

**Christopher McNulty**

An excerpt from "The Handkerchief" by  
Brigitte Kronauer

Originally published as "Das Taschentuch". Translated  
from the German by Christopher McNulty

**Master's Thesis**

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**An excerpt from  
*The Handkerchief*  
by Brigitte Kronauer**

**Originally published as  
*Das Taschentuch***

**Translated from the German by**

**Christopher McNulty**

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in the Faculty of Arts.**

**School of Modern Languages  
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## Abstract

The German author Brigitte Kronauer's fourth novel, *Das Taschentuch*, is a tragicomedy about the old-fashioned pharmacist Willi Wings, the narrator Irene Gartmann's secret affections for him, and the complex situation in Germany following the 'Wende' or period of sociopolitical change that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Twenty-five years after the novel was first published in 1994, this dissertation provides an introduction to Kronauer and to *Das Taschentuch*, reviews the only known translation into English – a partial translation published by Jutta Ittner in 2009 – and sets out the purpose of and strategy for a new translation. Drawing on work by theorists Christiane Nord and Peter Newmark, this new translation aims to retain the author's voice and sense of humour, to open up the source culture for the target language reader, and at the same time to provide an accessible text for all users.

Some general challenges presented by the text – including linguistic differences between German and English, the contrasting treatment required for dialogue and narrative sections, and idiosyncrasies of Kronauer's style – are addressed in an introductory analysis, together with strategies for resolving them. The translation itself, meanwhile, is accompanied by annotations which explain particular choices or highlight difficulties encountered during the translation process. This dissertation is intended to serve as a contribution to a greater understanding and appreciation of the work of Brigitte Kronauer, who sadly passed away during its preparation.

## **Acknowledgements**

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### **Author's declaration**

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, this work is my own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. I have identified all material in this dissertation which is not my own work through appropriate referencing and acknowledgement. Where I have quoted or otherwise incorporated material which is the work of others, I have included the source in the references. Any views expressed in the dissertation, other than referenced material, are those of the author.

SIGNED: Christopher McNulty

DATE: 09/09/2019

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# Analysis

## Introduction

Brigitte Kronauer was born in Essen in 1940 and was one of Germany's most acclaimed contemporary writers in the decades around the turn of the millennium, winning numerous literary prizes including the Fontane-Preis der Stadt Berlin in 1985, the Heinrich-Böll-Preis in 1989, and the prestigious Georg-Büchner-Preis in 2005. This dissertation focuses on her fourth novel, *Das Taschentuch*, published in 1994. After a brief introduction to Kronauer and her work and a review of the only known translation of the novel – a partial translation published by Jutta Ittner in 2009 – I shall outline my own translation strategy before covering in detail some of the specific challenges presented by the text. This dissertation is intended to serve as a contribution to a greater understanding and appreciation of Kronauer's work, twenty-five years after the publication of *Das Taschentuch* and some months after the author sadly passed away in Hamburg on 22 July 2019.

Written at a time of flux in the recently-reunified country, *Das Taschentuch* was originally published by the Stuttgart-based Klett-Cotta Verlag – which remained Kronauer's publisher throughout her life, releasing her posthumous work *Das Schöne, Schäbige, Schwankende* in August 2019 – and has become something of a modern classic.<sup>1</sup> The tragicomic plot of Kronauer's novel portrays "einen Untergang –

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<sup>1</sup> *Das Taschentuch* was one of the set literary pieces for the 2019 Goethe-Institut C2 level examinations. Prof. Dr. Sven Hanuschek at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, who was responsible for this choice, stated that "die [ausgewählten] titel sollen schon eine gewisse repräsentanz haben, sollen also etwas über das aktuelle deutschland oder das deutschland der letzten jahrzehnte aussagen ... kronauer schließlich ist eine der wichtigsten lebenden autorinnen" ["the [chosen] works should certainly be representative in a certain

den ihrer Hauptfigur Willi Wings, eines Apothekers mit epileptischen Schwindelanfällen und Absencen, und den der bundesrepublikanischen Gesellschaft in den neunziger Jahren" ["a demise – both of her protagonist Willi Wings, a pharmacist with epileptic seizures including absence seizures, and of the society of the Bundesrepublik in the nineties"] (Ehlebracht 2008, p.47-48). Moreover, the vintage pharmacy interiors and kitsch window displays so admired by Willi Wings are also in demise, as they gradually get replaced as part of the modernisation – “[d]ie Leute sind verrückt auf Gläsernes, auf Durchsichtiges, Luftiges” [“people are crazy about anything that’s glass or transparent, airy”] (Kronauer 1994, p.50) – and commercialisation – “ein Kollege im Ruhrgebiet hat sogar Bügeleisen an die Stammkundschaft verschenkt” [“a colleague in the Ruhr area has even been giving irons away to regular customers”] (ibid., p.51) – of healthcare services at the time. The novel is narrated by Irene Gartmann, an author who has known Willi since childhood and who is secretly in love with him. Her occasional reflections on the complex situation in Germany following the ‘Wende’ – the “turning point” or process of sociopolitical change that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall – contrast starkly with the majority of her observations, which concern everyday scenes, characters or gestures and are often humorous in nature.

