

FINAL PAPER

The other curtains. One of the best hideouts when playing hide-and-seek are curtains. They have to be long enough so no one can see your feet. Then, when they are open and hanging like fat sausages on both sides of the windows, you wrap yourself into them and no one notices. And when the windows are tall and the ceiling is far away, the curtains are very long and it feels like hiding in the coat of a giant –in mother Mary’s protective cloak.ⁱ

The window. I was born at the beginning of the 80s after less than 7 months of gestation. I was a very weak baby, and even the pediatricist secretly advised my dad not to get too attached to me. For many years, my health was one of the family’s biggest concerns and I feel sorry about it. Not that it was my fault –I know– but I could have been a little bit easier to handle. And when it came to food, I was impossible, specially at dinner time. I could be in front of the dinner plate for hours without taking one single bite. My parents, having lost all patience, used to place my seat with its back to the television, and hoped that the curiosity about what was happening behind me, would make me eat a little bit fasterⁱⁱ. What they did not know, was that the image on the screen reflected on the glass of the window behind them, always with the blinds already down but the curtains still folded on the sides, turning it into a huge private cinema, only for me. Even if you have blinds, you may also need curtains.ⁱⁱⁱ

The wallpaper. I was a guest in some old private castles with rooms that had silk wall hangings. The funny thing about them is that they are not glued to the wall like wallpaper, but spanned from the ceiling to the top of the wood paneling in the lower part of the wall. They do not touch the real wall, but are mounted at a little distance from it. When you touch them –what you shouldn’t do because of your greasy hands– they recede. You get the strange feeling that the wall itself is thin and soft. We once built something similar when remodeling a bathroom in the ground floor of an old Venetian palazzo. The walls were constantly wet –of course. We mounted a milky glass pane at a little distance from the wall to get a somehow more sanitary surface. Poor walls!^{iv}

The trousseau. My grandmother raised five daughters and three sons almost alone. For her, family was the only thing. Her greatest joy was seeing her nineteen grandchildren grow up, marry and have kids. I remember her in the armchair next to the brazier under the cloth of a round dining table, always crocheting.^v Her goal was to crochet the trousseau for all her grandchildren, which included two double bedspreads (one for summer and one for winter), between two and four individual bedspreads for the future great grandchildren, curtains for about six windows and two balcony doors, two table cloths (one round and one square) and a cloth to place a photo frame or a figurine on top of the television. After she died, although not all of us had married and had kids, we all got ours^{vi}. I have mine at home, of course, but like my cousin Isabel, I don’t really use it. Maybe because we are the only girls that remain single. Or maybe just because our one-single-person apartments don’t really fit so many crochet fabrics^{vii}.

The doormat. When I decided to move to the ground floor apartment of the building where we both live, I already knew that I would eventually collect your packages when the delivery

companies don't find you at home, that I would hear random heated conversations between you and your friend while you park the bikes in front of my window, that more than once – particularly on late Saturday nights– you would mistake my doorbell for the staircase light switch, and unfortunately wake me up... and I am fine with all of that. But I would have never imagined that every single night when you arrive from work you would dare to stand in front of my door and wipe the soles of your dirty shoes on my doormat. When I hear this, I get furious and I run quietly to the entrance to try to see your face through the peephole, but every time, I can only see your hair.^{viii}

The wingchair. Not matter for how long I live here already, I don't get used to the north European quick lunch break. Still after 7 years, every day after lunch with my belly full and sleepy, I remember when being a kid, after having cleaned the table, we all used to sit around the television, turn down the volume, and in complete silence, closed the eyes for never more than 20 minutes: me on the short cream sofa, lying on my back and with my hands on my belly; my mum on the long blue sofa, lying on her side with her back facing the screen; my dad on the brown leather wingchair, with his head resting on the right side, his arms on the chair arms and his feet on the stool. When I visit my mum, we still do it: me on the short cream sofa, laying on my back and with my hands on my belly; my mum on the long blue sofa, lying on her side with her back facing the screen; the brown leather wingchair, with the wear mark from my dad's head still visible.^{ix}

The bedspread. I always wanted to have a carpet on my bed. I got inspired by someone telling me that it was fashionable in the 19th Century in Germany to have private living rooms where all the surfaces were covered with oriental carpets. Floors, of course, like in a Bedouin tent, but also the walls –vertically hung carpets and tapestries, like Gobelins I imagine– and also the benches, seats, sofas, tables... carpets everywhere^x. Was it a stuffy atmosphere, or just warm and cozy and soft? How was the sound in such a room with no echo at all? I see it in my mind –a perspective drawing of a dark and somehow stiff 19th Century interior. Maybe in the style of Eduard Gaertner or Anna Alma-Tadema.^{xi} But I have never really found such a room. I bought a carpet as a day cover for my bed. It is a Kilim, a woven wool carpet, and quite heavy. In my morning routine, when I make my bed, I grab it at the short end, swing it high into the air and let it sail onto the bed. I am quite good at it now, so that it mostly sails into just the right position. My bed-carpet has narrow stripes of different widths and colors –blues and reds. It is heavy enough that it rounds off the edges of the mattress. And it is scratchy –I love the feeling of the scratchy rough wool on my naked skin.^{xii}

