

Translating Features of Short Stories: A Case Study of Elizabeth Strout's "Olive Kitteridge"

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i pedagogije

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**Translating Features of Short Stories: A Case Study of Elizabeth
Strout's *Olive Kitteridge***

Diplomski rad

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis contains an analysis of my translation of the story “A Little Burst”, taken from the collection of short stories entitled *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout. Through reconstruction of the translation process, it sheds some light on the linguistic and cultural issues encountered in the process of translation and establishes several concrete strategies and procedures used to tackle those problematic parts. Under the linguistic issues, the translation of a number of medical, botanical and onomatopoeic expressions is described, as well as certain problems concerning the syntax and punctuation. The section on cultural issues establishes translation strategies used to deal with the difference between the Croatian and the American education systems, preceded by the problems in translation of idiomatic expressions and concluding with a few culture-bound terms, namely trademarks and trade names. The paper offers numerous examples from the original story and its translations into Croatian to illustrate the problems and the concrete strategies applied. In order to give a framework for this case study, the paper first explores the phenomenon of translation from the theoretical point of view, defines literary translation as a distinctive type of specialist translation and puts special emphasis on the translation of literary prose and its limitations. It further explores the translation of short stories, explaining in greater detail some of its common elements and features, illustrated in the concrete examples from *Olive Kitteridge*.

KEY WORDS: literary translation, short story, translation strategies

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TABLES

Abbreviations

| | |
|----|-----------------|
| SL | source language |
| ST | source text |
| TL | target language |
| TT | target text |

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyze my translation of the short story “A Little Burst” into Croatian, to determine the problems in the process of translation as well as to establish strategies to tackle those problems. Furthermore, the aim is to give a theoretical background for the phenomenon of translation in general and the literary translation in particular, with special emphasis on the translation of short stories.

In the second chapter translation is described and defined from the theoretical point of view by contrasting it to adaptation and interpretation and some fundamental translation types are listed.

Literary translation is further described in the third chapter with special emphasis on the translation of literary prose and its limitations, followed by an overview of common translation techniques, strategies and procedures.

The fourth chapter deals with the definition of the short story as a literary form and brings some common elements and general characteristics of the form: plot, setting, characters, theme and style. Each of the characteristics is illustrated in the examples from *Olive Kitteridge*.

Finally, the fifth chapter is a practical part based on my own translation of a short story and analysis of the translation process. It brings a case study of Elizabeth Strout’s *Olive Kitteridge*, namely the translation of a story entitled “A Little Burst”. The reconstruction of the translation process is given through examination and discussion of the main linguistic and cultural issues encountered, followed by the comparison of my translation with Tatjana Jambrišak’s translation of the same story.

Two final chapters are Conclusion and Works Cited section.

2. What is Translation

Translation is an enormously important activity in today's globalized world. It has a huge effect on everyday life, ranging from a multilingual menu in a neighboring restaurant to the translation of international treaties.

How can we then define the phenomenon of “translation”? *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* offers the following definition of the term *translation*:

translation n. something which is translated, or the process of translating something, from one language to another

The first of these two meanings relates to translation as the **product**, while the second meaning describes it as the **process**. This evidently shows diverse perspectives of translation. The first meaning centers on the concrete translation product produced by the translator. The second meaning, however, focuses on the role of the translator in the process of transferring the text from one language to another (Hatim, Munday, 2004).

Another generally accepted definition of translation would be that translation is the process in which a text written in a first language is produced as the text written in the second language interpreting the same meaning. The text in the first language (source language – SL) is generally referred to as the “**source text**” (ST) and the equivalent text in the second language (target language –TL) is the “**target text**” (TT) or “translated text” (Munday, 2001).

Vinay Dharwadker (2002) describes translation as a multidimensional process where translator has to handle his/hers means, resources and material at several levels at once. The translator is expected to render the meaning literally and to transpose the syntax, structure or form of the original into the TL. The role of the translator is to carry over a text from one language into another as literally and accurately as possible.

Translation does not happen in a vacuum, it is not an isolated act. On the contrary, it is a part of a continuous process of intercultural transfer. Translation involves all kinds of stages in that process of cross-cultural transfer. It is not an innocent act and it rarely involves relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems (Bassnett, Trivedi 2002). In her book on *Translation*

Studies, Bassnett (2005) insists that translation involves the transfer of meaning from one language into another through competent use of dictionaries and grammar.

Etymologically, the word “translation” comes from the Latin word *translatio*, the perfect passive participle of which is *translatum* or *transfere*. *Trans* implies “to transfer” and *ferre* implies “to carry across/bring across”. Hence, “translation” stands for the process of “bringing across” or “carrying across”.¹

Translation is not an easy act. It is not just word for word correspondence between the languages. On the contrary, many factors are to be taken into account, some of which are:

- actual context
- the rules of grammar of the two languages
- the spelling in the two languages
- the writing conventions
- meaning of idioms and phrases
- punctuation².

Translation and adaptation are frequently discussed within the same context. The distinction between the two dates back to Cicero and Horace, both of who referred to translation as working word-for-word and considered the other method freer. Maybe the best-known definition of adaptation is one given by Vinay and Darbelnet which says that “adaptation is a procedure which can be used whenever the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the culture of the TT, thereby necessitating some form of re-creation.” In other words, adaptation is to be used whenever there are cultural mismatches (Bastin, 2009: 3-4). Bastin continues by mentioning “tradaptation” – the term coined by Michael Garneau, a poet and translator, to express the close relation between translation and adaptation. The author then states that the key difference between the two activities is that translation stays basically at the level of transposing the meaning of the original, while adaptation seeks to transmit the purpose of the ST (2009: 5-6).

Translation is often described in relation to interpretation. According to Nolan (2005), interpretation can roughly be defined as conveying understanding. A translator studies written material in one language and reproduces it in a written form in another language. On the other hand, an interpreter listens to what is being said in the SL and renders it orally, consecutively or

¹ <http://www.thelanguagetranslation.com/what-translation.html>

² Ibid.

simultaneously, into the TL. Both the translator and the interpreter must have a thorough knowledge of languages from and to which they work. Although no translation is ever perfect due to the interference of cultural and linguistic matters, the translator is, in practice, usually held to a higher standard of accuracy and completeness (Nolan, 2005).

To conclude, the term *translation* generally refers to either the process of translating or the product of the act. It is commonly discussed in connection with adaptation and interpretation. While adaptation is generally considered merely a representation of the ST, interpretation refers to the spoken transference of meaning between two or more languages. Thus, both adaptation and interpretation differ considerably from translation.

2.1. Types of Translation

Translations are generally classified according to their subject domains, topics, genres, text types, text functions or other criteria. Some theorists like to group all translations which are not literary or religious into a category called “non-literary” translation (Olohan, 2009). This chapter brings a short overview of the most common types of translation.

Bassnett (2005: 23) lists three types of translation given by Roman Jakobson:

- (1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* – translation in the same language, which can involve rewording or paraphrase;
- (2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* – translation from one language to another, and
- (3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* – translation of verbal signs by non-verbal signs, for example music or image.

Only (2) *translation proper* describes the transfer from the SL to the TL. Jakobson points to the central problem of all types: that there is no full equivalence through translation even when there is apparent synonymy. He goes on to explain that each word contains within itself a set of non-transferable connotations (Bassnett, 2005).

In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2001; 2009) we can find numerous types of translation: audiovisual translation, auto-translation or self-translation, computer-aided

translation and machine translation, institutional translation, intertemporal translation, and finally retranslation. All the types are fully described in the above-mentioned *Encyclopedia*.

Alongside those types, there are specialist translations, categorized according to their scope. The work within these types requires the knowledge of specialized terminology.³ Here we distinguish between: administrative, commercial, computer, economic, financial, general, legal, medical and technical translation. Literary translation stands out as a distinctive type of specialist translation that has been a subject of many discussions. It is explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

³ <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/translation/articles/types.html>

3. Literary Translation

3.1. What is Literary Translation?

Dutta (2009) is among the rare authors who give an exact definition of what literary translation really is. In her paper on *Literary Translation and Its Limitations in the Wider Spectrum of Cross Cultural Communication* she defines literary translation as “a mode of cross-cultural communication, not simply a derived or second-hand communication. It is not just a TL replica of a message or a text in SL; rather it is a creative process by which meaningful experience is communicated from one speech community to another.” On the other hand, when translating scientific texts, translators’ creativity is restricted to encoding and decoding of one language by another. In contrast to literary translation, which frequently relies on the interpretation of metaphors and meaning, translation of scientific texts leaves no room for creativity and interpretation. It relies merely on facts and denotative meaning; hence it contains no ambiguity (Dutta, 2009). As Devy (2002) acknowledges, literary translation is not just a replication of a text into another verbal system of signs. In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, P. Bush (2001) defines literary translation as “the work of literary translators”. He uses this truism as a starting point in describing literary translation, adding that work of a literary translator includes imaginative, intellectual and intuitive writing.

Peter Newmark (in Schäffner, 2004: 35) agrees that literary translation involves creativity: “Literary translation is concerned with the mind or imagination, whilst non-literary translation is about the world, extralinguistic reality.” In this regard, Ivir (1978) says that literary translation is often considered a type of art, while non-literary translation represents a type of craft. The two types of translation have different purposes, too. The purpose of literary texts is to enhance aesthetic sensibility in people, whereas the purpose of non-literary texts is to communicate facts. In addition to that, Ivir suggests that depending on the type of text they are translating, translators have more or less freedom. Scientific texts demand complete loyalty to the original. However, literary translation should have the same aesthetic effect on its readers as the original, therefore leaving the translator more space to maneuver.

Dutta (2009) goes on to say that if a translation of a literary text is too faithful, it loses its aesthetic appeal. On the other hand, if it is too free, it becomes an adaptation rather than translation. For her, a creative translator would be one who does not destroy the identity of the

original, but creates something perfectly acceptable and comprehensive in the receptor language. In his writing on literary translation, Bush (2001) agrees that a literary translator is the creator of the new work in the target culture and in that way he operates at the frontiers of language and culture. Dutta (2009) mentions Larson by citing his words that each society will interpret the translation in terms of its own culture. According to her, the main goal of translation is communication and it should always take the context into account. In this respect, Lambert (1998) insists that a literary translation cannot be understood in isolation from the target culture. Bush (2001) supports this view stating that literary translation is always a very social and culturally-bound process with a translator playing a key role in these complex interactions.

Theo Herman (2007) wonders why literary translation is often classified as a distinctive kind of translation. The theory of text types categorizes texts according to their functions and features, placing a literary text into a class of its own. However, Herman doubts that this is reasonable since the text typology cannot agree on what distinguishes literary from other texts. Thus, there is no obvious reason that literary texts should be considered distinctive or be awarded their own niche. In addition to that, Ivir (1978) considers that every literary text contains facts and every non-literary text holds elements of literary style, like metaphors, similes, rhythm, alliteration, allusion, etc. Therefore, it is hard to draw a line between the two types of texts. Herman (2007) makes mention of Gideon Toury who distinguishes between ‘literary translation’ and the ‘translation of literary texts’, the latter being non-literary form of translation. He continues by stating that a literary translation possesses literary features and qualities and is therefore perceived as a literary text.

3.2. Translating Literary Prose

In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Jones (2009) observes that literature could be seen as a cluster of conventionally-agreed component genres: drama, poetry and fictional prose. The translation of literary prose is the subject of interest here, since the story I translated falls under this particular genre.

Many studies on the specific problems of translating literary prose are concerned with ‘translating well’ and being ‘faithful’. As Dutta (2009) stated in her paper on *Literary Translation and its Limitations*, a general aim of literary translation is to find expressions in

another language while “preserving semantic and stylistic equivalence, matching grammatical structures and cultural contexts.” She goes on to question the possibility of translator’s faithfulness to the original text if equivalence in the sense of absolute synonymy does not exist. For Dutta, a translator needs to be a good writer, excellent in both SL and TL, so as to satisfy the reader and the critic. Same as Lambert (1998) and Bush (2001), Dutta maintains that cultural connotations need to be taken into consideration in order for the translation to be faithful and harmonious.

In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Francis R. Jones (2009) points out two major issues in translating literary prose: equivalence and communicative purpose. In terms of equivalence, the question arises as to whether or not the translator should give priority to equivalence and try to replicate the complex stylistic features from the ST. In terms of communicative purpose, the question is how far translators should update or adapt the text for the target audience.

Another serious issue in literary translation, according to Dutta (2009), is the possibility that the translator projects his/her own thoughts into his/her work. Even best translators fall prey to this kind of error because a translator has no right to interpret.

Susan Bassnett (2005) introduces another limitation in translating literary prose – prose is generally considered easier to translate than poetry. She illustrates this with the example of her students to whom she usually gives an exercise to translate a short opening paragraph of a novel. They would frequently start translating without having read the whole text first. They would not consider the relation of the opening section to the work as a whole. Consequently, their sentences are not translated as component units of the complex structure, which leads to the loss of dimension. According to Popovič (in Bassnett, 2005), this leads to:

- 1) mistranslation of information;
- 2) ‘subinterpretation’ of the original text;
- 3) superficial interpretation of connections between intentional correlatives.

Jones (2009) acknowledges the translation of style as the next serious issue in translating literary prose. The style defines writers’ ‘cultural space-time’, although writers sometimes deliberately use nonstandard styles to predetermine their attitude towards the text’s content, to define

different voices or to structure the text. Ivir (1978) also highlights the importance of the style in translation, adding that the style of the TT should correspond to the style of the ST.