Critics praised Kronauer’s texts for being “immer verlässlich, was Witz und Virtuosität angeht” [“ever reliable, as far as humour and virtuosity are concerned”] (Mayer 2017), and “in Schönheit [genau]” [“beautiful in their accuracy”] (Steinfeld 2019), but her

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way, i.e. they should have something to say about Germany today or Germany over the past decades. Kronauer is, after all, one of the most important living [female] authors” (personal communication, 23 July 2019, lack of capitalisation in original. Unless otherwise attributed, all English translations of German references cited in the text are my own). In fact, the author had passed away the previous day.

writing was also criticised for being too prolix; one contemporaneous reviewer of *Das Taschentuch* was of the opinion that the work focused too much on “Peripheres und Triviales, ihren den banalsten Alltagskram ins Unwirkliche übersteigernden Beschreibungsorgien” [“peripheral and trivial details, the most banal, everyday nonsense drawn out into unrealistically over-the-top orgies of description”] (Höbel 1994).<sup>2</sup> Kronauer’s style is indeed heavy on detail and description and she had a fondness for ‘Schachtelsätze’ or long, multi-clause sentences; it has been claimed that “man [sucht] vergeblich nach einer nennenswerten Handlung” [“one searches in vain for some sort of noteworthy action”] (Kister 2019) in her works. “Der Plot indes war ihre Sache nicht” [“plots were not really her thing”] was the blunt conclusion arrived at by Ijoma Mangold in his obituary for Kronauer on ZEIT ONLINE (2019).

One consequence of Kronauer’s predilection for long, illustrative sentences is that her works have often been characterised as challenging to read. Her colleague Martin Mosebach, for example, stated: “sie hat vielleicht nie ein besonders großes Publikum für sich gewonnen, denn die Lektüre ihrer Werke braucht Hingabe” [“she was perhaps never particularly popular among the masses, because reading her works requires commitment”] (Deutschlandfunk Kultur 2019b). *Das Taschentuch* is no exception: not only the lengthy descriptions but also the colourful vocabulary,

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<sup>2</sup> The novel received mixed reviews upon publication. Reinhard Baumgart was positive in the ZEIT newspaper (1994) but Wolfgang Höbel noted in the SPIEGEL magazine that the work basically consisted of “[e]in Exzeß an Ereignislosigkeit, an kunstvoll-beiläufigem Geplauder, an kumpelhafter Koketterie mit dem Leser” [“excessive uneventfulness, elaborately parenthetical chit-chat and chummy coquetry with the reader”] (1994). One English language review published in a journal of international literature concluded that “*Das Taschentuch*’s combination of kaffeeklatsch, blaming, and mucus do not add up to redeeming literary value” (Mahlendorf 1995, p.575) and “none of the characters commands the reader’s sympathy, because the author acquaints us only with their outward gestures, their appearances, and their exchanges of social platitudes. The protagonist remains as flat as the other characters” (ibid.).

neologisms, and the narrative's jumping between different time levels (Höbel 1994) make for a demanding novel.

As for Kronauer's "uninspiring" (Mahlendorf 1995, p.575) title, this refers to "the old-fashioned item that her old-fashioned hero, Willi Wings, carries around with him for emergencies" (Ittner 2009, p.183). Willi's handkerchief makes appearances throughout the novel – mostly in a comical context – but in a broader sense, "[d]ieses ordinäre Tuch, gemeinhin bestimmt für Rotz und Wasser, Blut, Schweiß und Tränen, auch Lachtränen, faßt zum Ende tatsächlich zeichenhaft den ganzen Roman in sich zusammen, seine Komik, seine Trauer, seine Mühsal und Alltäglichkeit" ["this common cloth, generally intended for snot and water, blood, sweat and tears – also tears of laughter – actually sums up the whole novel in the end, symbolically – its comedy, its tragedy, its tribulations and banality"] (Baumgart 1994).

## **Previous translation**

As far as the Klett-Cotta Verlag is aware (personal communication, 3 September 2019), *Das Taschentuch* has never been translated in its entirety into any language. A selection of extracts was, however, translated into English by Jutta Ittner in 2009 as part of her English-language study *Constructs of Desire: Selections from Brigitte Kronauer*, which also features an introduction to Kronauer, an interview with her, a translation of the address she gave on accepting the Georg-Büchner-Preis, and an extensive bibliography. Kronauer is presented to the reader as an author who "has until now remained virtually unknown in the English-speaking world" (Ittner 2009, front flap) and the text is clearly designed to be accessible to target language (TL)

readers with no knowledge of German whatsoever: when referring to the names of Kronauer's works, for example, a TL translation is always provided, even if the original source language (SL) name is not.

For *Das Taschentuch*, Ittner selected and translated four extracts from the novel. Two of these are not discrete, with the result that her translation consists of six separate sections in total, each ranging from five to ten pages. These are intended to give TL readers unfamiliar with the author an introduction to and a general impression of Kronauer's writing, rather than provide them with a summary of the text.

It is clear from the orthography ("parlor", "gray", "center") and vocabulary ("cookie sheet", "kibitzers", "condominiums") she uses that Ittner's target text (TT) is aimed at an American audience, and the register of her translation feels harsher than the source text (ST) in renderings such as "What a bastard[!]" ["So ein Schwein!"] (ibid., p.203) or "What bullshit, I was thinking" ["So ein Quatsch! dachte ich"] (ibid., p.205). She often employs a domesticating approach – where aspects of the ST which would highlight its origin in the SL are removed or made invisible in the TT – for example by avoiding SL terms in "old Mrs. Luchs" ["alte Frau Luchs"] (ibid., p.193) or "Mr. Wings" ["Herr Wings"] (ibid., p.196). This ensures that the TT is accessible for TL readers, but can also mean that marked or humorous content in the ST is absent in the translation.

The phrase “Willi’s buddy from a childhood amidst post-war rubble”

[“Willigesellschafterin aus der Trümmerkindheit”] (ibid., p.191), for example, is perfectly comprehensible to TT readers but has lost the comedic aspect of the neologism “Willigesellschafterin” in the ST. Similarly, in the following example, the disappearance of the SL lexical item “futterneidisch” again results in a less humorous TT:

acht Personen, die kurz vorher, während sie es sich doch schmecken ließen,  
absonderliche Grimassen geschnitten hatten ... die sich alle abstrus  
futterneidisch auf das süße Zeugs bezogen

eight people who were now enjoying the sweet stuff but had shortly before  
pulled the weirdest faces in an absurd case of the green-eyed monster (ibid.,  
p.187)

Although the clarity of the TT has ostensibly been ensured by the use of the TL idiom “green-eyed monster”, this – combined with the restructured syntax – actually results in a TT which is less clear than the ST.

