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Research article

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"THE WORD *HOMOSEXUAL* IS NOT A NOUN"

Transfiguring James Baldwin's Queerness through Translations of *Giovanni's Room*

Introduction: Nouns of a Native Son

For decades, James Baldwin's sophomore novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956) has been considered a landmark of American queer fiction. In 1973, three members of Gay Activist Alliance took inspiration from its title when they founded Giovanni's Room Bookstore, presently the oldest gay bookstore in the United States. Apart from that, the novel has been routinely featured at the top of classic queer fiction lists, most notably when The Publishing Triangle compiled its list of the hundred best gay and lesbian novels in 1999.[1]

In 2019, *Giovanni's Room* featured on the BBC's list of the hundred most inspiring English language novels in the category "Love, Sex, and Romance."[2] The BBC's disclaimer that these novels "shaped our world" offers a normative reading of the influence literature exerts on modern society, but surely *Giovanni's Room* has helped to shape our contemporary understanding of Baldwin as a writer, especially in non-anglophone Europe. Not only is it Baldwin's most celebrated novel – together, arguably, with his debut *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), which appears on Modern Library's 1998 list of the hundred best English language novels of the twentieth century – but since the turn of the century it has also been his most widely circulated novel through translation in continental Europe.[3] Moreover, Baldwin's novels enjoy far greater circulation-through-translation in Europe than his non-fiction, of which at present only the collections *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and *The Fire Next Time* (1963) are circulating beyond the French and Italian markets – a marked contrast with the essays' omnipresence in the anglophone world. Crucially, despite the importance of Baldwin's essayist output for his revival in popular culture, his queer identity, which is decidedly absent in these texts, remains closely intertwined with his popular reception.

Since the turn of the century, Baldwin's work has enjoyed an international critical and popular renaissance, which has been further amplified by the release of Raoul Peck's documentary *I Am Not your Negro* (2016), Barry Jenkins' film adaptation of

Baldwin's penultimate novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018), and by Baldwin's ongoing mobilization by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and his circulation on social media. Intriguingly, these adaptations of Baldwin's life and work – or *translations* if you will, into new media – are primarily informed either by Baldwin's non-fiction writings, or, in the case of Jenkins' film, by the one novel which is least concerned with notions of queerness. Peck's screenplay constructs a voice-over monologue based on Baldwin's unfished memoir *Remember This House* and a variety of other essays while the overwhelming majority of quotes and videos that circulate on social media are derived from Baldwin's essays, speeches and interviews.[4]

Queerness is routinely if only superficially invoked in these various mobilizations, as well as in their reception. Although *I Am Not Your Negro* contains only one brief allusion to Baldwin's sexuality – a move that has led some to criticize Peck for "erasing" Baldwin's queerness[5] – reviews and promotional material consistently pointed out Baldwin's difficulties as both a Black *and* gay man. In 2021, Wes Anderson's fiction film *The French Dispatch* featured a character that was loosely based on Baldwin: Roebuck Wright (Jeffrey Wright), an expatriate queer African American author residing in France. The flimsy biographical resemblance to Baldwin was enough for the connection to be routinely mentioned in the film's press talks – further aided by the fact that actor Jeffrey Wright himself had been a student of Baldwin's at UMass Amherst.[6] Relatedly, the queer romcom *Bros* (2022), features a hologram of Kenan Thomson ventriloquizing Baldwin in the fictitious National LGBTQ+ History Museum. Earlier in that same film, protagonist Bobby (Billy Eichner) is exchanging flirtatious, slightly scabrous texts with his soon-to-be-lover Aaron: "You had a gender-reveal-orgy? James Baldwin would be so proud!" Baldwin's queerness has thus become a vital part of his posthumous public image, to the extent that fictional gay characters self-mockingly measure their love life to his standards.

One of the few non-fiction pieces where Baldwin *does* address the issue of queerness is a short paragraph in his idiosyncratic volume of film criticism *The Devil Finds Work*.[7] Here he expresses doubt that "Americans will ever be able to face the fact that the word, homosexual, is not a noun."[8] Considering Baldwin's present world literary status – and the significance of his queer writing for his circulation in Europe – Baldwin's complex views on the linguistic representation of queerness warrants a closer examination of the strategies that his European translators have wielded to render the notions – and *nouns* – that denote queerness in Baldwin's oeuvre into their respective languages. As Stefan Helgesson argues, "[w]orld literature has a necessary connection to translation"; a connection that David Damrosch defines as a transcultural process which includes multiple refractions, as they negotiate between 'source' and 'target' cultures and thus bear evidence for shifting literary values.[9] These shifting literary values are evident when considering the taboo queer subject of *Giovanni's Room* and the varying sociopolitical realities and ideological inflections of its target cultures upon original publication – a notion which has been at the heart of recent interventions in the convergent fields of translation and queer studies.[10]

This essay engages in what Helgesson identifies as "text-based approaches to literary translation that deal with textual transformation and recontextualization."[11] Given *Giovanni's Room*'s central position in Baldwin's European *canonization-through-translation*, the translations of the novel's frank discussions of same-sex intimacy are vital to

European audiences' understanding of Baldwin as a queer author. By comparing the Danish, Dutch, French, and German translations of *Giovanni's Room*, this essay argues that a plurality of strategies have been employed to transmit notions of queerness in Baldwin's novel – informed both by socio-political and ideological discrepancies between the various receiving cultures, and linguistic tendencies specific to the respective languages.[12] The comparisons show that over the years, shifts in the reception of queer literature and that of *Giovanni's Room* specifically have led to revised strategies and paratextual elements that offer a much more varied perspective than that on display on the popular slotting of Baldwin as a gay icon. However, this broadened understanding of 'the queer imagination' is itself – due to dominant modes of thinking – constantly under threat, as essentialization diminishes its disruptive potential. Ultimately, the plurality of translation strategies exemplifies *Giovanni's Room*'s inherent destabilizing queer qualities as these diverging translations, too, invoke the tensions and contradictions which are intimately bound up with the inevitable multifariousness of queer reading practices.[13]

Habeas Corpus: Criminalization and Corporality in the Translations of *Giovanni's Room*

Giovanni's Room tells the story of David, a WASP expatriate idly spending his days in Paris. While his fiancée Hella is away, David meets the young Italian Giovanni. The pair strike up a brief romance that is doomed from the onset because of David's internalized guilt and self-hate – a similar trajectory to a brief fling he had with another same-sex lover in his youth in New York. As Hella returns from Spain, David breaks off the affair and Giovanni falls into despair and destitution, ultimately murdering the gay bartender Guillaume. Hella discovers David's bisexuality and leaves for the US. On the morning of Giovanni's scheduled execution, a solitary David imagines both Giovanni's physical and his own spiritual demise.