As we have seen, there are issues that a literary translator needs to take into consideration during the process of translation. Many translation theorists point out faithfulness, equivalence, the translation of style and the projection of one's own thoughts as common limitations of literary translation. However, there are several general strategies and procedures established to help literary translators overcome these problems. The next chapter lists these strategies and explains them a bit further.

3.3. Translation Techniques, Strategies and Procedures

There is no universal set of rules and translating techniques that would apply equally to everyone, but over time every translator develops personal techniques and strategies which improve the quality and speed of their translation. Many theorists made an effort to help literary translators and established concrete translation strategies. I will concentrate predominantly on the strategies of translating culture-bound terms and idiomatic expressions because most of these were used in my own translation, but first some general strategies and procedures will be mentioned.

In this regard, Hilarie Belloc (in Bassnett, 2005) lays down six rules:

- The translator should translate in sections, meaning that he/she should render the sense of a section, not translate sentence by sentence.
- The translator should translate *idiom by idiom*, which means that idioms cannot be rendered literally, but replaced with idioms which mean the same in the TL.
- The translator must translate *intention by intention*: be careful about the weight that a given expression has in a particular context in the SL. It could be disproportionate to translate it literally.
- The translator should be careful about *faux amis* – pairs of words in two languages that may appear the same, but have different meaning.
- The translator should ‘transmute boldly’ - the essence of translating is like “the resurrection of an alien thing in a native body”.
- The translator should never embellish.

Vinay and Darbelnet distinguish between translation strategies and procedures. They recognize two general translation strategies: *direct translation* and *oblique translation* (Munday, 2001: 56-58). *Direct translation* comprises of three procedures:

- Borrowing – the SL word is transferred directly to the TL;
- Calque – a special kind of borrowing where the SL expression or structure is transferred in a literal translation. It can sometimes result in false friends;
- Literal translation – word-for-word translation, which is described as being most common between languages of the same family and culture.

Where literal translation is not possible, Vinay and Darbelnet suggest *oblique translation*, which covers further four procedures:

- Transposition – a change of one part of speech for another without changing the sense (verb to noun, adjective to adverb, etc.)
- Modulation – a change in semantics and point of view of the SL (active to passive, part for whole, space for time, etc);
- Equivalence – refers to cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means; it is particularly useful in translation of idioms and proverbs;
- Adaptation – a change in cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture.

When it comes to translation of culture-bound terms, Pedersen (2005) gives a list of strategies to be used, going from most source language-oriented to most target language-oriented. The first one is official equivalent strategy, where a translator, for example, translates “Donald Duck” as *Pajo Patak*. The second strategy is retention, which allows an element from the SL to enter the TT. The retained term is italicized or put into quotes to distinguish it from the rest of the TT, except in case when its spelling is adjusted to meet TL conventions, for example, the word *interview* can be translated into Croatian as *interview* or *intervju*. The following strategy is specification strategy, which refers to leaving the culture-bound term in its untranslated form but adding information that is not present in the ST. This is done either through explication (spelling out of an acronym or abbreviation, adding someone’s first name, etc) or addition (added material is latent in the ST as part of the sense or connotations):

In 1995, *National Geographic* began publishing in Japanese, its first local language edition.

Od 1995. časopis National Geographic objavljuje se na japanskom, kao prvo lokalno izdanje na stranom jeziku.

Direct translation is the next strategy, used for rendering the names of companies, official institutions, technical gadgetry, etc (e.g. “Police Department” – *Policajska uprava*). The strategy of generalization denotes the act of replacing a culture-bound term referring to something specific by something more general (hyponymy and hyperonymy), for example “podiatry school” – *fakultet*. The strategy of substitution involves removing the culture-bound term and replacing it with a different culture-bound term known to the target audience, for example replacing the expression “dumber than dirt” with *glup je kao noć*. If a translator is unable to find a culture-specific substitute, he/she should resort to paraphrase of the term, reducing it to sense. Omission is the final strategy and it means that a culture-bound term is replaced with nothing.

Baker (1992) lists four strategies in the translation of idioms:

- (a) using an idiom of similar meaning and form - using an idiom in the TL with roughly the same meaning as the SL idiom and which consists of equivalent lexical terms (e.g. to die of boredom ~ *umrijeti od dosade*);
- (b) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form - using an idiom with the meaning similar to that of the SL idiom but consisting of different lexical items (e.g. He was like a cat on hot bricks. ~ *Bio je sav kao na iglama.*);
- (c) translation by paraphrase - to be used when a matching idiom cannot be found in the TL or the idiomatic language seems inappropriate (e.g. Take a backseat ~ *biti/ostati/držati se u pozadini*), and
- (d) translation by omission - an idiom is omitted because there is no close match in the TL or it cannot be easily paraphrased.

Soffer (2004) suggests that if the text abounds in specialized terminology, the translator should go through the dictionary and make a list of as many unknown terms as possible. This technique is very efficient, since we avoid wasting time on repeated interruptions to look up words once we have already started translating.

Once the translation is done, it should be proofread for possible mistakes in formatting, meaning, mistranslations, grammar, punctuation, clarity, style, etc (Soffer, 2004).

As we have seen, there are various strategies and procedures at translator's disposal. Many professional translators do not need to think consciously about implementing these strategies, although they use them on a daily basis. Some of the strategies were successfully applied in my translation of a short story, which is thoroughly described in the fifth chapter, but first we are going to look at a short story as a distinctive literary form and try to describe its general features and elements.

4. Defining a Short Story

There is no unanimous definition as to what a short story is. This chapter will give an overview of different attempts to define a short story, proceeding with a few general elements and characteristics of this literary form illustrated in the examples from *Olive Kitteridge*.

4.1. Short Story Definitions

One general definition of a short story says that it is a piece of prose fiction, having few characters and aiming at unity of effect (*American Heritage Dictionary*)⁴.

Somewhat more specific definition can be found in the online *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*⁵, stating that a short story is “a fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own”. It usually concentrates on a single event and follows a small number of characters. The length of a short story is not precisely defined due to the fact that the short story format includes a wide range of genres and styles. Nevertheless, its length usually falls between 2,000 and 10,000 words (*The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*).⁶

Edgar Allan Poe gave a witty description of a short story as a piece of narrative which is “no longer than can be read at a single sitting” (in Hills, 1977: 1). In an attempt to define a short story, Hills (1977) contrasts it with a sketch. The sketch is a static description of a character or a place; the character always remains the same, unaffected, regardless of the passing of time or the situations in which he ends up. Contrary to that, a short story is dynamic rather than static: the same thing cannot happen again. The character in the short story can be moved or is being moved.

Hills further differentiates the short story from a novel. Although both share the quality of character-moved-by-plot, the novel is longer and provides a number of incidents and effects. The short story, however, provides a “single and unique effect toward which every word contributes” (1977: 2). The short story writer, as opposed to the novelist, will not usually elaborate on the

⁴ <http://www.answers.com/topic/short-story>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/short_story.aspx#1

secondary characters or subplots. He/she focuses on a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters and covers a short period of time.

At the first attempt it may seem hard to place Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* under one particular genre. Although the book follows the life of Olive Kitteridge in general, each particular story concentrates on a different character and follows their story. Generally, we learn a lot about other townspeople besides Olive and it seems that the book depicts more than a single event. Thus, we could say that the book is a novel. However, if we look at each story independently from others, we can see that it actually does concentrate on one particular event. Each individual story is aimed at a single effect and focuses on a limited number of characters. For that reason, the book is not a novel but a collection of short stories. The next section explores common elements of that literary form and illustrates some of its features on the concrete examples from *Olive Kitteridge*.

4.2. General Elements and Characteristics of Short Stories

As we have seen in the previous section, there is no unanimous definition of a short story. However, there are elements which are to be found in most stories. These elements are listed in this subchapter and some common features of all short stories are discussed.

Longer forms of fiction have a few core elements of dramatic structure: exposition (the introduction of setting, situation and main characters); complication (the event of the story that introduces the conflict); rising action, climax (the point of highest interest in terms of the conflict and the point of the story with the most action); resolution (the point of the story when the conflict is resolved); and moral.⁷

However, due to their limited length, short stories may or may not follow this pattern. Thus, modern short stories frequently do not have an exposition, with the story starting in the middle of the action (*in medias res*), or end abruptly with no a moral or practical lesson.

The components which could be considered common for all short stories are as follows:

- Plot;
- Setting;

⁷ <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/fiction/elements.asp?e=1>

- Characters;
- Theme; and
- Style.

4.2.1. Plot

The term plot commonly refers to the sequence of selected events presented to the reader in a certain order. Most plots trace some process of change in which characters are caught up. Hills (1977) points out that the plot is there not *for its own sake*, but rather to contribute to the story as a whole, to move the character through action.

If events in the plot occur in the order in which they happened, this is called a chronological order. There may be references to the past or future event, but the events are written as they happened from first to last. However, the course of the story may be interrupted with flashbacks (interjected scenes which take the narrative back in time) or flashforward (scenes which reveal events that will happen in the future).⁸

After reading *Olive Kitteridge*, I concluded that there is no set plot in the book. Each story introduces new characters and new situations, so that the reader constantly feels as if he/she is starting a new book and repeatedly grapples with understanding who, where and why. One story does not flow into another and it is hard, if not impossible, to determine the order of the events. This is what might make the book unappealing.

4.2.2. Setting

Setting is the background where the action takes place, the time when it happens as well as the social conditions under which the story unfolds. The term “setting” also implies location in time, time of day, historic time and matters like the weather outside or the temperature in the room where everything happens (Hills, 1977).

The setting is often presented to the reader through “descriptions”. Passages of description abound in adjectives, which are all aimed at eliciting certain feelings in readers. Details of the place can be selected or omitted in description, depending on the type of effect desired. The overall goal of passages of description is to foreshadow action for the reader; the perception of the setting should help delineate the characters (Hills, 1977).

⁸ <http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/flashbackterm.htm>

In *Olive Kitteridge*, each story has a different setting. Due to limitation of space, I will here concentrate merely on “A Little Burst”, the story I translated. The above-mentioned “passages of description” are frequent in *Olive Kitteridge* and one particular reads as follows:

The inside door of her son’s bedroom is partly open, and voices and sounds make their way from the front of the house, where the party is also going on: high heels clicking down the hallway, a bathroom door pushed aggressively shut. (Honestly, Olive thinks—why not just close a door nicely?) A chair in the living room gets scraped over the floor, and in there with the muted laughter and talk is the odor of coffee, and the thick, sweet smell of baked goods, which is the way the streets near the Nissen bread factory used to smell before it closed down. There are different perfumes as well, including one that all day has smelled to Olive like that bug spray Off! All these smells have managed to move down the hall and drift into the bedroom.

Elizabeth Strout uses dozens of adjectives to conjure up the atmosphere and make the readers imagine the way Olive felt in that particular situation.

4.2.3. Characters

A character is a participant in the story, whose traits are presented to the reader through the process of characterization. This means that the author conveys information about characters by means of description, through their actions, speech or thought.⁹

Hills (1977) insists that the characterization in the story must be deep enough. If the character is presented superficially or in a one-sided way, then he will appear fixed to the reader. However, he must be presented as capable of change and this requires development of the character. In Hills’ words, the essence of a successful story is that a character is affected by action he himself takes or does not take.

There are several types of characters. The driver of the action in the story or the main character is usually referred to as *the protagonist*. The protagonist in *Olive Kitteridge* in general is the title character, Olive Kitteridge herself. However, each story involves different characters and sometimes Olive moves from being the protagonist (in “A Little Burst”) to being a *static* or a *flat character*¹⁰ (in “Starving” and “The Piano Player”). At the same time Olive is a *dynamic character*¹¹, which means that she is affected by certain situations. This could be seen in the story “A Different Road”, when Olive and her husband Henry are held hostage with a gun

⁹ <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/fiction/elements.asp?e=2>

¹⁰ <http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/crafttechnique/tp/charactertypes.htm>

¹¹ <http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/glossary/g/dynamic.htm>

pointed at them by two young men seeking drugs. Olive, believing that they are both going to die, blurts out:

“Did it ever occur to you that’s why Christopher left? Because he married a Jew and knew his father would be judgmental—did you ever think of that, Henry?”

Henry replies quietly:

“That’s a despicable thing to accuse me of, Olive, and you know it isn’t true. He left because from the day your father died, you took over that boy’s life. You didn’t leave him any room.”

This is the point where Olive undergoes a change of the character – she is deeply affected by Henry’s words and their marriage will never be the same after all this having been said aloud.

The reader’s response to a character is strongly influenced by the point of view. The story of Olive Kitteridge is told from many different points of view. The narrator is always a third person narrator whose knowledge is limited to one character, but in each story this character is different. In this way, in each story we learn about Olive’s life either through her own point of view or from the perspectives of people around her.

4.2.4. Theme

The theme of a story is the central idea or insight serving as a unifying element and creating cohesion. It is the concept we are left with after reading a story.¹² Hills (1977) equates theme with the story’s “values”, or its “meaning”, or what the story “has to say”.

In my opinion, the dominant theme of *Olive Kitteridge* is learning to live with disappointments. Other minor themes are love, death, suicide, family dynamics, marriage, losses, loneliness, etc. The point of the book is maybe best seen in the conclusion of the last story with Olive thinking:

Oh, what young people did not know. They did not know that lumpy, aged, and wrinkled bodies were as needy as their own young, firm ones, that love was not to be tossed away carelessly, as if it were a tart on a platter with others that got passed around again. No, if love was available, one chose it, or didn’t choose it. And if her platter had been full with the goodness of Henry and she had found it burdensome, had flicked it off crumbs at a time, it was because she had not known what one should know: that day after day was unconsciously squandered.