At other points in her translation, Ittner applies a more foreignising approach. This refers to a translation strategy where the TT reader is actively made aware of



linguistic and cultural differences between the ST and the TT.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, for example, Ittner introduces SL lexis – “festive coffee klatsch” [“festlichen Kaffeetrinkens”] (ibid., p.186) gives TL readers an insight into the SL culture and reminds them they are reading a translated text – or borrows from the ST: “Already a real little mom, little woman, what a little *hausfrau!*” [“Schon ein richtiges Mütterchen und Fräuchen, Hausfräuchen!”] (ibid., p.188). In both cases, the translation remains accessible because the sense is clear from the context, even if readers may not be aware of the exact meaning of the SL terms.<sup>4</sup>

Other foreignising techniques employed by Ittner include staying close to the SL in lexical choices – “Well, birthday child?” [“Na, du Geburtstagskind!”] (ibid., p.186) – or grammar – “He waved at the three” [“Er winkte den dreien zu”] (ibid., p.201). Elsewhere, she retains aspects of SL syntax, for example the retention of the prepositional phrase at the start of the sentence here, which is standard in the SL but marked in the TL:

Von Hilde hat er mir erzählt, sie krame jetzt, da sie allein leben müsse,  
absichtlich in ihrer Küche, bis alles nach intakter Geschäftigkeit aussehe

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of foreignising is not new: in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher promoted an approach to translation in which “the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him” (2012 [1813], p.49). In the present day, as “English is the most translated language worldwide, but one of the least translated into” (Venuti 1995, p.12-14 cited Venuti 1998, p.10), many contemporary critics advocate foreignising translation as a means of counteracting the unequal cultural values of the English-speaking world.

<sup>4</sup> Ittner conforms to TL capitalisation rules for common nouns to avoid further distracting her reader.

About Hilde he told me that she kept bustling around in her kitchen now that she was all by herself, so that she looked like the busybody she used to be (ibid., p.194)

Of course, TL readers have an expectation that they will be able to understand a text which has been translated into their language, and “there would normally be a price to pay for opting for any deviant kind of behaviour” (Toury 2012 [1995], p.170) which does not heed TT norms.<sup>5</sup> In the instances above, this “price to pay” might be that TT readers assume the translator has made a mistake; that they do not understand or misunderstand the TT; or that they make negative judgements regarding the ST author’s style.

Ittner’s approach to Kronauer’s trademark multi-clause sentences, which, as shown above, constitute an important aspect of the author’s style, is often to simplify or streamline them. In the example below, the new clause introduced for “sportlich patent auch” in the ST implies that this is an afterthought; the effacement of the separate clause in the TT inevitably results in a semantic loss:

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<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, I envisage that many literary translators in the West today assume that their TT readers have more flexible expectations when reading literature which they *know* has been translated. Toury observed that “a translator may subject him-/herself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the target culture, or, *in that section of it which would host the end product*” (Toury 2012 [1995], p.171, emphasis added); in other words, a translator may choose to adhere more or less strictly to TL norms depending on the specific genre of the TT.

Hält man sich Ingeborgs zwar tapfer geschminktes, aber hoffnungslos  
rechtschaffenes Gesicht, sportlich patent auch, vor Augen

Just visualize Ingeborg's hopelessly plain though practical and athletic face—  
even at its most courageously makeup (Ittner 2009, p.191)

Sometimes, Ittner's syntactical restructuring goes so far as to affect the information structure of the text (Halliday 1970 cited Baker 2011, p.131-5). In the following example, the transition between theme and rheme – the “part of a sentence communicating information relative to whatever is indicated by the theme” (Matthews 2014b) – has been confused, with the result that TT readers will interpret the sentence differently from ST readers. In the ST, the rheme “auch das ja eine vage Kindheitsreminiszenz” most likely refers to the theme “übertrieben nach Duschgel roch”. In the TT, however, the corresponding rheme “another of our vague childhood reminiscences” appears to refer to the theme “flaunting of medical expertise”:

dieses niedliche Gelichter, das montags, wenn es so auffällig medizinisch tat,  
übertrieben nach Duschgel roch, auch das ja eine vage Kindheitsreminiszenz

the pretty bunch that on Mondays smelled so excessively of shower gel while  
flaunting their medical expertise—which would be another of our vague  
childhood reminiscences (Ittner 2009, p.193)

Similarly unsuccessful syntactic restructuring can be seen in the following example, where the effacement of a subordinate clause results in a TT which implies that the piles of rubble, rather than Herder Street, were where Willi and Irene grew up:

Für Willi mußte es ... so sein, als schritte er, statt der Meeresküste, unsere alte verkommene Herderstraße mit ihren Trümmern, in der wir beide groß geworden waren, noch einmal ab

it must have seemed as though he weren't walking along the beach but ... along our old, run-down Herder Street with its piles of rubble where we grew up" (ibid., p.199)

Finally, Ittner's translation sometimes replaces passive or impersonal structures in the ST with active or personal ones in the TT. In the following example, the ST makes no reference to the first person and just one reference to the second person, in comparison to five references to the first person and four to the second person in the TT. The result is, in this instance, a TT dialogue which is much more grounded in the characters' personal experiences than the more general ST dialogue:

Aber das ist es ja, würdest du antworten, wenn das Gefühl mitmacht, ist alles in Ordnung! Das unangemessene Brimborium wegen einer Sache, an deren Bedeutung man nicht ernstlich glaubt, nur das ist nicht zu ertragen und eine Verhöhnung. Ja, Willi, stimmt!