Crime is a central element to the novel's plot, as is homosexual desire. The supposed connection between these elements ties in with Didier Eribon's argument that since the mid-nineteenth century, the proximity of homosexuality to crime "becomes one of the central themes not only of police literature and medical and psychological literature, but of literature itself."[14] Of special interest here is how this outdated notion has informed translation strategies in the past. In *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement: Translation and Intercultural Dialogue* (2017), Shuangyi Li traces the influence of the dominant Chinese scholarly view on homosexuality – which one sexologist called "an abnormal behaviour that should be penalized" – on the first Chinese translators of *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927), as they chose to "explicitly pathologize Proust's description of homosexual characters."[15] As we shall see, at least one of *Giovanni's Room*'s early European translations employ a similar pathologizing praxis. Before detailing specific translation strategies, however, I will briefly outline the novel's European publishing trajectories and circulation.

Giovanni's Room was quickly translated into Danish (1957, translated by Michael Tejn as *Giovannis Værelse*) and French (1958, translated by Claude Messanges as *Giovanni, Mon Ami*), followed by a West German edition in 1963 (*Giovannis Zimmer*, translated by Axel Kamm and Hans-Heinrich Wellman) and a Dutch translation in 1965 (*Giovanni's Kamer*, by G. A. Prinsen). The three most recent translations of this essay's

corpus are the new French (1996, translated by Élisabeth Guinsbourg as *La Chambre de Giovanni*), Danish (2019, translated by Pial Juul and also titled *Giovannis Værelse*), and German (2021, translated by Miriam Mandelkow and also titled *Giovannis Zimmer*) translations.[16] In her comprehensive study of Baldwin's American reception, Conseula Francis notes how American academic critics would not pay attention to the book's homosexual themes until the advent of queer theory, whereas its initial (non-academic) reviewers and readers much more openly discussed the queer elements.[17] In France, however, academic critics immediately *did* address these elements, some even making comparisons to established queer French authors André Gide and Jean Genet.[18]

Intriguingly, in the German Democratic Republic, a reprint of Axel Kamm's and Hans-Heinrich Wellman's West German translation was not published until 1981, in a large edition that quickly sold out.[19] A similar trajectory befell the Hungarian translation, which was not published until 1980. Zsófia Gombár calls this the "delaying" technique of the Socialist publishing industry, where "questionable works" were put aside for a few years, as their authors accrued more critical standing and publishers could "bide their time and wait for a politically more favorable atmosphere when the book could be published."[20] Hajek notes of the book's success in the GDR that

> [o]ne of the reasons for this strong reader-response may well be Baldwin's very sensitive yet reckless daring to explore the most intimate and most vulnerable and most tabuized regions of human relations, including his fictional treatment of sexuality, and specifically homosexuality, as a possible manifestation of true human love.[21]

Aside from a few French comparisons to Jean Genet's work, the book's initial reception in these receiving cultures has thus little to say on any supposed proximity between homosexuality and criminality, although the communist authorities in Hungary and the GDR considerably delayed its publication. However, a comparative analysis of the Danish, Dutch, French, and German translations lays bare the respective ideological tensions and shifts, as translations address the novel's criminal elements through diverging lexica and paratexts.

Nigel Hatton situates the first Danish translation, *Giovannis Værelse* (1957) within its national political and cultural context. As Hatton quotes from Bonnie Zimmerman's *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures* (2000), the 1950s in Denmark were marked by "harassment by the police, legal discrimination, and societal oppression of homosexuals."[22] Baldwin's novel was published two years after a national scandal, as Axel Lundahl-Madsen and his partner Eigil Eskilden were convicted in 1955 on pornography charges and sentenced to short prison terms for running a gay modeling agency that sold photographs of male nudity. Reportedly, over seventy Danes committed suicide in the aftermath of the scandal, as they were fearful of being outed by the authorities.[23]

When *Giovannis Værelse* was first released, its afterword was written not by a literary critic but by the Copenhagen police commissioner Aage Maurizio Lotinga. Lotinga himself had authored in 1948 a book called *The Sexual Deviant and Society*, and he had advocated before that homosexuality should not be publicly condemned on moral grounds, but best be understood "as a matter of concomitant crime, like the theft and public indecency associated with male prostitution."[24] Hatton carefully analyzes how Lotinga's afterword simultaneously paints the novel as illustrative of his own theories

on homosexuality *and* as a stylistic feat that succeeds in generating the reader's sympathy for its criminal queer characters. On the surface, Lotinga sees his understanding of homosexuality as inherently intertwined with crimes such as theft and violence, confirmed by the novel's plot, as the titular Italian character becomes destitute and retreats to murder once his American lover David, the book's protagonist, leaves him. At the same time, Lotinga recognizes the book's humane dimension and its "delicate, yes almost tender understanding."[25]

Hatton also sees Lotinga's criminalization of homosexuality mirrored in the book's translation, and one passage in particular stands out. The narrator David recounts the aftermath of a sexual encounter with a previous male lover: "I was ashamed. The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness." In the 1957 Danish translation, 'vileness' is rendered as "lastefuldhed". According to Hatton,

> *Lastefuld*, a form of carelessness, echoes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and links "vileness" to criminality. Lotinga, after all, urged the public to remove the issue from any discussion of morality.[26]

Hatton further remarks how Pia Juul's recent Danish translation (2019) does away with *lastefuld*, instead opting for *unmoralsk*, meaning "immoral", thus "eschew[ing] criminality in favor of Baldwin's moral difficulty."[27] None of the other editions of this essay's corpus opt for criminalizing translations of 'vileness.' The Dutch translation speaks of "laagheid", Messanges's of "abjection", and Kamm's and Wellmans' of "Verderbtheid," which are all terms that roughly translate to "lowness" or "abjection" in English. The more recent French and German translation use the terms "souillure" and 'Schändlichkeit," which suggest a sense of guilt and are in keeping with the development of the critical discourse on *Giovanni's Room*, in which the focus has shifted since the 1990s on David's interiorized shame and subjective guilt.[28]

Although Lotinga's afterword makes the original Danish translation stand out, G. A. Prinsen's translation at times also retorts to legal and implicitly judgmental jargon, occasionally invoking religious imagery when Baldwin refrains from doing so. Thus at one point Prinsen translates "cavern" as "kerker," which is the Dutch word for 'dungeon.'[29] A remarkable shift, as the original sentence reads "[t]hat body suddenly seemed the black opening of a cavern."[30] Elsewhere, he translates "healing" – "his eyes… were like the eyes of a dying man who looks everywhere for healing" – with "redding", which can both mean 'rescue' and 'salvation', while "I was Jacques' protection" becomes "beschermengel" ('guardian angel') in Dutch.[31] Strikingly, Prinsen interjects "als een aureool" ("like a halo") to Baldwin's less overtly religious "all of the light of that gloomy tunnel trapped around his head."[32] Prinsen also adopts judicial jargon to render "you have finally… corrupted this great American football player" with "omgekocht," which means 'bribed', while David's famous aside that "perhaps home is not a place but an irrevocable condition" becomes "een onherroepelijke voorwaarde," which is a judicial formulation.[33]