The curtain. I truly love the full-height 25m long white linen curtains that my mum made for me when I finally moved here. In fact, my curtains are the most straight and precise intervention of the self-fully-renovated apartment, and that is most probably because my mum is not an architect, and because they are not made out of a consistent architectural material –just white linen fabric. When the renovation finished, I installed a continuous track directly on the concrete ceiling that runs along the 6 living room windows and I sent my mum the dimensions. I used my laser measuring machine to calculate the exact length and width, then I divided it in 6 pieces and finally I added an extra 40% width to get a nice and simple fold. The room is

relatively small and the shape is quite particular, so I figured that white colour would be the safest option. Since she offered me the curtains as a present, she would buy and choose the fabric herself and that was already enough of a risk. She chose a really beautiful light Italian linen with a fine and heterogeneous texture that, when the light passes through, feels more like a skin than a screen –it has goose bumps. It took me a long time to do so since the hooks were mounted and fixed inside the track and I had to count them, divide them proportionally to the size of the total width of fabric, and calculate how many rings each curtain should have. Then I stood on top of the ladder with all the curtain pieces on my shoulder and fixed more than 165 rings one by one. When I finished, I realised that I had one ring extra because I skipped one hook. I undid the last connections and started again from that hook, and again fixed one by one the remaining 50 connections. Then, I went down the ladder, looked carefully at each curtain and saw that two of the six pieces were 2cm shorter than the other four, already 3cm over the floor –kind of annoying. One day after, I deinstalled carefully each curtain and sent them back to my mum. I would have fixed only the shorter ones, but she insisted to fix the length of all of them to be exactly 1 cm over the floor –one finger as my mum says. That must have been quite a difficult task, because the package arrived only three more months later. This time I managed to install them successfully at the first attempt, always rechecking after each couple of pieces: going down the ladder, sliding the curtain, passing though, looking at the track from inside, passing though, looking at the fold from outside, confirming that I am not missing any hook and going up again to do the next connection. Last week I closed the terrace door with the curtain still closed and the window mechanism slightly damaged an area of around 1cm² of fabric –one finger as my mum would say. No one else realises it, but I do –and the next time that my mum visits me, she also will.^{xiii}

ⁱ Lakoff G, Johnson M.: “Metaphors we live by”. Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994: about the interdependence of our bodily experiences and thinking in abstract concepts.

ⁱⁱ Moles A.: “Teoría de los objetos (Object Theory)”. Editorial Gustavo Gili, S.A., Barcelona, 1975: about objects as essential mediators between the human being and the social environment in the daily experience.

ⁱⁱⁱ Monteys X.: “La habitación (The room)”. Editorial Gustavo Gili, SL, Barcelona, 2014: in favor of the ambiguity and non-specialization of domestic spaces.

^{iv} Harman G.: “Real Qualities”. CRiSAP by Finetuned, 2012. Source: <https://www.finetuned.org/graham-harman.htm> (last access: 26.09.2019) : about objects as a primary source of knowledge that construct reality and exist even if they are not perceived, that need to be understood not only through their perceptible qualities but through their real qualities.

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- ^v Bachelard G.: "Poetik des Raumes" (la poétique de l'espace). Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 2017: about home as a space that contains our memories.
- ^{vi} Klinenberg E.: "Going solo. The extraordinary rise and surprising appeal of living alone". Penguin Group USA Inc., New York, 2013: in defense of unipersonal housing not as social failure but as personal victory.
- ^{vii} Edited by The Spaces / Real Foundation (Self J., Bose S. and Williams F.): "Home economics". The British Council, London, 2016: about the difficulties of the current generation to access the housing market.
- ^{viii} Alexander C. et. al.: "A Pattern Language. Towns, buildings, construction". Oxford University Press, New York, 1977: about patterns described by a range of situations that address the problem and the solution of an architectural design.
- ^{ix} Pallasmaa J.: "Habitar (To inhabit)". Editorial Gustavo Gili, SL, Barcelona, 2016: about the poetic meaning of home and its relationship with existence, and ultimately with one's life. And for the concept of "Einfühlung" (empathy) see also: Vischer R.: „Über das optische Formgefühl: ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik“. Stuttgart, 1873.
- ^x Wright L.: "Warm & snug: A history of the bed". Stroud: Sutton; 2004.
- ^{xi} Davidson GS.: "House proud: Nineteenth-century watercolor interiors from the Thaw Collection". Smithsonian Institution, New York, 2008.
- ^{xii} Colomina B. (Ed.): "The century of the bed". Verlag für moderne Kunst, Wien, 2014: about the growing importance of the bed a domestic space for more than sleeping.
- ^{xiii} Perec G.: "La vida, instrucciones de uso (Life, A User's Manual)". Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona, 1992: about the exhaustive description of the life of an inhabitant down to the last detail.