Poginut ću, pomisliš. Moliš se da vas zaustavi policija, u retrovizoru tražiš plavo-crvena svjetla, ali ih nema. Hvataš se za vrata kada ubrza i kada auto preleti preko brda kao da ne teži ništa. „Prestani“, kaže i ubrza još više. „Spavaj“, naredi, ali ne možeš.

Ponoć. Sada ste u Ohiju, državi kroz koju ti je uvijek bilo tako dosadno voziti, a sada ti se od adrenalina – koji će, sigurna si, nestati premda još nije – u krilu tresu ruke. Prolazite pored desetaka mrtvih životinja: rakuna raznesenih kotačima jurećih vozila, jelena čija su mišićava životinjska tijela zgrčena poput onih palih plesača.

Kiša uspori pa stane i eto vas u Indiani.

Na završnoj dionici, kada siđe s autoputa i krene starom cestom prema Bloomingtonu, auto započne naginjati ulijevo, ljubiti dvostruku crtu, prelaziti je, a zatim udesno gdje vrata samo što ne dotaknu metalnu ogradu. Kada pogledaš do sebe, glava joj je na naslonu, oči zatvorene. Vikneš njezino ime i auto se ispravi.

„Sada si *ti* previše umorna“, kažeš. „Spava ti se. Molim te, daj da ja sad vozim. Skoro smo stigli.“ Nikad nisi bila toliko budna.

„Dobro sam“, kaže. „Nije mama pičku rodila. Mogu što hoću.“

„Molim te, molim te, stani.“

Stisne usne, ali ne kaže ništa, niti se zaustavi. Svako malo, auto zakrivuda. Prođete pored vjerskog reklamnog panoa koji te pita kamo nakon smrti. Na svjetlu dana ovakva bi te manipulativna propaganda natjerala da zakolutaš očima. Ali sada, ona iz tebe izvlači stari strah iz djetinjstva, i zacviliš, a zatim prekasno pokušaš progutati zvuk.

Kada si prvi put došla u Bloomington – kada si joj pomogla naći Kuću snova – bilo je nevjerojatno svijetlo. Bilo je kasno proljeće i stabla su bila neke električno, neonske zelene boje, one kakve su kada su nova, svježja, netom novo-izrasla. Sada lišće gori u crvenom i

narančastom, a smeđa se uvijaju u pokušaju da se odmaknu od grana. Godišnje doba umire i ti ćeš umrijeti ovu noć, u to si sigurna.

Auto se zaustavi na prilazu oko četiri ujutro i stoji tamo u tišini. Povraća ti se. Lišće pada na krov auta, a vjetar ga grabi i odnosi, za sobom ostavlja samo zvuk grebanja. Napokon, ona posegne da otkopča pojas, ali ti gledaš travnjak. Dva tamna obrisa prelaze preko njega, nalik na pse, a drugačiji. Kojoti? Bio bi to lijep prizor bilo kada, ali vidjeti tako što sada, nakon užasa koji je bila ova cijela noć, tako je prelijepo da ti lice trne.

„Vidi“, kažeš tiho, nježno i pokažeš joj.

Trzne se kao da si je udarila. Zatim vidi ono što ti vidiš. Čekaš njezino tepanje, njezinu slatkoću.

„Jebi se“, kaže. Nagne se prema tebi i kaže ti ravno na uho. „Kažeš samo 'vidi' i ja pomislim da je vani netko tko će nas jebeno ubiti. Noć je. Koji ti je kurac?“ Nogom gurne vrata, kojoti se razbježe među drveće. Gledaš je kako gazi kroz Kuću snova. Njezin obris u osvjetljenim prozorima – kuhinja, kupaonica, soba – a zatim, mrak.

Izađeš iz auta i sjedneš sa strane kuće, nasloniš se na zid, svoj zimski kaput naopako navlačiš i stežeš oko sebe kao da je ogrtač. Kojoti se nakon nekog vremena vrate, ležerno šeću travnjakom. I jeleni, i lisice, nijedna te životinja ne doživljava, kao da si dio okoliša, kao da uopće nisi tu, kao da ne postojiš.