None of the other translations I analyzed deviate from Baldwin's original prose with jargon as markedly legal and/or biblical. One point of comparison can be found in Kamm's and Wellman's translation, when they too translate "healing" as "Hilfe," which has no salvational connotations. Miriam Mandelkow's recent German transla-

tion sticks closer to the English original and opts for "Heilung." None of the corpus's translations contain paratextual elements in the vein of Lotinga's afterword. The only versions that feature an afterword are the East German 1981 reprint of Kamm's and Wellman's translation and Miriam Mandelkow's more recent counterpart. Both posit the opposite of Lotinga's plea for criminalization. The first was written by GDR literary critic Bernhard Scheller and stresses Baldwin's vision on homosexuality as a manifestation of universal love, thus, according to Friederike Hajek, "eventually [doing] justice to this formerly much criticized aspect of Baldwin's work."[34] In the second, playwright and essayist Sasha Marianna Salzmann claims that for many contemporary readers the book is both "a literary example and an antidote against one's own shame."[35]

This "shame" is often articulated in the book through bodily functions and physical discomfort and Matt Brim identifies "a fundamental corporeal questioning" at the heart of the novel.[36] Prinsen, Mandelkow, and both French translators closely follow Baldwin's explicit depictions of sex and of nausea and other forms of physical discomfort and corporality. However, the original German translation advocates a certain prudishness, as it tones down some of Baldwin's graphic language. Thus, "this was Giovanni's *regurgitated* life" becomes "es war der *Auswurf* von Giovannis Leben," that is, "the *ejection* of Giovanni's life" – a much less graphic image. Elsewhere, "[I] had trouble not to vomit" is translated as "ich ekelte mich vor ihm," ("I was disgusted by him") leaving out the actual physical discomfort altogether. On a similar note, when David recounts his distress after first having slept with Joey, he fails to understand "how this have happened to me, how this could have happened *in* me."[37] Kamm and Wellman translate this as "weil ich nicht begriff, wie so etwas passieren konnte, *mir* passieren konnte" – by leaving out "in", they neutralize the strong implication of anal sex. These observations are in line with Peter Freese's analysis on the early translations of Baldwin in West Germany, specifically the general tendency that "Baldwin's ubiquitous and often brutally outspoken sexual references [were] frequently tuned down and 'purified.'"[38] Miriam Mandelkow's recent translations do away with this strategy, and her *Giovannis Zimmer* in particular stays close to Baldwin's original direct and graphic prose.

Although the first Danish translation offers the most overt judicial condemnation of homosexuality, the threat of legal prosecution of homosexual acts was far from a uniquely Danish phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s. Same-sex activity was not decriminalized in West Germany until 1969. Meanwhile, despite the fact that the GDR decriminalized same-sex activity in 1968, it did not publish Kamm's and Wellman's translation until 1981.[39] While the act was not criminalized in France and the Netherlands, here too legal and public discrimination of sorts abided at the time.[40] Although Lotinga's proactive afterword exemplifies the judicial climate in Denmark in the 1950s, the points of comparison discussed below paint a more complicated picture of the discrepancies between the various translations – one in which homophobia, stereotypes, and prudishness manifest through a variety of translation strategies. All of these translations intersect with the cultural history of homosexuality and are, in part, shaped by their context.[41]

Baldwin's original text is no exception to that rule. *Giovanni's Room* was published four years after homosexuality was included on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and Cynthia Barounis argues that the book "is crucially engaged with this queer moment in the history of medicine."[42] Barounis reads the

novel "as an exploration of how these diagnostic criteria might function, for some gay subjects, as a counterintuitive site of racial and class privilege – one which cleansed same-sex desire of many of its previous associations with effeminacy, poverty, interracial intimacy, and prostitution."[43] These 'cleansing' dynamics that Barounis identifies in the original text, are transfigured and complicated through the strategies that its translators adopt – be it through omission, distortion or interjection.

"Strutting like a Cock before Them": Book Covers, Posturing, and Erotic Desire

Aside from afterwords, another paratextual element of comparison are each translation's book cover(s). The first edition of Tejn's Danish translation uses a plain dark grey cover, which Hatton sees as "representative of its taboo subject matter and the need to be hidden in the 1950s."[44] Messanges' translation has an equally sober artwork, with its title imprinted on a deep red cover. Later editions and translations in the 1960s and 1970s all opt for covers that suggest a detached domesticity. Thus, when Hasselbach reissued Tejn's translation in 1966, the new cover shows an impressionistic sketch of a window, presumably Giovanni's. The first editions of Prinsen's translation, all issued by Bruna, show blocked sketches of a lamp, window, and the top of a chair against a dark green backdrop. The first West German edition of Kamm's and Wellman's translation shows simple sketches of a chair and a bed, against a dark blue backdrop, ornamented by Mondriaanesque black and orange squares. Soberness and domesticity are essential to all these covers, as each gives little indication of the book's taboo content.[45]

Neither Tejn's nor Messanges's translations remain in print after 1966. Later West German editions continue to use the dark blue cover, although in the 1980s an alternative cover is sometimes employed, showing a dark shadow against an impressionistic cityscape. When the translation is printed in the GDR, the cover has a sober lay-out, in keeping with Reclams Universal-Bibliothek's uniform style. After the unification of Germany, further editions only used the dark shadow artwork, until Eder und Bach GmbH reissued the book with a sober red cover in 2015. The German tendency to downplay the novel's erotic undertones is thus mirrored in its artwork well into the twenty-first century. The Dutch translation received new artwork when it was republished by De Bezige Bij in the 1980s and 1990s. The first editions use a comic book-style image of a wine glass that breaks as it hits a wall. Domesticity and melodrama are again key here, although the shattered glass also suggests a more sinister conflict. The translation's last edition from 1996 is much more explicit, as it shows two naked men lying in the dark. The publisher's decision to explicitly show same-sex intimacy responds here to the popularization of LGBTQ literature and theory. In the same year, the new French translation by Guinsbourg is first published, although Payot & Rivages's artwork is far less erotic. Two covers are used, being another domestic image of a lamp and bedside, and a picture of a man resting on a couch. The most recent Danish and German translations follow the example of the last Dutch cover: Hatton sees in the multi-color cover of Pia Juul's translation "a medley of sculptures that depend on one another to reveal the presence of a human profile," as it shows two human – male? – figures embracing one another.[46] Mandelkow's cover features an attractive young Giovanni in tank top, suggesting eroticism.[47]

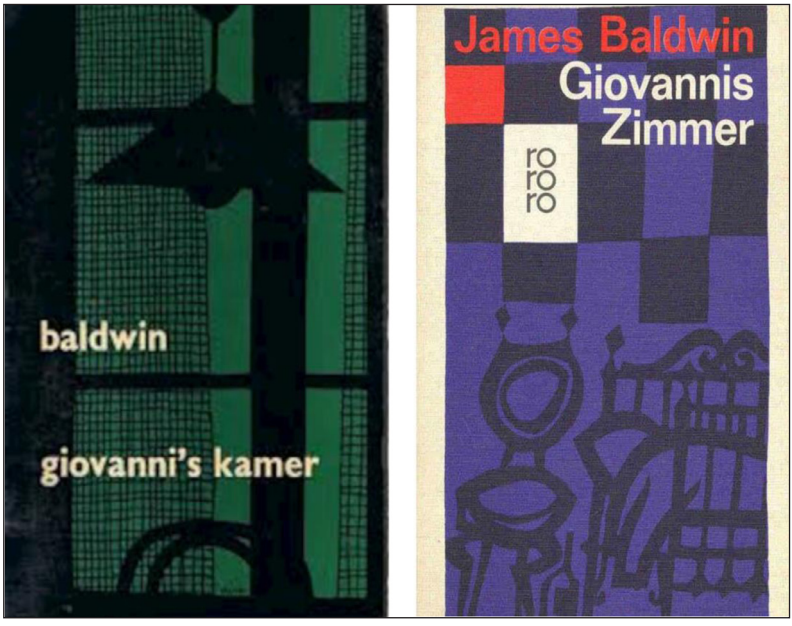

Figure 1. The original Dutch cover as it was first published by Bruna in 1965 (left), The original cover of Kamm's and Wellman's translation as published by Rowohlt in 1963 (right).