¹² <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/fiction/elements.asp?e=6>

4.2.5. Style

Style is very much about *how* the story is written. It usually refers to the elements of language like words, sentence structure, punctuation, phrasing, dialogues and other aspects of language manipulated by the writer to create style or mood (Hills, 1977). Let us take a look at Elizabeth Strout's style, for example. She uses ordinary words of everyday speech and simple sentence structure. Her writing is easy to read and understand. The use of direct speech in dialogues makes the characters "come alive".

To conclude, all the elements of a short story work in unison. The language will have the theme implicit in it. Together with the point of view it will have a determining effect on style; it will imply the author's tone, will be used for atmosphere and may contribute to the characterization. All elements contribute only as they work with other aspects of the story; they are inseparable from one another (Hills, 1977).

5. A Practical Part: Translation and Analysis of a Short Story “A Little Burst” by Elizabeth Strout

Elizabeth Strout is an American writer of fiction. She was born in Portland, Maine, in 1956. Already as a child she was drawn to writing. A few years after she graduated from Bates College, she also received a law degree from the Syracuse University College of Law. By her mid-twenties she was publishing quite a few stories in literary magazines, as well as in *Redbook* (a women’s magazine) and *Seventeen* (a magazine for teenagers). In 1998, Elizabeth published her first novel *Amy and Isabelle*, which had taken almost seven years to write. Six years later she published *Abide With Me*, and three years after that, *Olive Kitteridge*, for which she was awarded the **Pulitzer Prize for Fiction** in 2009.¹³

Olive Kitteridge is a collection of thirteen short stories connected through a character of a retired math teacher, Olive Kitteridge. In some stories the main character, in others just a passerby, Olive experiences the changes in a little town of Crosby, Maine. Through different points of view, the reader learns about Olive’s family, townspeople and her life in general. All the stories combined together form a portrait of this solid-as-rock woman.

One of the 13 stories from the book, “A Little Burst”, is the story I have chosen to translate (see Appendices I and II). The practical part of this paper is based on the analysis of my translation. I will try to describe the process of translation itself and give an overview of the problems I encountered and the strategies employed to tackle these problems. Eventually, I will compare my translation with the translation of Tatjana Jambrišak, whose translation of *Olive Kitteridge* was published in Croatia by Profil Publishing House.

5.1. Reconstruction of the Translation Process

When I decided to translate Elizabeth Strout’s short story, I realized I did not know much about her or her work; by then I had not read any of her books. I Googled the authoress and read her biography, a few interviews with her and some interesting book reviews. I found out that she was

¹³ <http://elizabethstrout.com/about-the-author/elizabeth-strout/>

a novel writer and *Olive Kitteridge* was actually her first published collection of short stories. That is how I decided on that particular book.

After I chose to translate a story from *Olive Kitteridge*, I was determined not to read the existing translation by Jambrišak so that it would not interfere with my concentration, choice of words or similar. At that point I still had not read it, but planned to do it later and compare it with my own translation.

As the first concrete step, I read the whole book. I was trying to read it not as a translator, but as a regular reader who would concentrate merely on the book content. I have to admit it was not easy because I kept noticing potentially problematic words/parts and struggled not to dwell on them. Once I finished the book, I knew I would select “A Little Burst” for translation. Shortly after, I reread the story but this time with much deeper concentration. Now I was able to determine concrete problems, which I later categorized under linguistic and cultural issues. The next two subchapters will discuss linguistic and cultural issues respectively, with the strategies used in translation and the examples drawn from the story “A Little Burst” and its translation into Croatian.

5.1.1. Linguistic Issues

❖ *Medical expressions (3)*

At the very beginning of the story, I came across the word *podiatrist*. *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* explains that this is an American expression for a chiropodist – a physician specialized in treating foot and ankle problems. Most online English-Croatian dictionaries either did not provide any translation or translated the term as *pediker*. However, I continued to explore it a bit further since I knew that *pediker* (or *pedicurist*) is associated with beauty treatments and cosmetology. Eventually, I managed to find the term *podijatar*¹⁴. Although *pediker* and *podijatar* in Croatia have similar job descriptions, I decided to stick to *podijatar*, since it is a closer equivalent to *podiatrist*.

Two other medical expressions I encountered were *gastroenterologist* and *emphysema*. These two presented almost no problem in translation, since I quickly found the equivalent terms in Croatian: *gastroenterolog* and *emfizem*.

¹⁴ http://www.proz.com/kudoz/english_to_croatian/medical/574071-podiatrist.html

The strategy applied in these cases is direct translation, as Vinay and Darbelnet suggest, and the procedure is calque. Both English and Croatian terms come from Greek.

❖ Botanical expressions (7)

Even though botanical expressions from the story may seem unimportant for the understanding of the story in general, there were a few of them which posed a problem for me in translation. I kept thinking about the ways to translate these expressions so that they are both acceptable in Croatian and well known to the readers. Since all expressions refer to the names of flowers, I could have used a hyperonym in all the cases, and instead of searching for equivalent flower names in Croatian, I could have just translated it as *cvijet*. However, I decided not to because I thought the impact of the ST would be lost. I had the feeling that the authoress intentionally used exact flower names in order to show their diversity in Olive's garden, to illustrate her love for flowers and a caring and gentle part of her character. Thus, I decided to find the Croatian equivalents.

The first problematic expression was *geraniums*. Browsing the Internet, I found myself reading detailed descriptions and studying closely the pictures of geranium flowers and leaves. I realized that there is a Croatian term *geranij*, but the term *pelargonija* is more frequently used among ordinary people. In order to make the TT more transparent and comprehensible, the term *pelargonija* prevailed.

The next botanical expression was *gladiola bed*. The flower can obviously be translated as *gladiole*, but I had second thoughts about the term *bed*. Having in mind the target readers, I decided for the term *gredica* instead of *lijeha*. Although both have the same meaning, I came to the conclusion that the term *lijeha* is more frequently to be found in botanical and floricultural magazines, whereas the term *gredica* is more repeatedly used in Internet discussion forums among ordinary people (i.e. people other than botanists).

The *roses* were the next type of flowers in the story, but these caused no problem in translation – being translated just as *ruže*. Similarly, the *lilacs* were translated as *jorgovani* and *rhododendrons* were translated as *rododendroni*.

The most problematic botanical expression was *nasturtiums*. One dictionary offered *potočarka* as a translation, but when I tried to translate it back to English, it was *water cress*. I further studied the pictures of nasturtium flowers and leaves, but it was not until I found a document

entitled *National List of Varieties* (2004) that I understood that the exact translation was *dragoljubi*. Having the document with all the varieties listed in Croatian and English, I was now able to check the translation of the previously mentioned botanical expressions. As it turned out, they were all correct.

Finally, *petunia* was simply translated as *petunija*, as it is suggested in the *National List of Varieties*.

❖ Onomatopoeic expressions

Onomatopoeia denotes the creation or use of words which sound like the actions they refer to¹⁵. In Strout's book, particularly in the story I translated, there was a significant number of onomatopoeic expressions. I will not mention them all, but I will give a few examples from the ST followed by their Croatian translation. I have to emphasize, however, that in some cases I was able to fully render the onomatopoeic word, while in other cases onomatopoeia was poorly rendered or lost.

The following is an example of a fully rendered onomatopoeia, with the use of a very similar onomatopoeic expression:

- (1) Through the open window she hears a cough, the **click** of a lighter.

*Kroz otvoren prozor čuje kašalj, **klik** upaljača.*

The next onomatopoeic expressions imitate human speech. In my opinion, the translation managed to preserve the onomatopoeia to a considerable extent:

- (2) He is like her that way, can't stand the **blah-blah-blah**. And they'd just as soon **blah-blah-blah** about you when your back is turned.

*On je po tome na nju, ne može podnijeti to **blebetanje**. A čim im okreneš leđa, oni će i o tebi odmah **blebetati**.*

- (3) Another click of a lighter, the deep **murmur** of men's voices.

*Još jedan klik upaljača, duboko **mrmljanje** muških glasova.*

¹⁵ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/onomatopoeia>

The next lines are examples of partially rendered onomatopoeia:

- (4) . . .and just recently she fired the cleaning woman because of the way the foolish girl dragged the vacuum cleaner across the floor, **banging** it into walls and **bumping** it down the stairs.

*Upravo je nedavno otpustila čistačicu zbog načina na koji je glupava djevojka vukla usisavač po podu, znajući njime **tresnuti** o zid ili ga **bubnuti** niza stepenice.*

- (5) Down the hall now comes the sudden sound of **clinking** crystal.

*Iz dna hodnika sada dopire **zveket** kristalnih čaša.*

- (6) Now she hears the sound of high heels **clattering** unevenly down the hallway.

*Sad začuje zvuk visokih potpetica kako neujednačeno **lupkaju** hodnikom.*

- (7) ...and the **clapping** of her hands.

*...i čuje se **pljeskanje** njezinih ruku.*

Every language interprets sounds from the nature in accord with its own sound system and culture.¹⁶ Therefore, onomatopoeia is sometimes nearly impossible to translate. The following example from the story shows that the English language has a wider choice of onomatopoeic words:

- (8) A screen door **bangs**. / A screen door **slams**.

*Mrežasta se vrata **zalupe**.*

I translated both *to bang* and *to slam* with a Croatian verb *zalupiti*. There is, however, another verb that could have been used - *tresnuti* – but in that case the sentence *Mrežasta se vrata zatres(n)u* sounds awkward and unnatural in Croatian.

Three final examples are the cases where onomatopoeia gets lost in translation:

¹⁶ <http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/japonoma.html>

- (7) ...she has a momentary image of the house collapsing: pipes breaking, floorboards **snapping**, walls folding over.

*...pred očima joj je slika kuće kako se urušava: cijevi pucaju, podovi se **dižu**, zidovi se ruše.*

- (8) ...and then **squashed** into a dumpster the next day.

*...odakle će sutradan biti **prebačena** u kontejner za smeće.*

- (9) Picturing her heart, a big red muscle, **banging away** beneath her flowered dress.

*Zamišljala je kako joj srce, veliki crveni mišić, **tuče** ispod cvjetne haljine.*

❖ Syntax and Punctuation

Strout's use of Standard English facilitates the translator's task. However, her occasionally long sentences were sometimes hard to translate without sacrificing some stylistic features. Many times I was under the influence of the English syntax and punctuation, which is the reason why I engaged a professional proofreader. In the following examples I will demonstrate my own mistakes and the influence of the ST on my translation.

Firstly, I would follow the ST word order too closely, which resulted in strange-sounding sentences like the following:

- (1) This is the first marriage for both of them, and the wedding has been a smallish, pleasant affair, with a flute player and baskets of yellow sweetheart roses placed inside and outside the house.

**Za njih oboje to je bio prvi brak, a vjenčanje je bilo mala, ali ugodna zabava sa flautisticom i košarama sitnih žutih ruža koje su ukrašavale kuću i dvorište.*

At first glance it may seem that nothing is wrong, but after the sentence was proofread, it reads as follows:

Bio je to prvi brak za oboje, a vjenčanje je bilo mala, ugodna zabava s flautisticom i košarama sitnih žutih ruža koje su ukrašavale kuću i dvorište.

Other examples of the wrong word order are:

- (2) She and Henry, years ago, did all the design and then worked closely with the builder, so that Chris would have a decent place to live when he came back from podiatry school.

**Ona i Henry su prije mnogo godina napravili nacrt i blisko surađivali s graditeljem, da bi Christopher imao pristojno mjesto za život kad se vrati s fakulteta.*

The proofread sentence reads:

Prije mnogo su godina ona i Henry napravili nacrt i blisko surađivali s graditeljem, da bi Christopher imao pristojno mjesto za život kad se vrati s fakulteta.

- (3) Her own house, a few miles down the road, she and Henry also built, years ago...

**Njezinu kuću, nekoliko kilometara niz ulicu, izgradili su davno također ona i Henry.*

Njezinu kuću, nekoliko kilometara niz ulicu, također su davno izgradili ona i Henry.

- (4) A small child stands staring from the doorway; one of the bride's little nieces from Chicago.

**Malo dijete stoji na vratima i zuri: jedna od mladenkinih malih nećakinja iz Chicaga.*

The more natural version in Croatian would be:

Na vratima stoji dijete i zuri; jedna od mladenkinih malih nećakinja iz Chicaga.

- (5) She pictures fleetingly, again, how Suzanne's hand so easily, gently cupped that little girl's head.

**Kratko joj je pred očima opet Suzanneina slika dok lagano I nježno rukom miluje glavu one djevojčice.*

Pred očima joj je nakratko ponovno Suzanneina slika dok lagano I nježno rukom miluje glavu one djevojčice.

Besides following the ST word order too closely, I had a problem with Croatian punctuation rules. Very often I would fall under the influence of the ST and simply put a comma, a hyphen or

a dash where it occurred in the original, but made little or no sense in the TT. The proofreader brought this problem into focus. While in English a comma is put within the quotation marks, the Croatian grammar rule stipulates that it should be put after the quotation mark:

(6) “She’s good for Christopher,” Henry says.

*, *„Dobra je za Christophera,” kaže Henry.*

„Dobra je za Christophera“, kaže Henry.

(7) “Let's go,” Olive says finally...

*, *„Idemo,” rekla je Olive napokon...*

„Idemo“, rekla je Olive napokon...

5.1.2. Cultural Issues

Translation is often described as an act of intercultural communication. It is sometimes very hard for a translator to transfer a culture-bound term which has a specific meaning and carries certain connotations in the SL, since in the target reader’s cultural system the equivalent item does not exist.

Pedersen (2005: 2) categorizes culture-bound terms into two categories, namely intralinguistic and extralinguistic. The first category consists of idioms, proverbs, slang and dialect, while the second consists of the expressions pertaining to cultural items which are not part of a language system.