I ti bi mogla u krevet. Ili bi mogla sjediti za stolom u kuhinji i promatrati prizor iza prozorskog stakla. Ali to bi, pomisliš, bilo kao da ovu noć spremiš u muzej – udaljeno, daleko i prebrzo zaboravljeno. Razmišljaj o ovome, pomisliš. Ne zaboravi da se ovo događa. Sutra ćeš vjerojatno sve ovo gurnuti pod tepih. Ali sada, ovdje, zapamti.

Dupe ti utrne na travi. Travnjak je kazalište u kojem nastupaju divlje životinje. Tvoj maleni automobil, snažan i stasit poput kakvog pastuha, stoji tiho i sjajno na prilazu, napokon se hladi nakon duge vožnje. Ptice kikoću ranojutarnju Morseovu abecedu negdje iz krošanja.

Pijani studenti penju se na brdo uz rub golf terena i tamo stoje i gledaju te – možda misle da si duh – prije nego što se brzo odšuljaju dolje na ulicu. „Hoćemo li šetati sanjajući izgubljenu Ameriku ljubavi“, piše Allen Ginsberg, „pored plavih automobila na prilazima, doma našoj tihoj kolibi?“

I kao što se zapešće okreće brže kako kvaka popušta, tako i noć pred svitanje malko ubrza prije nego što dođe dan. I premda ćeš tek sljedećeg ljetnog solsticija od nje biti slobodna, premda ćeš uz nju provesti strmoglavi pad godišnjeg doba u tamu, ovog jutra svjetlost utječe u nebo i ti si prisutna, jedno sa svojim tijelom i umom, i ne zaboraviš.

Ujutro, žena zbog koje ti je pozlilo od straha, skuha kavu i šali se s tobom i ljubi te i slatko te češka po glavi kao da se ništa nije dogodilo. I, kao da si spavala, novi dan iznova započinje.

8 Conclusion

This study, as perhaps all do, started out as a quest. The translation that I provided within it was one too. Stumbling somewhat blindly through much of it and at the same time paying close attention to all of it, I attempted to find my footing. Just as the book in its original form was for me when I first read it, so the process of translating it was just as eye-opening. It was just as much of an exploration and an adventure, if not more. A fully-immersive sort of a process and an experience – one that pushed me to also explore my own sense of self, my own identity, my own beliefs, and more importantly, the ways in which I approach a body of work, a piece of literature to be consumed, read and understood, conceptualized and materialized in another language. Another culture. A whole new different sphere of experiences where it is likely to be regarded a whole lot differently than it was/is in any other, in its originating one.

I did not think much of it before I started translating, did not really go into it all with this notion of queerness guiding me or shining as a beacon in what is for me still a very much dark and unexplored space. And queerness too, especially in Croatian literature, be it the translated publications of foreign works or the original Croatian ones, seemed still like a road less travelled. Like the one leading from Machado's house into the woods, into the doom and gloom, leading to failure. Sure, I was apprehensive from the beginning about certain terminology, about some more technical aspects of the translation, and I knew some parts of it would be more challenging to tackle than the others, but I did not yet have the full picture of what translating a queer text meant. What it *can* mean. Did not have the complete understanding of my power as a translator, of all I could possibly (fail to) do to further queer agenda, how I might have to manage it all dependent on the target culture, balance it with my own and author's subconscious ideologies and aspirations underlying the texts and our processes of writing in general. Some I realized while producing the work, other concepts I only grasped in hindsight, with all the theory and this whole study behind me. The latter made me go back to certain

things, regard them from this new perspective that I had acquired, alter them, or keep them as they were, believing myself to really be balancing it all.

Explicitly portraying an erotic scene between two women or leaving words such as ‘butch’ and ‘femme’ as they are, still in English, does not actually have any deeper meaning or does not carry certain implications or is not a reflection of my own or the target culture’s worldviews, beliefs and ideologies inherent in us and in anything artistic and literary we produce, right? Well, maybe we should think again. Notice how through this we may get a glimpse of something bigger. How it is not just about one random word, or just about the language, this or that. Not the translation, nor the queerness. There is more at work and there is more at stake.

If there was anything that was important to me, it was not to soften anything. Not to *shy away* from anything. To offer Machado unapologetically and truthfully, just the way she is, especially because this is a memoir with a rather sensitive content. I did not want to change her or her identity, alter her queerness, adjust the parameters of her relationship and of the abuse within it just so it might better fit the Croatian standards – of what a woman should be, of the kind of a relationship she should be in, of the kind of sex she should be having, of femininity and masculinity and sexual identity and queerness.