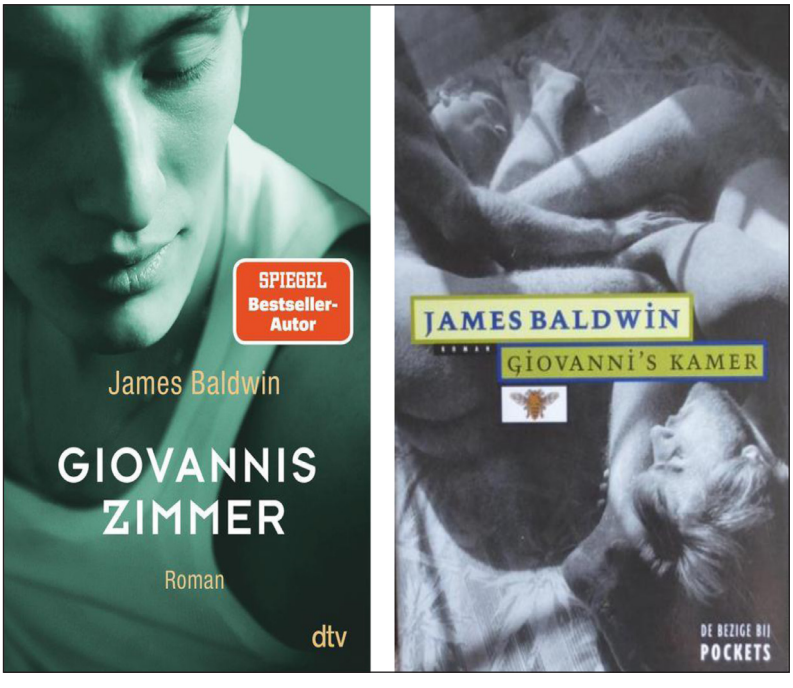

Figure 2. The cover of Miriam Mandelkow's recent translation for dtv Verlag (left). The cover of of De Bezige Bij's 1996 edition (right).

Giovanni's Room's eroticism has thus only reached the translations' covers – or literal surface, if you will – since the mid-nineties, and even then French and German publishers have remained hesitant to accentuate it. It is easy to see why most publishers preferred to forward elements of sexless domesticity instead. Not only do these tie in with the book's title – apart from Messanges's translation – but they also feature heavily in David's description of his life together with Giovanni. David is obsessed with gender roles and 'proper' masculine behavior. Both German translations leave out some of the nuances in this regard, while the Dutch translation at times goes even further than the original text to accentuate the matter. Thus both German versions translate "when I had become a man" and "he wanted me to look on him as a man like myself" with "erwachsen" ("grown-up") and "als meinesgleichen" ("as my equal"), leaving out the notion of masculinity altogether. The French and Dutch translations do pick up on the ambiguity, and elsewhere Prinsen accentuates the masculinity even more. Thus "Giovanni liked to believe that he was heard-headed and that I was not" becomes "dat hij een nuchtere vent was en ik niet" ("that he was a level-headed *guy*" – 'vent' carries a connotation of toughness in Dutch) and "with my manhood unquestioned" is rendered as "gewoon man zijn" (which can both mean "to be just a man" or "to be a normal man").

Performative femininity is equally important to Baldwin's novel, as exemplified through David's and Giovanni's usage of the terms 'coquette' and 'coquettishly.' Although 'coquette' denotes a flirtatious woman, the term is exclusively used for male characters in the book. Thus, upon first meeting Giovanni, David finds that "there was something in him of the coquette," while Giovanni later describes the predatory bar owner Guillaume as acting like "some fabulous coquette – and he is ugly, ugly, he has a body just like sour milk!" When David spots the cross-dressing 'mummy' (see below), he also notices how the character's shirt is "open coquettishly to the navel." Earlier in the novel, David describes his widowed father's bachelor behavior toward women as "no, not flirting with them, strutting like a cock before them." All translations render Baldwin's usage of the term 'coquette' relatively faithfully. Likewise, the French and German translations opt for the usage of 'coq' and 'Hahn' to describe the behavior of David's father. However, Prinsen writes "of nee, hij flirtte niet met ze, hij koketteerde," which constitutes the same verb that he later chooses to describe Giovanni's and the mummy's behavior. By conflating the vocabulary used for 'masculine' and 'effeminate' behavior, Prinsen undercuts the considerable efforts he takes elsewhere to stress David's preoccupation with masculinity. Brim sees David as being trapped in the delusion that he has to choose between hetero- and homosexuality. The fact that this choice constitutes a trap of itself, "is important for queer theoretical readings of the novel: neither straight identity nor gay identity can do justice to the complex realities of erotic life."[48] Prinsen's conflated translation strategy inadvertently suggests a similar conclusion.

Although the German and French translations stay clear from the criminalizing and legal jargon of their Danish and Dutch counterparts, a conflicted relationship with queer intimacy can be discerned beyond the initial book covers and the prudishness of Kamm's and Wellman's translation. When David describes his first night with Joey, he says that "out of this astounding, intolerable pain came joy; we gave each other joy that night." Both the Dutch and initial German translation translate 'joy' with terms

that rather denote 'pleasure' ("genot" and "Entzücken", respectively), thus substituting a carnal satisfaction for Baldwin's state of happiness. Elsewhere in the same paragraph, the German translation further emphasizes this notion, as it translates "tenderness" into "Verlangen" ("desire"). Both French translations stick closer to the original "joy" with "joie", while Mandelkow does the same with "Freude." However, nearly all translations equate David's moral dilemma with a fear of *becoming* corrupted – i.e. queer – instead of one of already *being* in this state. When Giovanni analyzes his lover's state of mind, he confronts him with his homophobic desire: "You want to be *clean*."[49] The Dutch, French and first German translation all render 'be' here with transversal verbs that are equal to the English verb 'remain' ("blijven", "demeurer", "bleiben"), as if David has not already been 'tainted' by his queer sexuality. Only Mandelkow's most recent translation uses the direct German equivalent of 'to be'; "Du willst *sauber* sein." All the other translations ignore – or willingly erase – Baldwin's more subtle indications of David's moral and sexual posturing.