But that's exactly what I mean. If you respond and there is a real emotion I'm fine with it! What I resent is the inappropriate fuss about nothing really meaningful, that I find insulting. Well, Willi, I'll give you that—where you're right you're right. (ibid., p.195)

On the whole, then, Ittner's translation is more successful when it keeps close to the ST, for example by maintaining aspects of the ST syntax to reflect Kronauer's style or by employing foreignising strategies to open up the SL culture and retain marked or comic content from the ST. On the other hand, her TT suffers when the information structures from the ST are not maintained, resulting in mistranslations, or when impersonal constructions from the ST are effaced in the TT.

## **Translation strategy**

In terms of my own translation, I decided first of all to determine some characteristics of the text and its users in order to ascertain which approach I wanted to take. The 'Textsorte' or genre is a novel – fictitious prose narrative – and the text type, to use the terminology of Katharina Reiß (1971/2000, p.25-6), is expressive. It has an 'Ausdrucksfunktion': rather than communicating facts or encouraging a behavioural response, the text is first and foremost a creative composition.<sup>6</sup> When translating texts of this type, "the main concern of the translator should be to preserve aesthetic

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<sup>6</sup> As will be seen, my TT will have elements of an 'Appellfunktion' or appellative function, as it is designed to induce a reaction on the part of the TT receivers. In any case, the ST remains a work of fiction with an expressive text type.

effect alongside relevant aspects of semantic content” (Hatim and Munday 2004, p.284); in other words, translators should typically consider the style of the text and focus on its artistic aspect.

In terms of the translation commission, I imagined that I, as a freelance translator, had been contacted directly by the author herself – the translation “initiator” to use Christiane Nord’s terminology (2005, p.6). So that she may reach out to UK publishers and encourage them to commission an English translation of the whole novel – perhaps to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – I supposed that the author had asked me to translate a section of it as a preview. The excerpt chosen by her – the ST for my translation – is discrete, unlike Ittner’s extracts, and does not cross over with the passages translated previously.

Establishing the function or *skopos*<sup>7</sup> of the translation was the next step: Nord has noted that “[i]t is not the source text as such, or its effect on the ST receiver, or the function assigned to it by the author, that operates the translation process [...] but the intended *function or skopos of the target text* as determined by the initiator’s needs” (ibid., p.10, emphasis added). In fact, my translation has a dual *skopos*. Firstly, it is intended to present TT “addressees” (Holz-Mänttari 1984, p.109-11; Nord 1997, p.22) – that is, members of the public who buy and read the book – with an acceptable<sup>8</sup> text; and secondly, is it designed to impress and arouse the interest of TT “receivers”

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<sup>7</sup> Skopos theory views translation less in theoretical terms and more as an action with a realistic purpose (Reiß and Vermeer 1984).

<sup>8</sup> “Acceptable” both in the regular sense of the word and in the sense used by Gideon Toury, who differentiated between an “adequate” TT which stays close to the SL norms and an “acceptable” TT in which TL norms prevail (2012 [1995], p.171).

or decision-makers at publishing houses who will ideally commission a translation of the full text.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the TT addressees, I anticipate educated laypeople who may be experienced in reading translated texts, and who might have an interest in Germany, humorous or tragicomic literature, or the period in which the novel is set – but who do not have sufficient language skills to read the ST in the SL. As for the TT receivers, they may or may not be able to read the ST in the SL; at any rate, I assume they cover a great deal of translated material and are very familiar with the contemporary publishing business. The difference in time and place between the ST context (Germany in the 1990s<sup>10</sup>) and the TT context (the UK in the 2010s) is relatively small, which should ensure that the content of the ST can be expressed satisfactorily in the TL.

In terms of my translation strategy, then, one option would have been to create a TT which aims to have an identical effect on the TL reader as the ST had on the SL reader at the time of publication. Had I adopted this strategy, I might have performed a cultural transplantation (Hervey et al. 2006, p.33-4) by setting the action of the novel in the UK in the present day, renaming the characters using forenames and

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<sup>9</sup> In reality, the TT's purpose would first and foremost be to persuade decision-makers at publishing houses, as amendments for the benefit of the TT addressees could be made if and when a full translation were commissioned.

<sup>10</sup> The novel is set in Germany (although the characters later travel to Belgium) and makes some allusions to the USA (either regarding the Gulf War or Martina's fiancé/Bedniak's son). There are several mentions of contemporary political events, but no notable references to the UK or British culture.

surnames more recognisable in contemporary Britain and removing or updating references to real-life people and events.<sup>11</sup> Peter Newmark termed this sort of translation 'communicative translation'. He described it as an approach which "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original" (1981, p.39), with the result that translations are "likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, [and] more conventional" (ibid.).<sup>12</sup> The majority of mainstream translation in the West today aligns closely with this approach (Robinson 2012, p.84), resulting in texts which read, more or less, as though they had originally been written in the TL.

Newmark contrasted this with 'semantic translation', an approach which "attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" (1981, p.39). This is achieved by creating a TT which "remains within the original culture and [...] tends to be more complex, more awkward [and] more detailed" (ibid.) than the ST. As outlined above, I found Ittner's translation less successful when it strayed too far from the SL, and decided, therefore, to incorporate elements of Newmark's 'semantic translation' into my TT.

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<sup>11</sup> An advantage of this technique for texts rooted firmly in their SL culture – such as the present ST – is that the non-exoticism of the text is retained; conversely, when a text is *not* culturally transplanted, "the TT will have an impact on the TL public quite unlike any that the ST could have had on an SL public, for whom the text is not exotic" (Hervey et al. 2006, p.33).

<sup>12</sup> Newmark based his theory on the work of Eugene Nida (1964); he found Nida's concept of 'dynamic equivalence' problematic, however, because in most translations it is impossible for the TT to have exactly the same effect on the TL reader as the ST had on the SL reader: "the translator is essentially trying to render the effect the SL text has on himself [...], not on any putative readership" (1988, p.48-49).