In “A Little Burst” I came across culture-specific items from both Pedersen’s categories, including a number of idiomatic expressions, terminology related to the specific education systems and trade names and trademarks, all of which will be discussed in the following subchapters.

❖ Idiomatic expressions

Idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components (Baker, 1992: 63). As Baker continues, a translator should have thorough knowledge of both SL and TL in order to be

able to (a) recognize and interpret an idiomatic expression correctly and (b) render the exact meaning that an idiom conveys into the TL (1992: 65). Although there are no many idiomatic expressions in this particular story, there are several which I think should be mentioned here.

The idioms I came across while reading the story, their meaning and translation to Croatian are as follows:

- **at this stage of the game** = at the current point in some event; currently.

But **at this stage of the game**, she is not about to abandon the comfort of food...

Ali u ovoj fazi života ne namjerava se odreći utjehe koju joj pruža hrana...

According to Newmark (in Strakšienė, 2009: 16), this would be an example of a literal translation. The form of the source idiom is preserved in the TL, which results in an expression that is grammatically correct but unidiomatic in the TL.

For the next idiomatic expression I had problem finding the definition. Despite that, I could figure out its meaning from the context.

- **as stiff as driftwood**

Then Suzanne walked over to Christopher—who was not smiling, looking **as stiff as driftwood**...

*Onda je Suzanne otišla do Christophera, koji se nije smiješio, nego je izgledao **ukočeno kao drvena Marija**...*

As one of the strategies for translating idioms, Baker (1992: 72) lists *using an idiom of similar meaning and form*. Croatian idiom *ukočen kao drvena Marija* conveys roughly the same meaning as the idiom in the SL and consists of equivalent lexical items.

The next example is:

- **until the last dog dies** (until the last dog is hung) = refers to the inevitable two or three people at every cocktail party who hang around everlastingly¹⁷

¹⁷ http://www.phrases.org.uk/bulletin_board/14/messages/376.html

Though I expect you'll want to stay **until the last dog dies**.

*Iako ti vjerojatno želiš **ostati do fajrunta**.*

In this case I applied the strategy of *using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form*. The idiom in Croatian has a meaning similar to the SL idiom but consists of different lexical items (Baker, 1992: 74). The same strategy was used in the following examples too:

- **out of the blue** = to appear suddenly as if falling from the sky

Then it happened, right **out of the blue**...

*A onda se dogodilo **kao grom iz vedra neba**...*

Both SL and TL idioms refer to something that happened suddenly and unexpectedly.

- **quick as a thunder-clap**

Because that part was surprising as well—to get married **quick as a thunder-clap**.

*Jer taj je dio isto iznenađujući – vjenčali su se **dok kažeš keks**.*

Although the lexical items of the idioms in English and Croatian do not correspond, the meaning is approximately the same.

The final example is:

- **make the rounds** = to talk to a lot of people

Henry is standing in the doorway, his face shiny and happy now that **he's made the rounds**...

*Henry stoji na vratima ozarena i sretna lica sada kada **se sa svima pozdravio** ...*

I could not find any equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, so I paraphrased the meaning. According to Baker (1992: 74), this is the most common way of translating idioms. The paraphrase used roughly corresponds to the meaning of the idiom although is not an idiom itself.

❖ *The Croatian and the American Education Systems*

According to Newmark (in Smakar, 2010), there are five areas from which a cultural item may come from. Discrepancy between the Croatian and the American education systems would fall under Newmark's category of social organizations. Similarly, Pedersen (2005) would place this discrepancy into extralinguistic sphere.

The term I have already discussed under medical expressions is a *podiatrist*, and the term *podiatry school* here again posed a problem since I was not sure whether it referred to a high school or a college. In the story, it is mentioned that Christopher, Olive's son, is a podiatry doctor. I found out that in the United States, in order to be granted a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree, first it is necessary to complete standard three or four years of undergraduate studies¹⁸ (which are nearly equivalent to Croatian Bachelor's degree) and then to enroll into a four year podiatry school. Accordingly, even though the term *school* is used, I decided to translate it as *fakultet*. The strategy applied here is generalization (Pedersen, 2005) - culture-specific term is replaced with a more general term in the TL:

...so that Chris would have a decent place to live when he came back from **podiatry school**.

...kako bi Christopher imao pristojno mjesto za život kada se vrati s fakulteta.

Another slightly problematic term was the title M.D., Ph.D. which generally refers to the education which includes both the medical training of a doctor (MD) and the traditional academic doctorate (PhD).¹⁹ However, I decided to translate it simply as *Dr* without further explanation in the Croatian text, because I considered that unnecessary and irrelevant to the point.

Then it happened, right out of the blue: Suzanne Bernstein, **M.D., Ph.D.**, showed up in town for a conference...

*A onda se dogodilo kao grom iz vedra neba: **Dr.** Suzanne Bernstein pojavila se u gradu na nekakvoj konferenciji...*

¹⁸ <http://www.podiatrychannel.com/aPodiatrist.shtml>

¹⁹ <http://mentalhealth.about.com/cs/psychotherapy/a/initials.htm>

For Pedersen (2005), this is the strategy of substitution. It is most frequently used in the translation of culture-bound terms referring to official institutions or titles. Pedersen acknowledges that the target readers seem to be used to this and will probably not even notice that the SL term has been replaced by a TL term.

❖ Trade names and trademarks (7)

Trade names are generally defined as names or designations used by companies to identify themselves and distinguish their businesses from others in the same field. A distinctive sign, symbol, word or combination of words that indicates the source or ownership of a product or service is referred to as a trademark.²⁰

In the story “A Little Burst” there are quite a few such names, which are mainly culture-specific terms. The first example comes from the following sentence:

There are different perfumes as well, including one that all day has smelled to Olive like that **bug spray Off!**

Although Croatian readers probably are familiar with the spray Off! since it is often advertised on TV, I decided to leave out the name and translate the sentence as:

*Osjete se i različiti parfemi uključujući i jedan koji Olive cijeli dan podsjeća na **nekakav sprej protiv insekata**.*

I applied the strategy of generalization, where a culture-bound term referring to something specific is replaced by something more general (Pedersen, 2005).

Another example is drawn from the sentence:

“How about we stop at **Dunkin’ Donuts**,” she says.

Even though Dunkin’ Donuts claims to be the world’s largest coffee and baked goods chain, I was not sure that Croatian readers are familiar enough with it. The closest Dunkin’ Donuts shops are in Spain and Germany. That is why I decided to leave out the trade name again and translate the sentence implementing the strategy of generalization:

²⁰ <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Tradename>

„Što misliš da stanemo u *slastičarnicu*“, upita ga.

Further examples of trade names and trademarks that show up in the story are **Sears catalogue**, **Bradlee's**, **So-Fro's** and **Magic Markers**. They were translated as *katalog*, *robna kuća*, *trgovina s tkaninama* and *markeri*, respectively. The strategy of generalization is applied repeatedly. However, there is one example where I needed to implement another strategy. It was in the following sentence:

...and that stain from a jar of **Vicks VapoRub** is still there.

In the ST it is needless to explain to what the mentioned trade name refers. However, if I retained the name in the TT as it is, it would mean nothing to the Croatian readers. For that reason I decided for the strategy of specification. Pedersen explains that culture-bound term is left in its untranslated form, but some information is added that is not present in the ST, thus making the TT term more specific than the ST term (2005: 4). The sentence in translation thus reads:

...a mrlja od posudice *kreme Vicks VapoRub* još uvijek je tamo.

❖ Other expressions (2)

I would like to mention two other expressions that occurred in the ST which were quite challenging to translate. The first one is **the little girls' room**. The term is mostly used as a euphemism to refer to the bathroom, but it sometimes can be used in a humorous way. In Croatian I used the term *toalet*, which is a euphemism but does not carry connotations of humor.

The next even more problematic expression occurs in the story when a man proposes a toast at the wedding saying “A toast to **Fidelity Select**”. The only thing I could find about the expression is that it refers to a group of 39 equity mutual funds. My conclusion is that the expression is primarily used for its literal meaning, but at the same time carries humorous connotations since it directly alludes to the mentioned investment fund. I translated it literally as *Izabrana Vjernost*, thus sacrificing the humor of the line.

5.2. The Comparison of the Translations

Finally, in this chapter I will compare my translation of the story “A Little Burst” with Tatjana Jambrišak’s translation. I will concentrate particularly on the linguistic and cultural issues discussed above.

At the very beginning there is a difference: Jambrišak translated the title as “*Mala iskra*”, while I translated as “*Mali prasak*”. The first term I had problems with, **podiatrist**, Jambrišak translated simply as *medicinski pediker*. Other two medical expressions were translated equally: *gastroenterolog* and *emfizem*.

As regards the problematic botanical expressions, Jambrišak used more or less the same terms as I did, with the exception of **geraniums**, which in my case was translated as *pelargonije* (for the reasons explained above) and in Jambrišak’s case as *geraniji*.

The sentences in which onomatopoeic expressions occur are rendered differently. In some cases I managed to preserve the onomatopoeia where Jambrišak did not, while in other cases she rendered it more successfully.

- (1) . . .and just recently she fired the cleaning woman because of the way the foolish girl dragged the vacuum cleaner across the floor, **banging** it into walls and **bumping** it down the stairs.

Upravo je nedavno otpustila čistačicu zbog načina na koji je glupava djevojka vukla usisavač po podu, znajući njime tresnuti o zid ili ga bubnuti niza stepenice. (my translation)

. . . a nedavno je otpustila čistačicu zbog načina na koji je budalasta cura vukla usisavač, udarajući o zidove i niza stube. (Jambrišak's translation)

- (2) He is like her that way, can’t stand the **blah-blah-blah**. And they’d just as soon **blah-blah-blah** about you when your back is turned.

On je po tome na nju, ne može podnijeti to blebetanje. A čim im okreneš leđa, oni će i o tebi odmah blebetati. (my translation)

Takav je, ne podnosi besmisleno brbljanje. A brbljaju i kad im okreneš leđa. (Jambrišak's translation)

As for the idiomatic expressions, I realized that Jambrišak's and my translation differ considerably. Table 5.1. below illustrates the difference in the two translations:

| Example | Idiom in English | My translation | Jambrišak's translation |
|---------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | at this stage of the game | u ovoj fazi života | u ovom dijelu igre |
| 2. | as stiff as driftwood | ukočen kao drvena Marija | ukočen poput debla u vodi |
| 3. | until the last dog dies | ostati do fajrunta | ostati pomesti kad svi odu |
| 4. | out of the blue | kao grom iz vedra neba | potpuno nenadano |
| 5. | quick as a thunder-clap | dok kažeš keks | brže od zvuka |
| 6. | make the rounds | pozdraviti se sa svima | obići sve |

Table 5.1. The difference between Jambrišak's and my translation of idiomatic expressions from "A Little Burst"

For the first idiom, **at this stage of the game**, Jambrišak used an expression *u ovom dijelu igre*, which is, according to Newmark (in Strakšienė, 2009: 16), the strategy of literal translation. The form of the expression is preserved, but the idiomaticity of the translated phrase is somewhat dubious. The idiom **as stiff as driftwood** was in Jambrišak's case translated with an expression which is very uncommon in Croatian - *ukočen poput debla u vodi*. This is again the strategy of literal translation, with the expression in Croatian losing its idiomatic meaning. However, my translation *ukočen kao drvena Marija* is an example of Baker's strategy of *using an idiom of similar meaning and form* (1992: 72). **Until the last dog dies** is translated by Jambrišak as *ostati pomesti kad svi odu* and I translated it as *ostati do fajrunta*. We both applied the strategy of *using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form* (Baker, 1992: 74). Therefore, we managed to convey almost the same meaning, although I suppose the expression Jambrišak used is regionally determined since I have never heard of it. For **out of the blue** I used an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, *kao grom iz vedra neba*, while Jambrišak paraphrased the meaning to *potpuno nenadano*. The next idiom, **quick as a thunder-clap**, Jambrišak rendered as *brže od zvuka*. I cannot determine the exact strategy she used here, since the expression *brže od zvuka* is unidiomatic in Croatian and it is not a literal translation or paraphrase, either. I translated it as *dok kažeš keks*, which is still an idiom, although of a different form. Finally, both of us paraphrased the idiom **make the rounds**, reducing it to the sense: *pozdraviti se sa svima/obići sve*.

While I decided to translate **podiatry school** merely as *fakultet*, Jambrišak explained it a bit further adding *studirao je medicinsku pedikuru*. **M.D., Ph. D.** was translated as *liječnica, doktorica znanosti*, whereas I translated it as *Dr.*

Analyzing Jambrišak's translation, I could see that she used different strategies in the translation of trade names and trademarks mentioned in the story. At times she added information, as in *kafeterija Dunkin' Donuts*, *dućan So-Fro*, *dućani Bradlee and Vicks VapoRub*, *sredstvo protiv prehlade*, applying the strategy of specification (Pedersen, 2005). On other occasions she omitted the trade name and used a more general term like *sprej protiv insekata* (instead of **Off!**), *kataloška prodaja* (instead of **Sears catalogue**) and *crni markeri* (instead of **Magic Markers**). In these cases she used the strategy of generalization (Pedersen, 2005).

The expression **the little girls' room** was in Jambrišak's translation replaced by *trebam piš-piš*. The sentence "A toast to **Fidelity Select**" was translated as "Zdravica za *Fidelity Select fond*", where Jambrišak applied the strategy of specification. She added the word *fond* as an explanation, although I believe it does not mean much to Croatian readers.