Nomen est "No Men"? Translating *Giovanni's Room*'s Derogatory and Pejorative Terms

To Matt Brim, David "represents so dramatic an example of the *inability* to think queerly," while Baldwin leaves it up to the readers what he "through David, does not and cannot do for them: ever unseat themselves."[50] As both readers and transmitters of the novel, the European translators are given the dual task of at once rendering David's "inability to think queerly" while also "unseating" themselves in the process. The tensions between the two is laid bare when they engage with pejorative lexica – be they Baldwin's invention or their own.

The Dutch translation not only accentuates David's obsession with masculinity, it also adds a pejorative, or at least more colorful, connotation when Baldwin opts for the neutral nouns 'boys' and 'friends' to denote queer male characters. Prinsen consequently uses the diminutive forms 'vriendje' ('little friend') and 'jongetje ('little boy') when referring to these characters. Although 'vriendje' is a common Dutch term to denote one's lover (comparable to the French 'petit-ami'), the term never refers to David's actual lover, but to Jacques ("As long as I was there the world could see and he could believe that he was out with me, his friend…") and Giovanni's friends ("But his friends tell him how rich Guillaume is…"). Prinsen also doesn't limit his use of the diminutive to David's point of view, as he also employs it when Hella asks David "Do you want to have a drink upstairs before you go back to join your friends?" Even more striking is Prinsen's use of the diminutive to translate 'boys', when David wonders: "And would I then, like all the others, find myself turning and following all kinds of boys down God knows what dark avenues, into what dark places?" Prinsen's translation strategy thus adds a potentially deprecating connotation to male bondship in the novel, as David's would-be fantasy about "all kinds of boys" becomes conflated with suggestions of pedophilia. While it is true that in general Dutch makes extensive use of diminutive forms, it is striking how Prinsen exclusively applies the form to queer characters – with negative implications. When David recounts "I invented in myself a kind of pleasure in playing the housewife after Giovanni had gone to work,"

Prinsen again translates 'housewife' in the diminutive. Notions of domesticity, which are so abundantly promoted through all of the initial book covers, are thus not only feminized – as they are in Baldwin's original text – but also literally belittled.

Neither Claude Messanges' original nor Élisabeth Guinsbourg's presently circulating French translation adopt strategies as marked as the Dutch one's pederast undertones or the original German one's caution in matters of physicality. In fact, the French translations fairly often retort to the same relatively faithful lexicon – their main differences consist of stylistic choices in terms of syntax. Yet, in one passage these French translations depart significantly from the original text and its Dutch and German translations: the infamous "mummy" scene.

In this particular scene David has only just encountered his soon to be lover Giovanni for the first time. The pair find themselves in a Parisian gay bar, but David is careful to differentiate himself from "les folles" (a derogatory feminized term for overtly queer men), as he is still firmly pretending to be heterosexual. Right after making Giovanni's acquaintance, David makes the following observation:

> Now someone whom I had never seen before came out of the shadows toward me. It looked like a mummy or a zombie – this was the first, overwhelming impression – of something walking after it had been put to death. And it walked, really, like someone who might be sleepwalking or like those figures in slow motion one sometimes sees on the screen. It carried a glass, it walked on its toes, the at hips moved with a dead, horrifying lasciviousness. It seemed to make no sound; this was due to the roar of the bar, which was like the roaring of the sea, heard at night, from far away. It glittered in the dim light; the thin, black hair was violent with oil, combed forward, hanging in bangs; the eyelids gleamed with mascara, the mouth raged with lipstick.[51]

David's description of this cross-dressing or perhaps transgender character reads extremely cruel, as he routinely reduces the person to a 'thing', identified through pejorative adjectives and imbued with monster-like qualities. The passage shocks the modern reader, and in recent years critics have addressed its troubling content.[52]

The Dutch and both German translations stick close to the description of the English original. However, since French doesn't have a neutral personal pronoun, the original French translation relies on the masculine pronoun 'il' (referring back to "un être"), which achieves a significantly less blunt atmosphere of objectivation – even if terms like "une momie" and, intriguingly, "apparition" instead of "zombie", remain intact. Guinsbourg's more recent translation, on the other hand, wants to stay closer to Baldwin's original paragraph, and instead opts for the demonstrative pronoun "cela."

Messanges's translation	**Guinsbourg's translation**
Et voici que, sortant de l'ombre, s'avança vers moi quelqu'un que je n'avais jamais vu auparavant. On aurait dit une momie ou l'apparition… d'un être qui aurait continué à marcher après avoir été mis à mort. Il marchait vraiment… Tenant un verre, il avançait… Il empesait la poudre et le parfum genre gardenia. (59–60)	Et là, quelqu'un que je n'avais jamais vu emergea… on aurait dit une momie ou un zombie… une creature errante après son trépas. Cela marchait… Celait tenait un verre à la main, cela marchait… La creature luisait dans la semi-obscurité… (59–60)

Although this is the only instance where both translations significantly differ in matters of lexicon from the original text, the anecdote illustrates how even the absence of a certain pronoun can destabilize and transfigure the book's approach to gay life in its various manifestations. As Brim notes, "David's problems do seem to be category problems."[53] The bigendered structure of the French language poses here some category problems of its own – problems that translators have to strategize.

"Category problems" also apply to the linguistic *categorization* of homosexuals. Baldwin's belief that this term "is not a noun" seems to have informed the writing of *Giovanni's Room* – not once does the word appear in the text.[54] Instead, Baldwin's narrator and characters exclusively use pejorative terms: four times the word 'fairy' is uttered, while the French terms 'une tapette' and 'une folle' (which translates literally as 'a crazy woman') are both used twice, and "silly old queen" – English counterpart to "une folle" – makes one appearance. All five translations leave the French terms untranslated, except for the first German translation that translates 'tapette' once with the word that Baldwin so dreaded; 'Homosexuellen.'

Original text	Dutch translation	First French translation	Second French translation	First German translation	Second German translation
"fairy" (used four times)	"mietje" (once), "flikker" (three times)	"tapette"	"tapette" (twice), "tante" (twice)	"Schwule" (twice), "folle", "Homo"	"Tunte"
"une folle", "une tapette"	untranslated	/	/	"folle", "Homosexuellen"	untranslated
"silly old queen"	"onnozel oud wijf"	"vieille folle"	"vieille folle"	"Alten Homo"	"Alte Tucke"

This is in keeping with the original German translation's tendency to soften much of Baldwin's tone, as it also translates "fairy" and "tapette" with the less pejorative "Homo(sexuellen)." As to the term "fairy," the majority of these translations exhibit the opposite trajectory of the one Li observed in the Chinese translations of Proust, where "translators have struggled to find terminological variants in modern vernacular Chinese to accommodate Proust's wide range of vocabulary regarding 'homosexual(ity)'."[55] In these European translations of *Giovanni's Room*, several translators use a wider range of pejorative terms than Baldwin's original terminology, with only the first French translation and Miriam Mandelkow's recent German one opting for a consistent uniform usage throughout the text ("tapette" and "Tunte", respectively).