My strategy, then, has been to provide a translation which – while adhering on the whole to TL norms – retains Kronauer’s voice, humour and style (particular aspects of which are outlined in the next section) in order to resound with the TT receivers. At the same time, it will also open up the SL and its culture for the TT addressees. Since readers (particularly the TT receivers) may be proficient in the SL and as the author writes in a very particular, careful manner, my translation must also accurately reflect the content of the ST. In some respects, this strategy resembles the one adopted by Ittner. However, in contrast to her translation, I have endeavoured both to prioritise foreignising strategies which do not modify the text’s information structures and to avoid extremely marked TL syntax which might be construed as incorrect by TT readers (Vinay and Darbelnet (1995 [1958], p.31-2).<sup>13</sup> While translating, I have been mindful of the deforming tendencies outlined by Antoine Berman in his negative analytic of translation (2012 [1985]), for example by *not* providing a smooth, unambiguous TT where the ST is ambiguous and by *not* standardising the ST where it is marked.

In line with this strategy, I have retained the characters’ German names,<sup>14</sup> including those with non-standard TL characters such as umlauts (Paul Bürger, Frau

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<sup>13</sup> This is in line with Lawrence Venuti’s pragmatic approach to foreignisation: “translation concerned with limiting its ethnocentrism does not necessarily risk unintelligibility and cultural marginality. A translation project can deviate from domestic norms to signal the foreignness of the foreign text and create a readership that is more open to linguistic and cultural differences – yet without resorting to stylistic experiments that are so estranging as to be self-defeating” (1998, p.87).

<sup>14</sup> Reinhard Baumgart noted upon the novel’s publication: “Willi Wings – was für ein nichtssagender und doch hintersinniger Name: Ins Deutsche und damit ins Eindeutige übersetzt, hieße dieser Mensch also Fritz Flügel” [“Willi Wings – what a meaningless name, and yet one with a hidden meaning: translated into German and thus into unambiguous language, this person would be called Fritz Flügel”] (1994). Alongside Fritz, Willy and Willie

Schüssler). I have also borrowed basic lexis (such as “Frau”, “Herr”, “[Deutsch]mark” or “Wiener schnitzel”) from the SL culture which is widely understood in the TL. For less well-known terms which I chose to borrow as a means of adding SL flavour to the TT (such as “Reeperbahn” or “Bundeswehr”), I have ensured that these can be understood from their context, adding some basic explanation if necessary. On the other hand, I have not retained SL lexis which would require specialist knowledge of the SL culture or detailed contextualisation (such as “DDR” or “Gartenamt”).

As I am targeting UK-based publishers, I have translated into British English. For matters of style such as quotation marks, capitalisation, hyphens and so on, I have followed the Guardian style guide (Hodsdon and Marsh 2010), except for numbers, which I preferred to always spell out in words. Unlike Ittner, I have generally applied SL capitalisation rules for borrowed common nouns (with the exception of SL terms in wider use in the TL, such as “schnitzel”), again as a means of informing the TL reader about the SL culture. Regarding measurements, I have adopted a flexible approach, since this is not a special feature of Kronauer’s style which should be retained. The ST makes two references to square metres; in both cases, I have preferred to adapt the text as the precise areas are unimportant. There are also three references to metres, two of which occur in the narrative and one of which in Ingeborg’s dialogue; I have retained the former and adapted the latter to yards, in line with colloquial use in contemporary British English (Kelly 2011; Dahlgreen 2015).

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were further possibilities for the protagonist’s name in my TT; ultimately, retaining the SL name and orthography seemed the best fit.

As my ST begins on page 58 of the book, there are some aspects of the text which would be unclear to TT readers if no extra context were provided, such as the relationships between characters introduced previously, or references to events or conversations which took place earlier in the text. In these cases, I have adopted various strategies, choosing either to insert brief explanations into the text body (for information essential to readers' understanding, such as the relationship between Willi, Ingeborg and Jutta); to stay close to the ST as it is (for passing references which might be inferred from the text, such as the relationship between Willi and his mother Hilde); or, in extreme cases, to omit content from the TT entirely (for passing references which would require a disproportionate amount of explanation, such as the word "Mißgeburtenbesitzer").<sup>15</sup> In any case, while I deem translator's notes unsuitable for my strategy – neither the TT receivers nor the TT addressees would expect them – I would inform the client separately that I have made adjustments to the ST in this way. Should a full translation be commissioned, I would of course reverse these changes.

In the final section of my analysis, I consider some aspects of the translation process which have presented particular challenges.

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<sup>15</sup> Inevitably, omitting information completely from the TT results in a loss on several levels, yet I deemed this approach preferable in line with my strategy and in the interests of providing TL receivers and addressees with a readable TT.

## Specific challenges

Kronauer has often discussed the importance of the natural world in her work (Mangold 2009; Kronauer 2015; Mosebach 2019). In *Das Taschentuch* and indeed in the ST itself, there are numerous descriptions of and references to landscapes, plants, gardening and so on – from Willi’s gorilla impression and Irene’s plankton metaphor to the name of the “Schwan” (“swan”) pharmacy and Ingeborg’s description of Will’s “anthologies full of little owls” – each individual reference contributes to the semantic network of allusions to the environment, nature and the living world. I have, therefore, taken care to translate such passages carefully; the vocabulary is occasionally rather technical (see footnote 48 on p.41 and footnote 68 on p.51), if rarely pivotal to the story.