To conclude, from the comparison of the two translation versions of the story "A Little Burst" with special emphasis on the linguistic and cultural issues discussed earlier, it is noticeable that the translators used different translation strategies. Naturally, it is hard to tell which translation is better or worse. It would be interesting to contact Tatjana Jambrišak to offer her explanations and reasons why she implemented a certain strategy or used a certain expression. From my point of view, the overall result of both translations is very similar.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyze the translation of short stories through a case study of “A Little Burst”, a short story taken from Elizabeth Strout’s collection of short stories entitled *Olive Kitteridge*. The intention was to determine concrete problematic parts of translation and establish several strategies of tackling these problems. In the first part the definition of translation was dealt with and some of the most common translation types and techniques were introduced. Literary translation was then more closely looked at, followed by the description and general elements of the short story as a distinctive literary form. Thus, the theoretical framework was given for the analysis of my translation. As we have seen earlier, the analysis has brought to focus some of the linguistic and cultural issues encountered during the translation process. Linguistic issues were classified under medical, botanical and onomatopoeic expressions, followed by the problems concerning the difference in English and Croatian syntax and punctuation. Cultural issues were described through the examples of idiomatic expressions, the difference between American and Croatian education systems and culture specific trade names and trademarks. Each example from the story was accompanied by a short explanation of the translation strategy applied in that particular case. Finally, the last section brought the comparison of my translation with Jambrišak’s translation of the same story in order to show that each translator applied their own strategies. Occasionally, one translation managed to render what the other failed or vice versa; nevertheless, the overall result of both translations is very similar.

7. Appendix I: “A Little Burst” by Elizabeth Strout

Three hours ago, while the sun was shining full tilt through the trees and across the back lawn, the local podiatrist, a middle-aged man named Christopher Kitteridge, was married to a woman from out of town named Suzanne. This is the first marriage for both of them, and the wedding has been a smallish, pleasant affair, with a flute player and baskets of yellow sweetheart roses placed inside and outside the house. So far, the polite cheerfulness of the guests seems to show no sign of running down, and Olive Kitteridge, standing by the picnic table, is thinking it's really high time everyone left.

All afternoon Olive has been fighting the sensation of moving underwater—a panicky, dismal feeling, since she has somehow never managed to learn to swim. Wedging her paper napkin into the slats of the picnic table, she thinks, All right, I've had enough, and dropping her gaze so as to avoid getting stuck in one more yakkety conversation, she walks around to the side of the house and steps through a door that opens directly into her son's bedroom. Here she crosses the pine floor, gleaming in the sunshine, and lies down on Christopher's (and Suzanne's) queen-size bed.

Olive's dress—which is important to the day, of course, since she is the mother of the groom—is made from a gauzy green muslin with big reddish-pink geraniums printed all over it, and she has to arrange herself carefully on the bed so it won't wind up all wrinkly, and also, in case someone walks in, so she will look decent. Olive is a big person. She knows this about herself, but she wasn't always big, and it still seems something to get used to. It's true she has always been tall and frequently felt clumsy, but the business of being big showed up with age; her ankles puffed out, her shoulders rolled up behind her neck, and her wrists and hands seemed to become the size of a man's. Olive minds—of course she does; sometimes, privately, she minds very much. But at this stage of the game, she is not about to abandon the comfort of food, and that means right now she probably looks like a fat, dozing seal wrapped in some kind of gauze bandage. But the dress worked out well, she reminds herself, leaning back and closing her eyes. Much better than the dark, grim clothes the Bernstein family is wearing, as though they had been asked to a funeral, instead of a wedding, on this bright June day.

The inside door of her son's bedroom is partly open, and voices and sounds make their way from the front of the house, where the party is also going on: high heels clicking down the hallway, a bathroom door pushed aggressively shut. (Honestly, Olive thinks—why not just close a door nicely?) A chair in the living room gets scraped over the floor, and in there with the muted laughter and talk is the odor of coffee, and the thick, sweet smell of baked goods, which is the way the streets near the Nissen bread factory used to smell before it closed down. There are different perfumes as well, including one that all day has smelled to Olive like that bug spray Off! All these smells have managed to move down the hall and drift into the bedroom.

Cigarette smoke, too. Olive opens her eyes: Someone is smoking a cigarette in the back garden. Through the open window she hears a cough, the click of a lighter. Really, the place has been overrun. She pictures heavy shoes stepping through the gladiola bed, and then, hearing a toilet flush down the hall, she has a momentary image of the house collapsing; pipes breaking, floorboards snapping, walls folding over. She sits up slightly, rearranges herself, and puts another pillow against the headboard.

She built the house herself—well, almost. She and Henry, years ago, did all the design and then worked closely with the builder, so that Chris would have a decent place to live when he came back from podiatry school. When you build a house yourself, you're going to have a different feeling about it than other people do. Olive is used to this because she has always liked to make things: dresses, gardens, houses. (The yellow roses were arranged in their baskets by her this morning, before the sun was up.) Her own house, a few miles down the road, she and Henry also built, years ago, and just recently she fired the cleaning woman because of the way the foolish girl dragged the vacuum cleaner across the floor, banging it into walls and bumping it down the stairs.

At least Christopher appreciates this place. Over the last few years, the three of them, Olive and Henry and Christopher, have taken care of it together, clearing more woods, planting lilacs and rhododendrons, digging postholes for the fence. Now Suzanne (Dr. Sue is what Olive calls her in her head) will take over, and coming from money the way she does, she will probably hire a housekeeper, as well as a gardener. (“Love your pretty nasturtiums,” Dr. Sue said to Olive a few weeks ago, pointing to the petunia rows.) But never mind, Olive thinks now. You move aside and make way for the new.

Through her closed eyelids Olive sees a red light slanting through the windows; she can feel sunlight warming her calves and ankles on the bed, can feel beneath her hand how it warms the soft fabric of her dress, which really did come out nicely. It pleases her to think of the piece of blueberry cake she managed to slip into her big leather handbag—how she can go home soon and eat it in peace, take off this panty girdle, get things back to normal.

Olive senses someone in the room, and opens her eyes. A small child stands staring from the doorway; one of the bride’s little nieces from Chicago. It’s the one who was supposed to sprinkle rose petals on the ground right before the ceremony but at the last minute decided she didn’t want to, and hung back, sulking. Dr. Sue was nice about it, though, speaking reassuringly to the little girl, cupping her hand gently around the child’s head. Finally Suzanne called out good-naturedly “Oh, go ahead” to a woman standing near a tree, who started playing a flute. Then Suzanne walked over to Christopher—who was not smiling, looking as stiff as driftwood—and the two stood there, getting married, on the lawn.

But the gesture, the smooth cupping of the little girl’s head, the way Suzanne’s hand in one quick motion caressed the fine hair and thin neck, has stayed with Olive. It was like watching some woman dive from a boat and swim easily up to the dock. A reminder how some people could do things others could not.

“Hello,” Olive says to the little girl, but the child does not reply. After a moment, Olive says, “How old are you?” She is no longer familiar with young children, but she guesses this one is around four, maybe five; nobody in the Bernstein family seems tall.

Still the child says nothing. “Run along now,” Olive tells her, but the girl leans against the doorjamb and sways slightly, her eyes fixed on Olive. “Not polite to stare,” Olive says. “Didn’t anyone teach you that?”

The little girl, still swaying, says calmly, “You look dead.”

Olive lifts her head up. “Is that what they teach you to say these days?” But she feels a physical reaction as she leans back down, a soft ache beating on her breastbone for a moment, like a wing inside her. The child ought to have her mouth washed out with soap.

Anyway, the day is almost over. Olive stares up at the skylight over the bed and reassures herself that she has, apparently, lived through it. She pictured herself having another heart attack on the day of her son’s wedding: She would be sitting on her folding chair on the lawn, exposed to everyone, and after her son said, “I do,” she would silently, awkwardly fall over dead, with her face pressed into the grass, and her big hind end with the gauzy geranium print stuck up in the air. People would talk about it for days to come.

“What are those things on your face?”

Olive turns her head toward the door. “Are you still there? I thought you’d gone away.”

“There’s a hair coming out of one of those things on your face,” the child says, bolder now, taking a step into the room. “The one on your chin.”

Olive turns her gaze back to the ceiling and receives these words without an accompanying wing beat in her chest. Amazing how nasty kids are these days. And it was very smart to put that skylight over the bed. Chris has told her how in the winter sometimes he can lie in bed and watch it snow. He has always been like that—a different kind of person, very sensitive. It was what made him an excellent oil painter, though such a thing was not usually expected of a podiatrist. He was a complicated, interesting man, her son, so sensitive as a child that once, when he was reading Heidi he painted a picture to illustrate it—some wildflowers on an Alpine hillside.

“What is that on your chin?”

Olive sees that the little girl has been chewing on a ribbon from her dress. “Crumbs,” Olive says. “From little girls I’ve eaten up. Now go away before I eat you, too.” She makes her eyes big.

The girl steps back slightly, holding the doorjamb. “You’re making that up,” she finally says, but she turns and disappears.

“ ‘Bout time,” Olive murmurs.

Now she hears the sound of high heels clattering unevenly down the hallway. “Looking for the little girls’ room,” a woman’s voice says, and Olive recognizes the voice of Janice Bernstein, Suzanne’s mother. Henry’s voice answers, “Oh, right there, right there.”

Olive waits for Henry to look into the bedroom, and in a moment he does. His big face is shiny with the affability that comes over him in large groups of people. “You all right, Ollie?”

“Shhh. Shut up. I don’t need everyone knowing I’m in here.”

He steps farther into the room. “You all right?” he whispers.

“I’m ready to go home. Though I expect you’ll want to stay until the last dog dies. Don’t I hate a grown woman who says ‘the little girls’ room.’ Is she drunk?”

“Oh, I don’t think so, Ollie.”

“They’re smoking outside there.” Olive nods toward the window. “I hope they don’t set the place on fire.”

“They won’t.” Then, after a moment, Henry says, “Everything went well, I think.”

“Oh, sure. You go say your goodbyes now, so we can get going.”

“He’s married a nice woman,” Henry says, hesitating by the foot of the bed.

“Yes, I think he has.” They are silent for a moment; it is a shock, after all. Their son, their only child, married now. He is thirty-eight years old; they’d gotten pretty used to him.

They expected at one point that he would marry his office assistant, but that didn’t last very long. Then it seemed that he would marry the teacher who lived out on Turtleback Island, but that didn’t last long either. Then it happened, right out of the blue: Suzanne Bernstein, M.D., Ph.D., showed up in town for a conference and trotted around all week in a new pair of shoes. The shoes inflamed an ingrown toenail and caused a blister the size of a big marble to appear on her sole; Suzanne was telling the story all day. “I looked in the yellow pages, and by the time I got to his office, I had ruined my feet. He had to drill through a toenail. What a way to meet!”

Olive found the story stupid. Why hadn't the girl, with all her money, simply bought a pair of shoes that fit?

However, that was how the couple met. And the rest, as Suzanne was saying all day, was history. If you call six weeks history. Because that part was surprising as well—to get married quick as a thunder-clap. “Why wait?” Suzanne said to Olive the day she and Christopher stopped by to show off the ring. Olive said agreeably, “No reason at all.”

“Still, Henry,” Olive says now. “How come a gastroenterologist? Plenty of other kinds of doctors to be, without all that poking around. You don't like thinking about it.”

Henry looks at her in his absent way. “I know it,” he says.

Sunlight flickers on the wall and the white curtains move slightly. The smell of cigarette smoke returns. Henry and Olive are silent, gazing at the foot of the bed, until Olive says, “She's a very positive person.”

“She's good for Christopher,” Henry says.

They have been almost whispering, but at the sound of footsteps in the hallway, both of them turn toward the half-open door with perky, pleasant expressions on their faces. Except that Suzanne's mother doesn't stop; she goes right on past in her navy-blue suit, holding a pocketbook that looks like a miniature suitcase.

“You better get back out there,” Olive says. “I'll come say my goodbyes in a minute. Just give me a second to rest.”

“Yes, you rest, Ollie.”

“How about we stop at Dunkin' Donuts,” she says. They like to sit in the booth by the window, and there's a waitress who knows them; she'll say hi nicely, then leave them alone.

“We can do that,” Henry says, at the door.

Lying back against the pillows, she thinks how pale her son was standing there getting married. In his guarded Christopher way he looked gratefully at his bride, who stood, thin and small-breasted, gazing up at him. Her mother cried. It was really something—Janice Bernstein's eyes positively streaming. Afterward she said to Olive, “Don't you cry at weddings?”

“I don't see any reason to cry,” Olive said.

Weeping would not have come close to what she felt. She felt fear, sitting out there on her folding chair. Fear that her heart would squeeze shut again, would stop, the way it did once before, a fist punched through her back. And she felt it, too, at the way the bride was smiling up at Christopher, as though she actually knew him. Because did she know what he looked like in first grade when he had a nosebleed in Miss Lampley's class? Did she see him when he was a pale, slightly pudgy child, his skin broken out in hives because he was afraid to take a spelling test? No, what Suzanne was mistaking for knowing someone was knowing sex with that person for a couple of weeks. You never could have told her that, though. If Olive had told her that the nasturtiums were actually petunias (which she did not do), Dr. Sue might have said, “Well, I've seen nasturtiums that look just like that.” But, still, it was disconcerting how Suzanne looked at Christopher while they were getting married, as though saying, “I know you—yes, I do. I do.”

A screen door bangs. A man's voice asking for a cigarette. Another click of a lighter, the deep murmur of men's voices. "Stuffed myself...."

Olive can understand why Chris has never bothered having many friends. He is like her that way, can't stand the blah-blah-blah. And they'd just as soon blah-blah-blah about you when your back is turned. "Never trust folks," Olive's mother told her years ago, after someone left a basket of cow flaps by their front door. Henry got irritated by that way of thinking. But Henry was pretty irritating himself, with his steadfast way of remaining naïve, as though life were just what a Sears catalogue told you it was: everyone standing around smiling.