Despite the first German translation's softening of David's pejorative lexicon, it employs a register of objectification when talking of homosexuals as a group. Thus, when David says of 'les folles' that "a man who wanted a man would certainly not want one of *them*,"[56] "one of them" is translated as "mit dieser Sorte" ("with this type/variety", no emphasis in the text).[57] Once Giovanni has murdered Guillaume, the police start arresting men on suspicion of having "les goûts particuliers," which David himself translates in the next sentence as "these 'tastes'." In the German translation, this becomes "Neigungen" ("inclination"), which adds a pathological connotation. Elsewhere, David tells Hella, referring to Giovanni, that "these people have another

style from us." Kamm and Wellman render 'style' here as "Lebensstil," turning the comment in a reference to Giovanni's way of living enhances the implication of sexual preferences.[58] While the translators are reluctant to render Baldwin's graphic depictions and pejorative terms in full, they thus accentuate a detached pathologized view of "les folles."

Conclusion: "Thinking Queerly" and the Confinements of Circularity

In *The Devil Finds Work*, Baldwin continued his argument that "the word, *homosexual*, is not a noun" by claiming that "[t]he root of this word, as Americans use it – or, as this word uses Americans – simply involves a terror of any human touch, since any human touch can change you."[59] *Giovanni's Room* and its protagonist are preoccupied with this "terror of any human touch." To Brim, the novel "offers a particularly productive text for cultivating the queer imagination, not because it repays close readings by individual queers of different stripes, but because it so urgently compels the individual reader to engage incompatible or incommensurable LGBT reading practices."[60] The book's Danish, Dutch, French, and German translators have each engaged in reading and translating practices that are inevitably – whether or not knowingly – intertwined with LGBTQ discourse and "the queer imagination." This correlation not only pertains to what the novel represents, but also to the textual elements of which the translations are a part.

Marc Démont identifies three modes of translating queer literary texts: the misrecognizing translation, the minoritizing translation, and the queering translation.[61] Of these, misrecognizing is the most *straight*forward, as it "simply ignores queerness" and "aims to suppress the text's disruptive force."[62] None of this essay's case studies wholly engage in this mode, but the toned-down graphicness of the first German translation and the original, chaste book covers contain hints of it. Démont's second mode, the minoritizing translation, is much more present throughout the corpus. Minoritizing translations, according to Démont, "often serve the goal of an identity politics at the expense of queerness," that seeks to assimilate the text's disruptive force "into a fixed explicit form."[63] At its most explicit, in the original Danish case, this implies a reconfiguration of 'the queer as criminal,' while in Prinsen's translation it entails an accentuation of the masculinity-femininity binary. In sharp contrast with the Danish translation, the original German translation counters the stigmatization of queer people – as same-sex activity was still criminalized in West-Germany – through its prudishness and reluctance to render pejorative terms. Without directly erasing the novel's queer elements, the characters are presented here in 'sanitized' form, ready to be assimilated into the heteronormative mold.

As Brim notices, Baldwin's original text is itself heavily invested in the dynamics of the queer imagination. Margaret Sönser Breen sees *Giovanni's Room* as "informed both by American politics and by the sexual and racial politics of mid-century France;" since David's sexual panic and guilt also reflect "his resistance to being shaped by France's long-standing tradition of homosexual tolerance," his internalized homophobia is itself "a refusal of cultural translation."[64] Precisely because both French translations of this story of "translation failure" stay markedly close to Baldwin's original prose, their strategies still correspond to Démont's understanding of minoritizing translations,

which "congea[l] queerness's drifting nature by flattening its connotative power to a unidimensional and superficial game of denotative equivalences."[65] The same critique may apply to Pia Juul's and Miriam Mandelkow's translations, as they, too, substitute "denotative equivalences" for Baldwin's queer prose.

Démont posits a third mode of translation, the queering translation, which "focuses on acknowledging the disruptive force and recreating it in the target language" by simultaneously exposing "the source text's specific manifestations of queerness" – often through critiquing the minoritizing mode of previous translations – and developing techniques that recreate the queerness of the text in the target language.[66] Drawing on Kwame Anthony Appiah's understanding of "thick translation," Démont argues for a mode of translation that "preserves the web of virtual connotative associations and, therefore, the text's ambiguities and potentially disruptive content."[67] He concludes that the queering translation can succeed in this

> by voluntarily refusing to offer an 'ultimate' translation, by resisting the temptation to close the translation on itself, and by offering commentary that preserves its fundamental ambiguities and highlights its potential interpretative *lignes de fuite*.[68]

One such instance can be found in the cover of Pia Juul's recent translation. Hatton compares the cover of the recent German translation unfavorably to the Danish one, as dtv Verlag "opted to set aside the potentialities of allegorical hybridity and transcendence," instead representing Giovanni in ways that are "reminiscent of earlier representations of the novel and claims about Baldwin that scholars have carefully problematized."[69] The bright-colored, equivocal human figure on Gyldendal's cover stands in sharp contrast to this singular narrative.

Démont's queering mode offers useful tools for approaching the inherent tensions of translatability vis-à-vis the dynamics of the queer imagination, and it resonates with William Spurlin's understanding of the "disruptive, subversive space of indeterminacy between source and target languages" as "a queer space, one that challenges any normative idea of straightforward, untroubled translatability."[70] In a similar vein, Aarón Lacayo has drawn from Luce Irigaray's theory of sexual difference to identify the act of translation as "a queer encounter between a bodily text and an infinite number of unknown, possible others," as these constitute "a body that is yet to come into existence, a body created – and that only exists – in the act of translation."[71]

Démont's and Lacayo's theorizations offer insights in the pluralities of strategies – a finite number of "possible others", if you will – that the European translations of *Giovanni's Room* have adopted. Rather than exhibiting conclusive and consistent supranational (or cross-generational) patterns, they are primarily characterized by a multifariousness that is only at times convergent. Although historical developments such as anti-discriminatory legislation and the popularization of queer studies have informed epistemic shifts in the way queer literature is being read and translated, the trajectory of *Giovanni's Room*'s translations cannot merely be attributed to these developments. The same applies to the original text's impact on Baldwin's reception in the anglophone world: as the novel helped cement Baldwin's reputation as a major queer author, its ambiguous representation of various aspects of queerness continues to destabilize reductionist and essentialist understandings of its author and of queerness.

David's "*inability* to think queerly" and the readers' task of "ever unseat[ing] themselves," are mirrored in the way these translations transform Baldwin's already unstable original text.[72] Lotinga's afterword, Prinsen's curious insertion of diminutives and Kamm's and Wellman's aversion to corporality and explicit intimacy each display a certain inability to "think queerly" – a marked contrast to Baldwin's pop culture afterlife, where "thinking queerly" has become an obvious, if at times superficial, prerequisite.