And so, this study attempted to provide a somewhat critical analysis of the ways in which the prevalent theories and practices of translation might be aided by queer theory. In other words, it explored how it might be necessary to queerly confront queer phenomena, i.e., those that are frequently disregarded, sidelined, or domesticated by the dominant regime(s) of knowledge and power (Baer and Kaindl), and how to go about accomplishing that in translation – in translation as a process and as a product. It showed how portrayals of queerness in different languages and cultures might influence the way we view, analyse, and understand translation, both as a field of study and as a practice and how by pushing researchers to confront entrenched

Western, and possibly particularly Anglophone, biases, attention to translation might maintain queer scholarship's anti-hegemonic attitude (Baer and Kaindl).

When connecting the queer with the translation, it is necessary and inevitable to take into account the scholarly, literary, and socio-cultural context, in which the narrative was conceived and for which it is being translated, the strategies and motifs of the translator or the writer, which might be and often are influenced or shaped by the aforementioned context. So is the potential self-censorship on the part of the translator. Be it through that or through any other type of censorship or under the influence of agents in politics and publishing, very often queerness is softened, concealed, or erased completely, and this study highlighted different ways one can take not to succumb to that when dealing with a translation of a queer work or attempting to generally translate (more) queerly. I tried to approach my own translation with all that in mind, and I can only hope that I have managed to do at least half of it, that I have done justice to Machado's work, and provided a queer text, queer just as much as the original one, even if in some ways 'adjusted' for the new audience.

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10 TRANSLATING QUEER AND QUEERLY: CARMEN MARIA MACHADO'S *IN THE DREAM HOUSE*: Summary and key words

Undeniably, one of the main characteristics of Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* is that it is a queer literary work, and through it and through the (recent) popularity of queer literature in general, it is becoming increasingly more important to find interconnections between queer theory and translation studies as both can offer some useful insights for one another. Translations are rarely unbiased, and one of such inherent biases or underlying ideologies might be the queer one, too, which then influences the way a certain body of work is produced and presented to the audience. The context plays a big role too, and affects the strategies employed in a translation of a queer work. For this and many other possible reasons, translations are often softer and milder when it comes to representation of queerness and explicit, erotic scenes in particular. It is possible, through the way of writing, to highlight and illuminate the queerness of a text, or to do the opposite, to censor it, cover it or erase it completely. The reasons behind either of the directions as well as the possible implications are important to explore further, as is the overlap between the two areas of study, the queer, and the translation one.

Key words: queer theory, queer literature, literary translation, translation studies

11 PRIJEVOD: ČUDAN, ČUDESAN ILI *QUEER* – CARMEN MARIA MACHADO I *U KUĆI SNOVA*: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Memoar *U kući snova* autorice Carmen Marije Machado nedvojbeno je *queer* književno djelo i dokaz (nedavne) popularnosti *queer* književnosti općenito, zbog čega postaje sve važnije pronaći poveznice između *queer* teorija i prevoditeljskih studija budući da oba područja mogu ponuditi neke korisne uvide jedno drugom. Prijevodi se rijetko proizvedu neovisno od određenih uvjerenja i ideologija, a jedna je od takvih inherentnih ili temeljnih ideologija možda i ona *queer*, koja potom utječe na način na koji se određeno djelo stvara i predstavlja publici. Kontekst također igra veliku ulogu i utječe na strategije korištene u prijevodu *queer* djela. Iz tog, ali i mnogih drugih mogućih razloga, prijevodi su često mekši i blaži kada je riječ o prikazivanju *queer* aspekata, a posebno eksplicitnih, erotskih scena. Moguće je načinom pisanja više istaknuti i osvijetliti *queer* u tekstu ili učiniti suprotno, cenzurirati ga, prikriti ili potpuno izbrisati. Važno je daljnje istražiti razloge koji stoje iza oba pristupa, kao i moguće implikacije te preklapanje između dvaju područja proučavanja, *queer* i prevodilačkog.

Ključne riječi: *queer* teorija, *queer* književnost, književno prevođenje, studije prevođenja