Still, Olive herself has been worried about Christopher's being lonely. She was especially haunted this past winter by the thought of her son's becoming an old man, returning home from work in the darkness, after she and Henry were gone. So she is glad, really, about Suzanne. It was sudden, and will take getting used to, but all things considered, Dr. Sue will do fine. And the girl has been perfectly friendly to her. ("I can't believe you did the blueprints yourself!" Blond eyebrows raised sky-high.) Besides, Christopher, let's face it, is gaga over her. Of course, right now their sex life is probably very exciting, and they undoubtedly think that will last, the way new couples do. They think they're finished with loneliness, too.

This thought causes Olive to nod her head slowly as she lies on the bed. She knows that loneliness can kill people—in different ways can actually make you die. Olive's private view is that life depends on what she thinks of as "big bursts" and "little bursts." Big bursts are things like marriage or children, intimacies that keep you afloat, but these big bursts hold dangerous, unseen currents. Which is why you need the little bursts as well: a friendly clerk at Bradlee's, let's say, or the waitress at Dunkin' Donuts who knows how you like your coffee. Tricky business, really.

"Nice spot Suzanne's getting here," says one of the deep voices outside the window. Heard very clearly; they must have shifted their feet around now, facing the house.

"Great spot," says the other voice. "We came up here when I was a kid and stayed at Speckled Egg Harbor, I think. Something like that."

Polite men having their cigarettes. Just keep your feet off the glads, Olive thinks, and don't burn down that fence. She is sleepy, and the feeling is not unpleasant. She could take a nap right here if they'd give her twenty minutes, then go make her rounds and say goodbye, clear-headed and calm from a little sleep. She will take Janice Bernstein's hand and hold it a moment; she will be a gracious gray-haired, pleasantly large woman in her soft, red-flowered dress.

A screen door slams. "The emphysema brigade," comes Suzanne's bright voice, and the clapping of her hands.

Olive's eyes flip open. She feels a jolt of panic, as if she herself has just been caught smoking in the woods.

"Do you know those things will kill you?"

"Oh, I've never heard that," the man says jovially. "Suzanne, I don't think I've ever heard that before."

The screen door opens and closes again; someone has gone in. Olive sits up, her nap spoiled.

Now a softer voice comes through the window. That skinny little friend of Suzanne's, Olive thinks, whose dress looks like a piece of wrapped seaweed. "You holding up okay?"

"Yeah." Suzanne draws the word out, somehow—enjoying the attention, Olive thinks.

"So, Suzie, how do you like your new in-laws?"

Olive's heart goes beat-beat as she sits on the edge of the bed.

"It's interesting," Suzanne says, her voice lowered and serious: Dr. Sue, the professional, about to give a paper on intestinal parasites. Her voice drops and Olive can't hear.

"I can see that." Murmur, murmur. "The father—"

"Oh, Henry's a doll."

Olive stands up and very slowly moves along the wall closer to the open window. A shaft of the late-afternoon sun falls over the side of her face as she strains her head forward to make out words in the sounds of the women's murmuring.

"Oh, God, yes," says Suzanne, her quiet words suddenly distinct. "I couldn't believe it. I mean that she would really wear it."

The dress, Olive thinks. She pulls herself back against the wall.

"Well, people dress differently up here."

By God, we do, Olive thinks. But she is stunned in her underwater way.

Seaweed Friend murmurs again. Her voice is difficult to make out, but Olive hears her say, "Chris."

"Very special," Suzanne answers seriously, and for Olive it is as if these women are sitting in a rowboat above her while she sinks into the murky water. "He's had a hard time, you know. And being an only child—that really sucked for him."

Seaweed murmurs, and Suzanne's oar slices through the water again. "The expectations, you know."

Olive turns and gazes slowly around the room. Her son's bedroom. She built it, and there are familiar things in here, too, like the bureau, and the rug she braided a long time ago. But something stunned and fat and black moves through her.

He's had a hard time, you know.

Almost crouching, Olive creeps slowly back to the bed, where she sits down cautiously. What did he tell Suzanne? A hard time. Underneath her tongue, back up by her molars, Olive's mouth begins to secrete. She pictures fleetingly, again, how Suzanne's hand so easily, gently cupped that little girl's head. What had Christopher said? What had he remembered? A person can only move forward, she thinks. A person should only move forward.

And there is the sting of deep embarrassment, because she loves this dress. Her heart really opened when she came across the gauzy muslin in So-Fro's; sunlight let into the anxious gloom of the upcoming wedding; those flowers skimming over the table in her sewing room. Becoming this dress that she took comfort in all day.

She hears Suzanne say something about her guests, and then the screen door slams and it is quiet in the garden. Olive touches her open palm to her cheeks, her mouth. She is going to have to go back into the living room before somebody finds her in here. She will have to bend down and kiss the cheek of that bride, who will be smiling and looking around, with her know-it-all face.

Oh, it hurts—actually makes Olive groan as she sits on the bed. What does Suzanne know about a heart that aches so badly at times that a few months ago it almost gave out, gave up altogether? It is true she doesn't exercise, her cholesterol is sky-high. But all that is only a good excuse, hiding how it's her soul, really, that is wearing out.

Her son came to her last Christmastime, before any Dr. Sue was on the scene, and told her what he sometimes thought about. Sometimes I think about just ending it all—

An uncanny echo of Olive's father, thirty-nine years before. Only, that time, newly married (with disappointments of her own, and pregnant, too, but she hadn't known that part then), she said lightly, "Oh, Father, we all have times when we feel blue." The wrong response, as it turned out.

Olive, on the edge of the bed, leans her face into her hands. She can almost not remember the first decade of Christopher's life, although some things she does remember and doesn't want to. She tried teaching him to play the piano and he wouldn't play the notes right. It was how scared he was of her that made her go all wacky. But she loved him! She would like to say this to Suzanne. She would like to say, Listen, Dr. Sue, deep down there is a thing inside me, and sometimes it swells up like the head of a squid and shoots blackness through me. I haven't wanted to be this way, but so help me, I have loved my son.

It is true. She has. That is why she took him to the doctor this past Christmas, leaving Henry at home, and sat in the waiting room while her heart pumped, until he emerged—this grown man, her son—with a lightened countenance and a prescription for pills. All the way home he talked to her about serotonin levels and genetic tendencies; it might have been the most she had ever heard him say at one time. Like her father, he is not given to talk.

Down the hall now comes the sudden sound of clinking crystal. "A toast to Fidelity Select," a man's voice calls out.

Olive straightens up and runs her hand across the sun-warmed bureau top. It is the bureau that Christopher grew up with, and that stain from a jar of Vicks VapoRub is still there. Next to it now is a stack of folders with Dr. Sue's handwriting on them, and three black Magic Markers, too. Slowly, Olive slides open the top drawer of the bureau. Once a place for a boy's socks and T-shirts, the drawer is now filled with her daughter-in-law's underwear—tumbled together, slippery, lacy, colorful things. Olive tugs on a strap and out comes a shiny pale blue bra, small-cupped and delicate. She turns it slowly in her thick hand, then balls it up and pokes it down into her roomy handbag. Her legs feel swollen, not good.

She looks at the Magic Markers lying on the bureau, next to Suzanne's folders. Miss Smarty, Olive thinks, reaching for a marker and uncapping it, smelling the schoolroom smell of it. Olive wants to smear the marker across the pale bedspread that this bride has brought with her. Looking around the invaded bedroom, she wants to mark every item brought in here over the last month.

Olive walks to the closet, pulls open the door. The dresses there do make her feel violent, though. She wants to snatch them down, twist the expensive dark fabric of these small dresses hanging pompously on wooden hangers. And there are sweaters, different shades of brown and green, folded neatly on a plastic quilted hanging shelf. One of them near the bottom is actually beige. For God's sake, what's wrong with a little color? Olive's fingers shake because she is angry, and because anyone of course could walk down the hall right now and stick his head through the open door.

The beige sweater is thick, and this is good, because it means the girl won't wear it until fall. Olive unfolds it quickly and smears a black line of Magic Marker down one arm. Then she holds the marker in her mouth and refolds the sweater hurriedly, folding it again, and even again, to get it as neat as it was at first. But she manages. You would never, opening this closet door, know that someone had pawed through it, everything so neat.

Except for the shoes. All over the floor of the closet shoes are tossed and scattered. Olive chooses a dark, scuffed loafer that looks as though it is worn frequently; in fact, Olive has often seen Suzanne wearing these loafers—having bagged a husband, Olive supposes, she can now flop around in beaten-up shoes. Bending over, scared for a moment that she won't get up, Olive pushes the loafer down inside her handbag, and then, hoisting herself, she does get up, panting slightly, and arranges the tinfoil-wrapped package of blueberry cake so that it covers the shoe.

"You all set?"

Henry is standing in the doorway, his face shiny and happy now that he's made the rounds, now that he's been the sort of man who is well liked, a doll. Much as she wants to tell him what she has just heard, much as she wants relief from the solitary burden of what she's done, she will not tell.

"You want to stop at Dunkin' Donuts on the way?" Henry asks, his big ocean-colored eyes looking at her. He is an innocent. It's how he has learned to get through life.

"Oh," says Olive, "I don't know if I need a doughnut, Henry."

"That's all right. I just thought you said—"

"Okay. Sure, let's stop."

Olive tucks her handbag under her large arm, pressing it to her as she walks toward the door. It does not help much, but it does help some, to know that at least there will be moments now when Suzanne will doubt herself. Calling out, "Christopher, are you sure you haven't seen my shoe?" Looking through the laundry, her underwear drawer, some anxiety will flutter through her. "I must be losing my mind, I can't keep track of anything.... And, my God, what happened to my sweater?" And she would never know, would she? Because who would mark a sweater, steal a bra, take one shoe?

The sweater will be ruined, and the shoe will be gone, along with the bra, covered by used Kleenex and old sanitary napkins in the bathroom trash of Dunkin' Donuts, and then squashed into a dumpster the next day. As a matter of fact, there is no reason, if Dr. Sue is going to live near Olive, that Olive can't occasionally take a little of this, a little of that—just to keep the self-doubt alive. Give herself a little burst. Because Christopher doesn't need to be living with a woman who thinks she knows everything. Nobody knows everything—they shouldn't think they do.

"Let's go," Olive says finally, and she clutches her bag beneath her arm, preparing for a journey through the living room. Picturing her heart, a big red muscle, banging away beneath her flowered dress.

8. Appendix II: My Translation of “A Little Burst” by Elizabeth Strout

Mali prasak

Prije tri sata, dok su se sunčeve zrake probijale kroz krošnje drveća i obasjavale travnjak iza kuće, lokalni podijatar, čovjek srednjih godina imenom Christopher Kitteridge, oženio je Suzanne, ženu iz drugog grada. Bio je to prvi brak za oboje, a vjenčanje je bilo mala, ugodna zabava s flautisticom i košarama sitnih žutih ruža koje su ukrašavale kuću i dvorište. Zasad, čini se da dobro raspoloženje gostiju neće tako skoro splasnuti, a Olive Kitteridge, stojeći pored stola u vrtu, razmišlja kako je stvarno krajnje vrijeme da se svi razidu.

Cijelo se poslijepodne Olive bori s osjećajem da tone – paničnim, tmurnim osjećajem, budući da nikad nije naučila plivati. Gurajući salvetu među daščice drvenog vrtnog stola, Olive razmišlja - Dobro, dosta je bilo - i spuštajući pogled kako bi izbjegla uplitanje u još jedan preglasani razgovor, odlazi do druge strane kuće i vrata koja vode direktno u spavaću sobu njenog sina. Prelazi preko poda od borovine, koji se presijavao na suncu, i spušta se na Christopherov (i Suzannein) veliki bračni krevet.

Oliveina haljina – koja je danas itekako važna jer ipak je Olive mladoženjina majka - izrađena je od lepršavog zelenog muslina s otisnutim velikim crvenkasto-rozim cvjetovima pelargonije. Olive se mora pažljivo smjestiti na krevet da se haljina ne bi zgužvala i kako bi izgledala pristojno u slučaju da netko uđe u sobu. Olive je krupna i svjesna je toga, no nije uvijek bila krupna i to je još uvijek nešto na što se mora naviknuti. Istina je da je uvijek bila visoka i često se osjećala nespretno, ali njena je debljina došla s godinama; gležnjevi su joj natekli, jastučići sala nakupili su se iza vrata, a zglobovi i ruke postali su veliki kao u nekog muškarca. Olive to smeta – naravno da da; ponekad kad je sama, strašno joj smeta. Ali u ovoj se fazi života ne namjerava odreći utjehe koju joj pruža hrana, što znači da u ovom trenutku vjerojatno izgleda poput debelog, uspavanog tuljana umotanog u nekakav proziran zavoj. No haljina je dobro poslužila, podsjeća samu sebe naslanjajući se i zatvarajući oči. Mnogo bolje od tamne odjeće koju nosi obitelj Bernstein, kao da su pozvani na sprovod, a ne na vjenčanje, ovog sunčanog lipanjskog dana.

Vrata sinove spavaće sobe napola su otvorena pa se glasovi i zvukovi probijaju izvana, gdje zabava još uvijek traje: visoke potpetice odzvanjaju hodnikom, snažno udaranje vratima kupaonice (Mislim stvarno, zašto jednostavno lijepo ne zatvore vrata? - pita se Olive). Netko u dnevnom boravku vuče stolicu po podu, a s prigušenim smijehom i glasovima dopire i miris kave i gusti, slatki miris peciva, onako kako su znale mirisati ulice blizu tvornice kruha Nissen prije nego što se zatvorila. Osjete se i različiti parfemi, uključujući i jedan koji Olive cijeli dan podsjeća na nekakav sprej protiv insekata. Svi su ti mirisi uspjeli proći hodnikom i zavući se u spavaću sobu.