This prerequisite contains tensions of its own. As shown in the essay's introduction, Baldwin's popular afterlife is primarily informed by anglophone cultural discourses and artifacts. Although Baldwin's European circulation focuses more on his output as a queer novelist, here, too, the question arises to what extent these new translations are not themselves primarily informed by what Baer identifies as "the monopolization of sexual discourse by the anglophone West."[73] In like manner, Epstein and Gillet are wary of "the American notion of queer as a global phenomenon," and see (the resistance to) the appropriation of the American concept as exemplary of transcultural translation practices in the twenty-first century.[74] While the recent French, Danish, and German translations of *Giovanni's Room* may appear to stay closer to Baldwin's original text than their predecessors, a parallel argument could be made: perhaps they simply deviate less from the now increasingly dominant anglophone notion of what queerness precisely entails. By primarily adhering to an American understanding of 'the' queer, they are less informed by the *actual* source text than by the normative discourse that shapes the popular – and as of yet still decidedly anglophone, as the examples in the introduction attest – reception of Baldwin. Thus, these recent translations simultaneously epitomize the circularity of Baldwin's text and the corresponding circular movements of queer translation practices over time. Much like David and Giovanni struggle to leave the titular room behind, translators must navigate the confinement of dominant, normative modes of thinking as they encounter the novel's inherent destabilizing queer qualities.

Notes

1 Victoria A. Brownworth, "Road to Stonewall: Giovanni's Room," *Philadelphia Gay News*, 20 June 2019; "Best Lesbian and Gay Novels," *The Publishing Triangle*, https://publishingtriangle.org/best-lesbian-gay-novels/. In a delightful coincidence, the first review of *Giovanni's Room* in *The New Yorker* was titled "Tormented Triangle" (Hicks, Granville, "Tormented Triangle", *New York Times*, 14 October 1956, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-giovanni.html; accessed 26 November 2022). Meanwhile, one of Baldwin biographer James Campbell's main regrets is that he didn't manage to show Baldwin a local restaurant called Giovanni's Room, while they were together in Bloomsbury in 1985 (Douglas Field and Justin A. Joyce. "How Long Blues: An Interview with James Campbell," *James Baldwin Review* 7 (2021), 166–183; 179).

2 Jake Kerridge, "The BBC's 100 Novels that Shaped Our World is a Short-sighted List that will please Nobody," *The Telegraph*, 9 November 2019.

3 Remo Verdickt, "The Evidence of Things Translated: Circulating Baldwin in Contemporary Europe," *James Baldwin Review* 8 (2022), 199–203; 211. It is of note that at present, due

to the recent release of Barry Jenkins's eponymous film adaptation (2019), there are more translations of *Beale Street* in print. However, since *Giovanni's Room* has been enjoying a re-circulation that considerably predates that of *Beale Street*, including several reprints and concurrent editions in key markets Germany and France, I argue that the *cumulative* twenty-first century European circulation of *Giovanni* exceeds that of *Beale Street*.

4 Melanie Walsh, "The Mythology of James Baldwin on Twitter," November 13, 2016, https://melaniewalsh.org/the-mythology-of-james-baldwin-on-twitter.

5 Max Gordon, "Faggot as Footnote: On James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*, *Can I Get a Witness?* and *Moonlight*," *The New Civil Rights Movement*, 25 February 2017; Magdalena J. Zaborowska, Nicholas F. Radel, Nigel Hatton and Ernest L. Gibson III, "Rebranding James Baldwin and his Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference," *James Baldwin Review* 6 (2020), 200.

6 The Roebuck character is in fact an amalgam of Baldwin and *New Yorker* food critic A.J. Liebling. Both authors are honored in the film's end credits. See: Eric Kohn, "*The French Dispatch*: How Jeffrey Wright Landed his Best Performance in Wes Anderson's Literary Tribute," *Indiewire,* 26 October 2021.

7 The other three are the short essays "Preservation of Innocence" (1949), "The Male Prison" (1954), and "Here Be Dragons" (1985). Notably, "Here Be Dragons" is the only piece of non-fiction in which Baldwin addresses *his own* queerness. Likewise, Baldwin "discussed his sexuality during a handful of interviews from the mid-sixties" (Douglas Field, *James Baldwin,* Tavistock: Northcote House 2011, 46), but his "most candid discussion of homosexuality" was delivered at the end of his life, in an interview with Richard Goldstein in 1985 (Douglas Field, *All Those Strangers: The Art and Lives of James Baldwin*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015, 65).

8 James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America 1998), 529. Baldwin argues that Americans simply use the term to evade the complexity of same-sex bonds and that it is instrumental in bringing "the American legend of masculinity […] to its highest pressure."

9 Stefan Helgesson, "Translation: Duration and Cosmopolitan Reading," in *Literature and the World*, eds. Stefan Helgesson and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Abingdon: Routledge 2020), 134; David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), 24, 167.

10 William J. Spurlin, "Introduction: The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: New Approaches," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 204–205; B. J. Epstein, and Robert Gillett, "Introduction," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 1–2; William J. Spurlin, "Queering Translation: Rethinking Gender and Sexual Politics in the Space between Languages and Cultures," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 173; Brian James Baer, and Klaus Kaindl, "Introduction: Queer(ing) Translation," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 3–4.

11 Helgesson 135.

12 As I am not familiar with Danish myself, I draw on Nigel Hatton's case study on the two Danish translations for the section on translation and criminalization. I briefly look at the books' paratextual elements (i.e. their covers) but leave them out from the more detailed linguistic comparisons.

13 Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2014), 56; Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 167–168.

14 Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, transl. Michael Lucey, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 210–211.

15 Shuangyi Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement: Translation and Intercultural Dialogue* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan 2017), 59.

16 Miriam Mandelkow has been working exclusively with dtv Verlag in the past few years to translate several of Baldwin's works. So far, the pairing has led to brand new translations of four novels and two collections of essays, making Mandelkow the most prolific and experienced contemporary European translator of Baldwin's work. Mandelkow has also spoken at length and publicly about some of her translation strategies, and the issues she has had with some of the translations of her German predecessors (Elizabeth Grenier, "N-word and Gender Politics: How German Translators Deal with Them," DW, September 30, 2019, www.dw.com/en/n-word-and-gender-politics-how-german-translators-dealwith-them/a-50636705, accessed November 15, 2022; Miriam Mandelkow and Gesa Ufer. "Romane im Rhythmus des Blues," Deutschlandfunk Kultur, May 7, 2020, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/baldwin-uebersetzerin-miriam-mandelkow-romane-im-rhythmus-100.html,accessed November 15, 2022).

17 Conseula Francis, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin: 1963–2010* (London: Camden House 2016), 105. It is important to note that, initially, Baldwin himself faced several hardships in getting the book published: Knopf, which had published his debut *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, was frightened by the new book's queer content, and it took considerable effort and concessions on Baldwin part to finally publish the book with Dial Press in the US and with Michael Joseph in the UK (Fern Marja Eckman, *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*, New York: M. Evans 1966, 137–138; David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, New York: Arcade Publishing 2015, 113, 116; Field *All Those Strangers*, 41).

18 Rosa Bobia, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France* (Lausanne: Peter Lang 1998), 22. Interestingly, in "The Male Prison," Baldwin overtly criticizes André Gide for too openly discussing his own homosexuality.