*Das Taschentuch* is narrated in the first person by a character named Irene Gartmann;<sup>16</sup> the fact that she is an author gives the novel a slightly autobiographical feel.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the style of the narrative, I have endeavoured to retain Irene’s characterisation, for example by maintaining her ‘dehabitualisations’ and long sentences (both covered in more detail below) and as many of her frequent rhetorical questions as possible.<sup>18</sup> Irene’s narrative is written in standard German

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<sup>16</sup> Kronauer returned to the character of Irene Gartmann in *Die Einöde und ihr Prophet: Über Menschen und Bilder* in 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Numerous aspects of the opening paragraph of the novel, in particular, give the impression that one is reading a real-life account: the first word, “ich”; the references to historical events such as the end of the Gulf War and the integration of the new states into the Federal Republic of Germany; and of course the revelation that Irene is an author. One could speculate over which aspects of the novel are autobiographical, though Kronauer rejected the suggestion that readers might understand her work better if they knew (Fokke 2008).

<sup>18</sup> In some passages, Irene’s rhetorical questions threaten to outnumber the sentences themselves (Kronauer 1994, p.86); elsewhere, they are piled up one after the other: “Warum

(‘Hochdeutsch’)<sup>19</sup> – although Kronauer employs occasional abbreviations such as “d. h.” (1994, p.58) or “z. B.” (ibid. p.33) – and features some anonymised initials instead of full place names (“B.” or “H.”). Accordingly, I have written in standard English, and to maintain the directness of the narration and sense of orality, I have not shied away from using contractions.<sup>20</sup> Thanks to its system of case inflections, German is more flexible than English regarding word order and is able to draw on a broader range of possibilities for accentuating different parts of the sentence (Baker 2011, p.120); in the absence of a similar technique in English, I have occasionally used italics in my TT to emphasise particular words or phrases.

The tenor of a linguistic event can be defined as “the level of formality of the relationship between the participants” (Hatim and Munday 2004, p.81) – or in the case of the ST, between Irene and the reader – and one of the most alluring aspects of Irene’s narrative is the dynamism of her tenor, which features frequent and abrupt shifts, often to comic effect. In the example of Schadenfreude below, the sudden change of topic from Ingeborg’s walking pace to a bruise on her bottom is made all

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aber die vielen Wege, ein unsinniges Wegenetz, wohin sollte das führen, im Kreis herum, wer sollte das alles abgehen und sich die Füße vertreten?” (ibid., p.64).

<sup>19</sup> Kronauer was renowned for her “beharrliche Festhalten an der alten Rechtschreibung [“unwavering adherence to the old spelling rules”]” (Kister 2019), which were initially updated by the German orthography reform of 1996 (Dudenverlag, [no date]). Even in her final work, published posthumously in 2019, she shunned the rules which had initially been introduced over twenty years previously.

<sup>20</sup> Inevitably, the narrative voice of “my” Irene is different from that of the ST Irene; one of the paradoxes of literary translation is that “[t]here will always be a compromise between faithfulness and freedom, between the need to be true to one’s own and the author’s voice” (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999, p.10 cited Sedarat 2019, p.11). Ultimately, as Kwame Anthony Appiah has noted, a literary translation which features “[a] precise set of parallels is likely to be impossible, just because the chances that metrical and other formal features of a work can be reproduced while preserving the identity of literal and non-literal, direct and indirect, meaning are vanishingly small” (2012 ([1993]), p.339).

the more amusing by the use of the passive – a more formal tenor – to describe the bruise’s vesperal inspections. In order to retain the humorous effect of this ‘dehabitualisation’ or deliberate use of language in a “non-habitual, non-ordinary way” (ibid., p.69) – and since it is at any rate unclear who is inspecting Ingeborg’s sore bottom – I have stayed close to the ST in my translation and retained the passive, impersonal construction:

Willi wollte offenbar unsere Geschwindigkeit drosseln, es gelang ihm nur für zehn Sekunden. »Momentan hat sie einen blauen Hintern. Das kommt hinzu. Sie ist auf einem Ölfleck ausgerutscht. Jeden Abend wird der veränderte Farbton besichtigt. Es ist jetzt kein reines Blau mehr, tut ihr aber noch weh.«

Willi ostensibly wanted to reduce our speed; he only managed for ten seconds. “On top of that, she has a blue bruise on her bottom at the moment. She slipped on some oil. The changing colour is inspected every evening. It’s not really a proper blue anymore, but it still hurts.”

Another aspect of Irene’s narration which frequently proves very amusing is its incoherence.<sup>21</sup> In the following passage, for instance, the unexpected reference to an idea which Irene has spontaneously had for a story creates an incoherent text, as there is no connection between the final sentence and the sentences preceding it. The effect is heightened by the contrast between the seriousness of Ingeborg’s

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<sup>21</sup> Coherence is defined as “the way in which the content of connected speech or text hangs together, or is interpreted as hanging together, as distinct from that of random assemblages of sentences” (Matthews 2014a).

situation (Irene assume she has tears in her eyes) and the inane subject of Irene's idea (toenails). Rather than trying to produce a more coherent text, for example by creating semantic connections between sentences, I have embraced such instances of incoherence and retained them in my TT:

Ich sah nicht so genau hin, vermutete jedoch, daß Ingeborg wie in Bedniaks Campingwagen Tränen in den Augen hatte. Nur in meinem Fall konnten es ja wohl schlecht Erpressungstränen sein. Mir war ein Einfall zu der Geschichte gekommen, der mit Zehennägeln zu tun hatte.

I didn't look too closely, but I suspected that Ingeborg had tears in her eyes – like she did in Bedniak's campervan. Except in this case, she could hardly have been emotionally blackmailing me. I suddenly had an idea for a story I was working on – it was about toenails.

Aside from the narrative, the ST contains plenty of dialogue; when translating this, I have once again focused on staying close to the ST in order to retain each character's personality as reflected in their idiolect. The term "Technische Universität" appears twice, for example; had it appeared in the narrative, I would have been inclined to retain the SL term, but as it appears in sections of dialogue, I have translated it as "technical university" (in the case of the old-fashioned pharmacist, Willi) and simply "university" (for his stropky teenage daughter, Jutta) respectively. In any case, the "formality/politeness dimension" (Baker 2011, p.105) of the German language is mostly absent from the ST, as the main characters always refer to each

other using the 'du' form and there is just one use of 'Sie'.<sup>22</sup> In line with my strategy, I have retained the SL tenor when Irene, or other characters, refer to each other in the third person, for example when Willi refers to his mother using her first name rather than "my mother", or when the characters say "Frau Luchs" or "Frau Schüssler" rather than using their first names, which would be more typical in the TL culture.