Tu je i dim cigareta. Olive otvori oči: netko puši u stražnjem dvorištu. Kroz otvoren prozor čuje kašalj, klik upaljača. Doista, mjesto izgleda preplavljeno. Zamišlja glomazne cipele kako koračaju kroz gredice gladiola, a onda čuje puštanje vode u kupaonici na kraju hodnika i pred očima joj je slika kuće kako se urušava: cijevi pucaju, podovi se dižu, zidovi se ruše. Polagano se uspravlja u sjedeći položaj, popravljajući haljinu i stavlja još jedan jastuk na uzglavlje kreveta.

Sama je sagradila kuću – dobro, gotovo sama. Prije mnogo su godina ona i Henry napravili nacrt i blisko surađivali s graditeljem, da bi Christopher imao pristojno mjesto za život kad se vrati s fakulteta. Kad sam izgradiš kuću, drukčije gledaš na nju nego drugi ljudi. Olive se na to naviknula jer je uvijek voljela izrađivati stvari: haljine, vrtove, kuće. (Ona je ta koja je jutros prije svitanja aranžirala žute ruže u košarama.) Njezinu kuću, nekoliko kilometara niz ulicu, također su davno izgradili ona i Henry. Upravo je nedavno otpustila čistačicu zbog načina na koji je glupava djevojka vukla usisavač po podu, znajući njime tresnuti o zid ili ga bubnuti niza stepenice.

Barem Christopher cijeni ovo mjesto. Tijekom posljednjih nekoliko godina njih su se troje, Olive, Henry i Christopher, zajednički brinuli za kuću, raščišćavali šumu, sadili jorgovane i rododendrone, iskopavali rupe za stupove za ogradu. Sad će Suzanne (Dr. Sue kako je Olive zove u svojoj glavi) to preuzeti i budući da dolazi iz

imućne obitelji, vjerojatno će zaposliti domara i vrtlara. („Jako mi se sviđaju vaši dragoljubi“, rekla je Dr. Sue Olive prije nekoliko tjedana, pokazujući na redove petunija.) Ali nije bitno, misli si sad Olive. Makneš se sa strane i oslobodiš mjesto za druge.

Kroz zatvorene kapke Olive vidi crvenu svjetlost koja dolazi kroz prozore; osjeća kako joj sunce grije listove i gležnjeve dok leži na krevetu, pod rukom može osjetiti kako je sunce zagrijalo mekanu tkaninu njezine haljine, koja je stvarno lijepo ispala. Zadovoljna je dok misli na komad kolača od borovnice koji je uspjela ubaciti u svoju veliku kožnu torbicu – kako će uskoro otići kući i pojesti ga u miru, skinuti ovaj steznik, vratiti se u normalu.

Olive osjeti da je netko ušao u sobu i otvori oči. Na vratima stoji dijete i zuri; jedna od mladenkinih malih nećakinja iz Chicaga. To je ona koja je trebala bacati ružine latice po podu neposredno prije vjenčanja, ali je u zadnji tren odlučila da ne želi, oklijevajući i dureći se. Dr. Sue se nije ljutila zbog toga; pokušala je utješiti djevojčicu nježno je mazeći po glavi. Konačno je Suzanne samo dobroćudno rekla „Nastavite“ ženi pored stabla koja je počela svirati flautu. Potom je Suzanne otišla do Christophera, koji se nije smiješio, već je izgledao ukočeno kao drvena Marija – i njih su dvoje stajali ondje u vrtu, stupajući u brak.

Ali pred Olive je stalno bio taj prizor, nježno milovanje djetetove glave, načina na koji je Suzanne samo jednim pokretom ruke pogladila lijepu kosicu i tanki vrat. Bilo je to kao da gleda ženu kako iz čamca skače u more i s lakoćom pliva do doka. Podsjetnik kako neki ljudi mogu raditi stvari koje drugi ne mogu.

„Bok“, reče Olive djevojčici, ali djevojčica ne odgovori ništa. Nekoliko trenutaka poslije Olive upita: „Koliko imaš godina?“ Više nije toliko u kontaktu s mladima, ali nagađa da ovo dijete ima oko četiri godine, možda pet; nitko iz obitelji Bernstein ne izgleda visoko.

Dijete i dalje ništa ne govori. „Hajde, idi sada“, reče joj Olive, ali se djevojčica nasloni na dovratnik i počne se lagano njihat i dalje zureći u Olive. „Nije pristojno zuriti“, upozori ju Olive. „Zar te nitko to nije naučio?“

I dalje se ljuljajući, djevojčica mirno odgovori: „Izgledate mrtvo.“

Olive podigne glavu. „To vas sada uče da kažete?“ Osjeća fizičku reakciju dok se spušta natrag na krevet, na trenutak joj lagana bol pulsira u prsima, kao da ima krilo u sebi. Djevojčici treba oprati usta sapunom.

U svakom slučaju, dan je gotovo pri kraju. Preživjela ga je, uvjerava samu sebe dok leži na krevetu i gleda kroz krovni prozor u nebo. Zamišljala je kako je doživjela drugi srčani udar na dan sinova vjenčanja: sjedila bi u vrtu na svojoj stolici na sklapanje svima na vidiku i nakon što bi njen sin rekao „Uzimam“, ona bi se tiho, nespretno srušila mrtva, s licem u travi i svojom velikom stražnjicom prekrivenom pelargonijama u zraku. Ljudi bi još danima pričali o tome.

„Što vam je to na licu?“

Olive okrene glavu prema vratima. „Još si tu? Mislila sam da si otišla.“

„Raste vam dlaka iz jedne od tih stvari na vašem licu“, reče dijete sada odvažnije i zakorači u sobu. „Iz toga na bradi.“

Olive vrati pogled na strop i prihvati ove riječi bez popratne boli u prsima. Nevjerojatno koliko su ovih dana djeca zločesta. Jako je dobra ideja što su stavili krovni prozor iznad kreveta. Chris joj je rekao kako ponekad zimi može ležati i gledati dok vani sniježi. Uvijek je bio takav – drukčiji, jako emotivan. To je ono što ga je činilo izvrsnim slikarom ulja na platnu, iako se takvo što ne očekuje od podijatra. Njezin je sin bio kompliciran, zanimljiv čovjek, tako osjećajan kao dijete da je jednom čitajući Heidi sam ilustrirao priču – naslikao je cvijeće na alpskim padinama.

„Što vam je to na bradi?“

Olive primijeti da djevojčica žvače vrpču sa svoje haljine. „Mrvice“, odgovori Olive. „Od malih djevojčica koje sam pojela. Sad odlazi prije nego što i tebe pojedem“, reče i raskolači oči.

Djevojčica lagano zakorači unazad, držeći se za dovratnik. „Izmišljate to“, napokon odgovori, ali se okrene i nestane.

„Konačno“, promrmlja Olive.

Sad začuje zvuk visokih potpetica kako neujednačeno lupkaju hodnikom. „Tražim toalet“, kaže ženski glas i Olive prepozna da je to glas Janice Bernstein, Suzanneine majke. Henryjev glas odgovori: „Aha, tamo, tamo.“

Olive pričekala da Henry zaviri u spavaću sobu te za trenutak on to i učini. Njegovo se veliko lice sjaji od prijaznosti koja ga obuzme kad god se nađe u velikim skupinama ljudi. „Sve u redu, Ollie?“

„Pssst. Šuti. Ne želim da svi znaju da sam ovdje.“

On uđe u sobu. „Sve u redu?“ šapne.

„Spremna sam za polazak. Iako ti vjerojatno želiš ostati do fajrunta. Kako mrzim kad se odrasla žena pravi tako pristojna. Je li pijana?“

„Mislim da nije, Ollie.“

„Netko vani puši.“ Olive kimne prema prozoru. „Nadam se da neće zapaliti kuću.“

„Neće.“ Nakon nekoliko trenutaka Henry reče: „Mislim da je sve dobro prošlo.“

„Naravno. Idi se sad pozdraviti pa da možemo krenuti.“

„Oženio je dobru ženu“, rekao je Henry, oklijevajući uz rub kreveta.

„Da, mislim da je.“ Na trenutak zavlada tišina; naposljetku, ipak je to šok. Njihov sin, njihovo jedino dijete, sad je oženjeno. Ima 38 godina; poprilično su se bili naviknuli na njega.

U jednom su trenutku očekivali da će oženiti svoju tajnicu, ali to nije trajalo jako dugo. Nakon toga činilo se da će oženiti učiteljicu koja je živjela na otoku Turtleback, ali ni to nije dugo trajalo. A onda se dogodilo kao grom iz vedra neba: Dr. Suzanne Bernstein pojavila se u gradu na nekakvoj konferenciji i cijeli je tjedan tapkala uokolo u novim cipelama. Zbog cipela joj se upalio urasli nokat, a na tabanu se stvorio žulj veličine špekule; Suzanne je cijeli dan prepričavala događaj. „Prelistala sam žute stranice, a dok sam došla do njegovog ureda, stopala su mi bila uništena. Morao je bušiti kroz nokat. Kakav način da se upoznamo!“

Olive je priču smatrala glupom. Zašto djevojka sa svim tim silnim novcem koji ima nije jednostavno kupila par cipela koji joj odgovara?

Međutim, tako su se njih dvoje upoznali. A sve je ostalo, kako je Suzanne govorila cijeli dan, povijest. Ako šest tjedana možeš nazvati poviješću. Jer taj je dio isto iznenađujući – vjenčali su se dok kažeš keks. „Zašto čekati?“ rekla je Suzanne Olive onaj dan kad su ona i Christopher svratili da se pohvale prstenom. Olive se složila: „Stvarno nema razloga.“

„Ali ipak, Henry“, rekla je sada Olive. „Zašto baš gastroenterolog? Toliko je drugih vrsta doktora, bez svog tog prćkanja. Ne volim ni misliti o tome.“

Henry je gleda na svoj odsutan način. „Znam“, odgovori.

Sunčeva svjetlost titra na zidu, a bijela zavjesa lagano se miče. Vraća se miris zapaljene cigarete. Henry i Olive sjede u tišini zureći u podnožje kreveta kad Olive progovori: „Ona je jako pozitivna osoba.“

„Dobra je za Christophera“, kaže Henry.

Gotovo su šaputali, no na zvuk koraka u hodniku oboje se okrenu prema poluotvorenim vratima s veselim, ugodnim izrazom na licima. Samo što se Suzanneina majka nije zaustavila; prošla je u svom mornarsko plavom kostimu, držeći torbicu koja izgleda kao minijturni kovčeg.

„Bolje se vrati tamo“, rekla je Olive. „Ja ću se doći pozdraviti za minutu. Samo me pusti na sekundu da se odmorim.“

„Da, odmori se, Ollie.“

„Što misliš da stanemo u slastičarnicu“, upita ga. Voljeli su sjediti u separeu pored prozora, a tamo je i konobarica koja ih poznaje; lijepo će ih pozdraviti i pustiti na miru.

„Možemo“, odgovori Henry s vrata.

Naslonjena na jastuke iza sebe, razmišlja kako je blijedo izgledao njen sin za vrijeme vjenčanja. Na svoj čuveni christopherski način zahvalno je gledao svoju mladenku, koja je, mršava i malih grudi, stajala i zurila u njega. Njezina je majka plakala. To je stvarno bilo nešto – iz očiju Janice Bernstein tekao je potok suza. Poslije je rekla Olive: „Zar ti ne plačeš na vjenčanjima?“

„Ne vidim razloga za plakanje“, odgovorila joj je Olive.

Plakanje nije ni blizu onoga kako se ona osjećala. Osjećala je strah dok je sjedila tamo na svojoj stolici na sklapanje. Strah da će joj se srce opet stisnuti i stati, onako kako se već jednom dogodilo, udarac šakom kroz leđa. Osjećala je to i u načinu na koji se mladenka smiješila Christopheru, kao da ga uistinu poznaje. A zna li kako je izgledao u prvom razredu kada mu je krv potekla iz nosa na satu gospođice Lampley? Je li ga vidjela kad je bio blijed, punašan dječak, a na koži mu izbio osip jer se bojao testa iz pravopisa? Ne, ono što je Suzanne smatrala poznavanjem neke osobe jest poznavanje seksa s tom osobom od nekoliko tjedana. Naime, nikad joj to ne bi mogla reći. Da joj je Olive rekla da su dragoljubi zapravo petunije (što nije učinila), Dr. Sue bi rekla: „Pa, vidjela sam dragoljube koji izgledaju baš tako.“ Ipak, bilo je uznemirujuće kako je Suzanne gledala Christophera za vrijeme vjenčanja, kao da govori: „Znam te – da, da, znam te.“

Mrežasta se vrata zalupe. Muški glas pita za cigaretu. Još jedan klik upaljača, duboko mrmljanje muških glasova. „Prejeo sam se...“

Olive razumije zašto se Chris nikad nije brinuo što nema puno prijatelja. On je po tome na nju, ne može podnijeti to blebetanje. A čim im okreneš leđa, oni će odmah blebetati o tebi. „Nikad ne vjeruj ljudima“, rekla je Olivei njezina majka davno, kad im je netko pred kućna vrata ostavio košaru punu kravlje balege. Henryja je iritiralo takvo razmišljanje. Ali Henry je i sam sebe poprilično iritirao svojom upornom naivnošću, kao da je život onakav kakav je u nekom katalogu: svi su sretni i nasmijani.