19 Friederike Hajek, "Historical Aspects of the Reception of James Baldwin in the German Democratic Republic," in *James Baldwin: His Place in American Literary History and His Reception in Europe*, ed. Jakob Köllhofer (Hamburg: Peter Lang 1991), 40.

20 Zsófia Gombár, "Literary Censorship and Homosexuality in Kádár-Regime Hungary and *Estado Novo* Portugal," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 151.

21 Hajek, "Historical Aspects…" 40.

22 Nigel Hatton, "Sculpting a Human Being: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, and the Police in Denmark," in "Rebranding James Baldwin and his Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference" (M. Zaborowska, N. Radel, N. Hatton & E. Gibson III), *James Baldwin Review* 6 (2020), 219. Original quote from Bonnie Zimmerman, *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures* (New York: Garland 2000), 394.

23 Hatton, "Sculpting...", 219.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. Original quote from James Baldwin, *Giovannis værelse* (Copenhagen: Hasselbalchs Forlag 1957).

26 Hatton, "Sculpting…" 220. One Scandinavian reviewer of this essay noted how "lastefuldhed" can also literally mean "full of vice." This brings to mind Li's work on the developments in Chinese translations of Proust: "The word 'vice' is most frequently associated with homosexual acts in *La Recherche*. In both early translations and Xu's Translation, 'vice' is consistently translated as *exi* (evil habit) or *chou'e* (ugly evil) (*FT I*, 121; *FT II*, 1720; *ES*, 80; *XT IV*, 17), which clearly expresses a firm moral condemnation.

Notwithstanding this perception of homosexuality as something inherently evil, as earlier translations imply, Zhou consistently changes all the 'vices' of homosexuality into *pi-xi*. *Pi*, as explained earlier, means 'proclivity' and *xi* 'habit'. In many ways, this is not necessarily a deliberate softening of tone purely based on Zhou's 'learned sympathy' towards homosexuality (i.e. the cultural change brought about by, for instance, Li's works). Proust's narrator himself states on several occasions that the word 'vice' is only used for the sake of convenience: 'le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage)', and he questions the validity of this conventional designation of homosexual acts: 'leur vice, ou ce que l'on nomme improprement ainsi' (*RTP III*, 15, 19; *PT IV*, 17, 21)." (Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 65)

27 Hatton, "Sculpting…" 220.

28 Guinsbourg, *La Chambre de Giovanni*, 19; Mandelkow, *Giovannis Zimmer*,15; Francis, *The Critical Reception…* 62–64; Sharon Patricia Holland, "(Pro)Creating Imaginative Spaces and Other Queer Acts: Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits* and Its Revival of James Baldwin's Absent Black Gay Man in *Giovanni's Room*," in *James Baldwin Now*, ed. Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 265–288; Kathleen N. Drowne, "An Irrevocable Condition": Constructions of Home and the Writing of Place in *Giovanni's Room*," in *Re-viewing James Baldwin: Things Not Seen*, ed. D. Quentin Miller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 72–87; Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 57–68; Monica B. Pearl, "*Chagrin d'amour*: Intimacy, Shame, and the Closet in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*," *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 64–84.

29 Prinsen, *Giovanni's Kamer,* 16.

30 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, (1956), in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America 1998), 226.

31 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 238, 242; Prinsen *Giovanni's Kamer,* 33, 38.

32 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 255; Prinsen *Giovanni's Kamer,* 56.

33 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 244–45, 294; Prinsen *Giovanni's Kamer,* 42, 113.

34 Hajek, "Historical Aspects…" 40.

35 Mandelkow, *Giovannis Zimmer*, 203, my translation.

36 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 76.

37 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 226, Baldwin's emphasis.

38 Peter Freese, "Some Remarks on the Reception of James Baldwin's Work in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *James Baldwin: His Place in American Literary History and His Reception in Europe* ed. Jakob Köllhofer (Hamburg: Peter Lang 1991), 19.

39 George De Stefano, "State of (Gay) Liberation in East Germany and West Germany," *Pop-Matters*, 11 July 2022, https://www.popmatters.com/states-gay-liberation-clowes-huneke.

40 In the novel, David also notes how "these 'tastes,' which do not constitute a crime in France, are nevertheless regarded with extreme disapprobation by the bulk of the populace, which also looks on its rulers and 'betters' with a stony lack of affection" (343).

41 Already in 1998, Keith Harvey noticed how translators of 'camp talk' produced texts "that harmoniz[e] with the prevailing view of human subjectivity that obtains in [their]—the target—culture." See Keith Harvey, "Translating Camp Talk: Gay Identities and Cultural Transfer", *The Translator* Vol. 4 (1998:2), 310.

42 Cynthia Barounis, "'Not the Usual Pattern': James Baldwin, Homosexuality, and the DSM," *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* Vol. 59 (2017:3), 395.

43 Barounis, "'Not the Usual Pattern'", 396.

44 Hatton, "Sculpting…" 221.

45 It is of note that the American and English editions of the novel follow a similar trajectory – sober book covers and imagery of domestic life have only in recent years received more explicit erotic counterparts.

46 Hatton, "Sculpting…" 221.
47 Hatton is less impressed with this cover: "… [P]ublisher Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag opted to set aside the potentialities of allegorical hybridity and transcendence for the cover of its 2020 German translation. The cover art represents Giovanni as a chiseled and handsome European man in a provocative white tank top, reminiscent of earlier representations of the novel and claims about Baldwin that scholars have carefully problematized. The publisher presents a singular narrative in opposition to Baldwin's multiple worlds, a stark contrast to the colorful, ambiguous yet recognizable human on the Danish *Giovanni's Room*." (221)
48 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 61.
49 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 336, Baldwin's emphasis.
50 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
51 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 251.
52 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 64–68.
53 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 61.
54 Baldwin's refusal of the term is reminiscent of Proust's, as the French novelist wrote in his notebook that he considered the term 'homosexual' "too German and pedantic" and he instead favored the term "inverti" (Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 51).
55 Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 52.
56 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 241, Baldwin's emphasis.
57 All the other translations stick much closer to the original with "un de *ceux-là*", "niet zo een," "aucun d'eux," and "einen von *denen*."
58 Intriguingly, Messanges interprets the comment in an entirely different light, as he translates "these people" with "les Italiens" (191–192).
59 Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* 526.
60 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
61 Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 157.
62 Démont, "On Three Modes…" 157, 163.
63 Démont, "On Three Modes…" 163.
64 Margaret Sönser Breen, "Translation Failure in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 65.
65 Démont, "On Three Modes…" 157.
66 Démont, "On Three Modes…" 163.
67 Démont, "On Three Modes…" 168.
68 Ibid.
69 Hatton, "Sculpting…" 221.
70 William J. Spurlin, "Introduction: The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: New Approaches," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 207.
71 Aarón Lacayo, "A Queer and Embodied Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 215, 220.
72 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
73 Brian James Baer, "Beyond Either/Or: Confronting the Fact of Translation in Global Sexuality Studies" in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 53.
74 B. J. Epstein, and Robert Gillett, "Introduction" in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 5.