As noted above, Kronauer relished "das ganze Ausdrucksspektrum des von ihr perfektionierten Schachtelsatzes" ["the entire expressive spectrum of the multi-clause sentence, which she perfected"] (Liebert 2019, p.37); she "liebte die langen Sätze [und] die Möglichkeiten von Para- und Hypotaxe" ["loved long sentences [and] the possibilities of parataxis and hypotaxis"] (Fessmann, 2019) presented by the German language. As a key feature of Kronauer's style, I wanted to keep the 'Schachtelsätze' intact as much as possible, though these were frequently a challenge to translate. In line with my strategy, I endeavoured to keep internal rearrangement to a minimum and employed calquing strategies – "a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements" (Vinay and Darbelnet (1995 [1958], p.32-33) – where necessary. In the following example, I have kept the long sentence mostly intact as Irene summarises the vicissitudes of Martina's life story in one breath, and have retained the unorthodox punctuation and syntax; the chain of short rhetorical questions within the sentence is marked and comical in both SL and TL. To make the TT as accessible as

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<sup>22</sup> At the end of the ST, the Wings' neighbour calls to them using "Sie"; I did not find it necessary to signal this usage in my TT.



possible, I have reversed the order of Erich Schuller's first name and surname, neither of which is common in the TL:

Dieser großmäulige Haudegen und das stets nur in seiner Begleitung auftauchende zirka 25jährige Mädchen, von dem ich wußte, daß es nach der Scheidung Ingeborgs von ihrem ersten Ehemann, einem gewissen Schuller, Erich, Börsenmakler? Immobilienhändler? Filialleiter?, inzwischen verstorben, etwa mit vier Jahren zur Großmutter, Frau Luchs und deren älterer Tochter Erika gegeben wurde und dort nach eigenem Willen verblieben war, auch nach der Wiederverheiratung der Mutter, jetzt dort aber nicht mehr wohnte, und unter dem Einfluß der Tante Erika, einer sehr erfolgreichen Steuerberaterin, sich mit dem Bank- und Finanzwesen beschäftigte, halbwegs noch studierte, halbwegs schon verdiente.

She can't have been older than twenty-five, and only ever showed up when chaperoned by this loudmouth exhibitionist. I knew that after Ingeborg's divorce from her first husband – one Erich Schuller, stockbroker? estate agent? bank manager? since deceased – Martina was handed over at the age of four or so to her grandmother, Frau Luchs, and her elder daughter Erika, and the child had chosen to stay with them, even after her mother had remarried, but in the meantime she had grown up and moved out, and under the guidance of Auntie Erika – a very successful tax adviser – had now gone into banking and finance, still studying but already earning.

As well as individual sentences which are particularly long, Kronauer's writing often features drawn-out expository passages spread across numerous sentences – upon publication, Wolfgang Höbel noted that these detailed descriptions give the text its “sperrige, bizarre Reiz” [“awkward and bizarre allure”] (1994) – characterised by frequent use of pronouns. A further challenge, therefore, was to maintain cohesion – defined as “the network of lexical, grammatical and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text” (Baker 2011, p.190) – in these instances. I have tried to do so by replacing pronouns with the characters' names where necessary, although this sometimes, inevitably, results in repetition.

The colourful and precise lexis of the ST also presented difficulties: some terms could not be located in any dictionary and others only in specialist reference works (of regional slang, for example). As Ijoma Mangold has noted, “man [muss] sich Zeit nehmen für jeden Kronauer-Satz und ihn sich von allen Seiten genau anschauen, sonst läuft man Gefahr, die eine oder andere Boshaftigkeit, die sie noch darin versteckt hat, zu übersehen – was schade wäre” [“one has to take one's time with each of Kronauer's sentences and inspect it from all angles, otherwise one runs the risk of overlooking one of the wickednesses still hiding inside – which would be a terrible shame”] (2019). I was therefore cautious to translate carefully – particularly, regarding the numerous compound nouns, on a morphological level – and research similes, metaphors and idioms thoroughly. Regarding the latter, I have often been able to stay close to the ST; elsewhere – such as in the case of “schwarzes Haar, so kräftig wie das der Chinesinnen” (Kronauer 1994, p.68) or “[er sieht] glücklich aus wie ein noch blindes Katzenjunges” (ibid, p.70) – I have prioritised an acceptable TT over

strict adherence to the ST and have therefore used TL idioms with similar meanings.<sup>23</sup>

I have been careful to pay particular attention to the modal particles (such as “ja” and “doch” in the example below) which play “[a] special and very important affective role in almost all non-technical communication in German” (Hervey et al. 2006, p. 128) and which Kronauer uses liberally; as a standard feature of the language rather than a particular aspect of Kronauer’s style, I have not prioritised a foreignising approach here:

Zu dir kann ich ja offen sein. Willi ist doch ein erwachsener Mann!

Thank goodness I can be open with you. Willi is a grown man, for heaven’s sake!