Ipak, Olive je bila zabrinuta da je Christopher možda usamljen. Prošle ju je zime posebno progonila misao da će njen sin postati starac, vratit će se kući s posla u potpuni mrak nakon što nje i Henryja više ne bude. Iz tog joj je razloga stvarno drago zbog Suzanne. Dogodilo se iznenada i trebat će vremena da se naviknu, ali s obzirom na sve, Dr. Sue će biti sasvim dobra. I djevojka se potpuno prijateljski odnosi prema njoj. („Ne mogu vjerovati da ste sami napravili skice za haljinu!“ Žute obrve podigle su se u nebesa.) Usto, treba prihvatiti da je Christopher lud za njom. Vjerojatno je njihov seksualni život sad jako uzbudljiv i oni nesumnjivo misle da će to potrajati, kao i svi novopečeni parovi. Misle i da je razdoblje usamljenosti završilo.

Ta misao natjera Olive da lagano klimne glavom dok je lijegala na krevet. Zna da usamljenost ljude može ubiti – na različite te načine može natjerati da umreš. Oliveino je osobno gledište da život ovisi o onome što ona zove „veliki praskovi“ i „mali praskovi“. Veliki su praskovi stvari poput stupanja u brak ili rođenja djece, osobne stvari koje te drže živim, iako ti veliki praskovi u sebi nose opasna, neviđena strujanja. Upravo zato trebamo i male praskove: recimo ljubazni djelatnik u robnoj kući ili konobarica u slastičarnici koja zna kakvu kavu piješ. Nezgodna stvar, doista.

„Suzanne će dobiti lijepu kuću“, kaže jedan od dubokih glasova s vanjske strane prozora. Mora da su se okrenuli prema kući jer ih se sad sasvim jasno moglo čuti.

„Prekrasno mjesto“, kaže drugi glas. „Došli smo ovdje kad sam bio dijete i mislim da smo odsjeli u pansionu Speckled Egg Harbor. Ili tako nešto.

Pristojni muškarci uživaju u svojim cigaretama. Samo neka se drže dalje od gladiola, misli Olive, i da ne zapale tu ogradu. Spava joj se, ali osjećaj je ugodan. Mogla bi odrijeti baš ovdje, samo da je puste 20 minuta, onda bi se išla pozdraviti sa svima, bistro glave i mirna poslije malo sna. Primit će Janice Bernstein za ruku i tako je malo držati; bit će dražesna, sjedokosa, ugodno popunjena žena u laganoj haljini na crvene cvjetove.

Mrežasta se vrata zalupe. „Kandidati za emfizem“, dobacuje Suzannein veseo glas i čuje se pljeskanje njenih ruku.

Olive naglo otvori oči. Osjeća trnce panike kao da je upravo ona uhvaćena kako puši u šumi.

„Znate li da će vas ubiti te cigarete?“

„Ah, nikad to nisam čuo“, kaže muškarac vedro. „Suzanne, mislim da to još nisam čuo.“

Mrežasta se vrata ponovo otvore i zatvore; netko je ušao. Olive se uspravi u sjedeći položaj, ništa od drijemanja.

Sad se mekši glas začuje kroz prozor. Ona mala mršava Suzanneina prijateljica, misli Olive, čija haljina izgleda poput zapetljane morske trave. „Dobro se držiš?“

„Aha.“ Suzanne rastegne riječ nekako – uživajući u pažnji, misli Olive.

„I, Suzanne, kako ti se sviđaju svekar i svekrva?“

Oliveino srce počne jače tući dok sjedi na rubu kreveta.

„Zanimljivo je“, kaže Suzanne tihim i ozbiljnim glasom: Dr. Sue, profesionalka, sprema se dati izvještaj o crijevnim parazitima. Glas joj se stiha i Olive više ništa ne može čuti.

„Osjetim to.“ Mrmljanje, mrmljanje. „Otac –“

„Ah, Henry je drag.“

Olive se ustane i počne polagano koračati uza zid do otvorenog prozora. Zraka popodnevnog sunca obasja joj jednu stranu lica dok se napinje glavom kroz prozor ne bi li razaznala riječi u mrmljanju tih žena.

„Ajme, da“, kaže Suzanne odjednom tiho kao iz udaljenosti. „Nisam mogla vjerovati. Mislim, da će to stvarno obući.“

Haljina, misli Olive. Vratila se natrag uza zid.

„Pa, ljudi se ovdje drukčije odijevaju.“

Pobogu, da, misli Olive. Ali je u šoku, kao da je opet pod vodom.

Prijateljica Morska Trava opet mrmlja. Olive teško razaznaje što govori, ali čuje da je rekla: „Chris“.

„Jako poseban“, Suzanne ozbiljno odgovara i Olive se čini kao da ove žene sjede u čamcu i veslaju dok ona ispod njih tone u mračnu vodu. „Bilo mu je teško, znate. I to što je jedina – to mu je stvarno bilo grozno.“

Morska Trava mrmlja, a Suzanne ponovno veslima zamahuje kroz vodu. „Očekivanja.“

Olive se okrene i lagano pogledom preleti po sobi. Spavaća soba njenog sina. Ona ju je sagradila i ovdje su smještene poznate stvari, poput ovog pisaćeg stola i prostirača koji je davno isplela. No, nešto nejasno, debelo i crno prožima Oliveino tijelo.

Bilo mu je teško, znate.

Gotovo čučajući, Olive se polako odšulja natrag do kreveta i oprezno sjedne. Što je rekao Suzanne? Da mu je bilo teško. Pod jezikom, iza kod kutnjaka, u ustima joj se počnu stvarati sline. Pred očima joj je nakratko ponovno Suzanneina slika dok lagano i nježno rukom miluje glavu one djevojčice. Što joj je Christopher rekao? Čega se sjetio? Ljudi mogu samo nastaviti živjeti, misli. Ljudi trebaju samo nastaviti živjeti.

Kao igla probode je osjećaj dubokog srama zato što joj se sviđa ova haljina. Srce joj je zaigralo kad je u trgovini s tkaninama naišla na ovaj lagani muslin; malo sunca u mučnoj tami nadolazećeg vjenčanja; ti cvjetovi koji su klizili preko stola u sobi za šivanje, postajući haljina u kojoj nalazi utjehu cijeli dan.

Čuje Suzanne kako govori nešto o svojim gostima, a onda se mrežasta vrata zalupe i u vrtu je opet tiho. Olive otvorenim dlanom dotakne obraze i usne. Morat će se vratiti u dnevnu sobu prije no što netko naiđe i zatekne je ovdje. Morat će se sagnuti i poljubiti obraz te mladenke, koja će se smiješiti i razgledati okolo, sa svojim licem sveznalice.

Oh, boli – Olive zastenje dok sjeda na krevet. Što Suzanne zna o srcu koje ponekad tako jako boli da je prije nekoliko mjeseci zamalo stalo, odustalo od svega? Istina je da ne vježba i da joj je kolesterol jako visok. Ali sve je to samo dobar izgovor, skrivajući da je njena duša ta koja je zapravo iscrpljena.

Sin joj je prišao prošlog Božića, prije nego je ikakva Dr. Sue bila u igri, i rekao o čemu ponekad razmišlja. Ponekad razmišljam da sve okončam –

Jezovita jeka Oliveinog oca prije 39 godina. Samo što je taj put, tek udana (s vlastitim razočaranjima i trudna, iako to tad još nije znala) olako odgovorila: „Ah, oče, svakome dođe trenutak kad se osjeća sjetno.“ Krivi odgovor, kako se poslije pokazalo.

Na rubu kreveta, Olive naslanja lice u ruke. Gotovo se ne može sjetiti prvog desetljeća Christopherova života, iako se nekih stvari sjeća, a ne želi ih se sjećati. Pokušala ga je naučiti svirati glasovir, ali pogrešno je svirao note. Toliko je se bojao da bi ona „pošizila“. Ali voljela ga je! Voljela bi to reći Suzanne. Voljela bi reći – Slušaj, Dr. Sue, duboko u meni je nešto, ponekad natekne kao glava od lignje i pusti crnilo kroz mene. Nisam željela da tako ispadne, ali tako mi pomogao Bog, voljela sam svog sina.

Istina je. Voljela ga je. Zato ga je tog prošlog Božića odvela doktoru, dok je Henry bio kod kuće, i sjedila je u toj čekaonici, a srce joj je luđački tuklo, dok se on nije pojavio – taj odrasli muškarac, njen sin – ozarena lica i s receptom za tablete. Cijelim putem kući govorio je o razinama serotonina i genetskim predispozicijama; to je možda bilo najduže što je ikad pričao, koliko ona zna. Nije stvoren za govor, baš kao ni njen otac.

Iz dna hodnika sad dopire zveket kristalnih čaša. „Zdravica za Izabranu Vjernost“, zove muški glas.

Olive se uspravi i rukom prijeđe preko suncem zagrijane površine pisaćeg stola. To je stol uz koji je Christopher odrastao, a mrlja od posudice kreme Vicks VapoRub još uvijek je tamo. Pored nje sad je hrpa uredskih mapa s rukopisom Dr. Sue i tri crna markera. Olive polako otvori gornju ladicu stola. Nekad ladica za dječakove čarape i majice, sad puna donjeg rublja njezine snahe – nabacano zajedno, glatko, čipkasto i šareno. Olive povuče jednu naramenicu i izvuče sjajni, glatki svijetloplavi grudnjak s malim košaricama. Polako ga okrene u svojim jakim rukama, onda ga smota i ugura u svoju veliku torbu. Osjeća da su joj noge natekle, nije dobro.

Pogleda u markere na pisaćem stolu odmah pored Suzanneinih mapa. Gospođica Pametnjakovića, misli Olive sežući za markerom. Miris otklopljenog markera podsjeti je na miris učionice. Olive poželi markerom pošarati

svijetli prekrivač na krevetu koji je mladenka donijela sa sobom. Razgledajući po sobi poželi označiti svaki komad namještaja koji je ovdje donesen prošlog mjeseca.

Olive ode do ormara i otvori vrata. Zbog haljina u ormaru osjeća se pomalo agresivno. Želi zgrabiti i zgužvati skupocjeni tamni materijal tih haljinica koje raskošno vise na drvenim vješalicama. Tu su puloveri u različitim nijansama smeđe i zelene boje, uredno složeni na plastičnoj visećoj polici. Jedan od pulovera pri dnu je bež. Za Boga miloga, što fali bojama? Oliveini prsti drhte jer je ljuta i, naravno, jer bi mogao netko proći hodnikom i zaviriti kroz otvorena vrata.

Bež pulover je debeo i to je dobro jer znači da ga djevojka neće nositi do jeseni. Olive ga brzo razmota i povuče crnu liniju duž jednog rukava. Onda pridrži marker ustima i užurbano složi pulover, presavije ga jednom, pa još jednom ne bi li izgledao uredno kao što je bio na početku. Uspjela je. Nikad ne biste pomislili da je netko kopao po ormaru, sve je tako uredno.

Osim cipela. One su razbacane po cijelom podu ormara. Olive izabere tamnu, pohabanu mokasinku koja izgleda kao da je često nošena; zapravo, Olive je nerijetko viđala Suzanne u tim mokasinkama. Sad kad je ulovila muža, misli Olive, može tapkati uokolo u razgaženim cipelama. Saginjući se i uplašena na trenutak da se neće moći uspraviti, Olive ugura mokasinku u torbicu i podigne se - uspjela se uspraviti - lagano zadihana, namjesti u foliju umotan kolač od borovnice tako da pokriva cipelu.

„Jesi spremna?“

Henry stoji na vratima ozarena i sretna lica sad kad se sa svima pozdravio, sad kad je čovjek kojeg ljudi vole. Koliko god mu željela reći ono što je upravo čula, koliko god željela s nekim podijeliti teret ovoga što je upravo učinila, neće mu reći.

„Želiš da stanemo u slastičarnicu usput?“ upita Henry, sa svojim velikim plavim očima uprtim u nju. On je nevin. Tako je naučio ići kroz život.

„Ah,“ kaže Olive, „ne znam treba li mi kolač, Henry.“

„U redu je. Mislio sam da si rekla...“

„Okej. Može, stanimo.“

Olive ugura torbicu ispod svoje snažne ruke i stisne je uz sebe dok hoda prema vratima. Ne pomaže mnogo, ali ipak malo pomaže to što zna da će sad biti trenutaka kada će Suzanne sumnjati u sebe. Vikat će: „Christopher, jesi li siguran da nisi vidio moju cipelu?“ Tražit će po prljavom rublju, ladici s donjim rubljem i prožet će je neka tjeskoba. „Ludim, ne znam gdje sam što ostavila... I, oh Bože, što se dogodilo mom puloveru?“ I nikad neće saznati, zar ne? Jer tko bi pošarao pulover, ukrao grudnjak, uzeo jednu cipelu?

Pulover će biti uništen, cipela će nestati skupa s grudnjakom, prekrivena upotrijebljenim papirnatim maramicama i ulošcima u kanti za smeće u WC-u slastičarnice, odakle će sutradan biti prebačena u kontejner za smeće. Zapravo, ne postoji razlog ako će Dr. Sue živjeti blizu Olive, da Olive povremeno ne uzme ponešto – samo da održi sumnju u samu sebe živom. Dat će samoj sebi mali prasak. Jer Christopher ne mora živjeti sa ženom koja misli da sve zna. Nitko ne zna sve – ne treba misliti da zna.

„Idemo“, rekla je Olive napokon i stisnula torbu ispod ruke, spremajući se na putovanje kroz dnevnu sobu. Zamišljala je kako joj srce, veliki crveni mišić, tuče ispod cvjetne haljine.

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