Many of the linguistic features outlined here – from the long sentences, ‘dehabitualisations’ and incoherent interruptions to the colourful lexis, figures of speech and use of modal particles – combine to make *Das Taschentuch* an amusing work, despite “the novel’s undercurrent of sadness, grief, and guilt” (Ittner 2009, p.184). Speaking about Kronauer’s sense of humour, Martin Mosebach said: “es ist ein sehr zarter Humor. Es ist eben kein Humor der donnernden Pointen [...] sondern ein schwebender, ironischer, zarter Unterton” [“it’s a very tender sense of humour. It

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<sup>23</sup> While staying close to the ST would – in line with my strategy – help to signal the text’s foreignness, it would at the same time introduce a foreignness not present in the ST in a rather extreme and distracting way (Hervey et al. 2006, p.37). At any rate, many German figures of speech can be translated word for word into English and I have been able to retain a good deal of those occurring in the ST.

is not the humour of the thunderous punch lines [...] but rather a floating, ironic, tender undertone”] (Deutschlandfunk Kultur 2019b). Although comedy has historically been seen as difficult to translate (Attardo 1994, p.28), I have made it a priority to retain the humour of the ST in my TT.

Finally, regarding punctuation, Kronauer mostly distinguishes between direct speech, for which she uses inward-pointing guillemets, and imagined speech, for which she does not use any punctuation.<sup>24</sup> Complying with this practice was sometimes problematic, for instance in the example below, where Irene manages to pose a question and provide affirmative and negative answers to it, in all three cases using the exact same words. Although I was unable to find a similar combination of words in English which would suffice in all three instances, I succeeded in formulating the affirmative and negative answers using the same wording. In any case, in order to ensure that the TT is as clear as the ST, I found it necessary to introduce quotation marks:

»Schlafen Bedniak und Martina doch nicht miteinander?« Martina und Bedniak schlafen doch nicht miteinander! Oder: Nicht doch, Martina und Bedniak schlafen miteinander! hätte Ingeborg gut antworten können unter Verwendung der gleichen Wörter.

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<sup>24</sup> There are some instances in the text where Kronauer breaks with this rule, for example: “Aber vielleicht würde er zu meinem Entzücken antworten: »Ja, gelegentlich bin ich das, und mit Wonne, bin gemein, gemein, und mit Wonne.«” (1994, p.54).

“Aren’t Bedniak and Martina sleeping together?” “Of course Martina and Bedniak aren’t sleeping together!” Ingeborg might have replied. Or, using the same words, “Aren’t Martina and Bedniak sleeping together? Of course!”

Elsewhere, I adopted the opposite approach, removing quotation marks from the ST in line with TL norms:

Etwa acht Monate später fragte mich Jutta, »wie ich den Mauerfall fände«.

Around eight months later, Jutta would ask me what I’d thought about the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In this instance of reported speech, I rendered the verb “ask” as a future in the past construction with “would”; removed the quotation marks; and rendered the ‘Konjunktiv II’ subjunctive as an indicative verb in the TL. While omitting the subjunctive in this way can sometimes result in significant translation loss (Hervey et al. 2006, p.46-7), this is not the case here: as Irene is referring to a question posed to herself, there is no need for her to express distance, doubt or scepticism (Whittle et al. 2011, p.125) in her description of it.

# Translation

**An excerpt from *The Handkerchief* by Brigitte Kronauer**

**Originally published as *Das Taschentuch***

**Translated from the German by Christopher McNulty<sup>25</sup>**

The housing development where Willi built his home a while ago is, on the other hand,<sup>26</sup> very modern. The meadows and farmland underneath are ancient, of course, but the residential estate itself – houses, gardens, streets and so on – is brand new. Most of the families there are younger than the Wingses. From their living room windows you can watch couples promenading with their dogs, whatever the time of day. One Saturday afternoon at the end of March, I myself finally went to visit – indeed, my visits to B. became suspiciously more frequent between 1990 and 1991.<sup>27</sup> So I was back again, and went for a walk without dog, but with Jutta.<sup>28</sup> Nearly

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<sup>25</sup> If a translation of the whole text were commissioned and published, I imagine that the book may end up with a more striking title. *Willi's Hanky*, for example, would certainly be more eye-catching; a more experimental, foreignising option might be *The Pocket Kerchief* or *Das Handkerchief*. At any rate, I have provided full information in the title to make it clear that the TT is a translation of a German text; to provide an indication about the geographic setting of the story; and to enable interested TT receivers and addressees to undertake further research.

<sup>26</sup> I have retained the translation of “aber” – despite the lack of context – as its position in the opening sentence should mean the distracting effect on readers will be minimal. At any rate, the heading makes clear that the translation is an *excerpt* from the novel.

<sup>27</sup> In order to avoid a clear TT where the ST is unclear, I have retained the mysterious, abbreviated name of the place, “B.”. As noted above, I have suggested in the TT title that the setting is Germany.

<sup>28</sup> There are discrepancies in the ST about whether this visit to “B.” in March 1990 was Irene’s first or not. When asked to guess which house belongs to the Wingses, she is unable

fourteen years old by this point, Willi's daughter<sup>29</sup> was rattling on about the writers she'd been studying at school:<sup>30</sup> Gryphius, Brecht, Andersch... My God, how absurd that her childhood had flown by already – and I'd more or less experienced the whole thing, from start to finish. How different my own youth had been!

Ingeborg was there too. I could sense quite clearly that Willi's wife and I were there to listen, rather than contribute to the conversation. Jutta was to open up about school and practise her oral presentation skills – without noticing, of course.

No matter where you are in the country, the landscape always looks a little austere at this time of year. I wasn't paying attention to the one in B. at all: with the two others beside me, I couldn't concentrate properly. I was simply observing, in the playfully changeable wind, Jutta chatting away and Ingeborg maintaining her maternal silence. I don't have the faintest idea about parenting, but tried to do what was expected of me (and hoped I reacted in an appropriate way) when – having been asked what I thought of the three aforementioned writers – I emitted a funny sort of grumbling noise which was meant to signal my abstention and encourage Jutta to make her own judgement on the matter.

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to recall which colour the roof is, which implies that this is not her first visit; yet Willi later asks repeatedly whether she is happy to "finally" be visiting. I have refrained from attempting to clarify this in my translation.

<sup>29</sup> Jutta (and, in the subsequent paragraph, Ingeborg) were introduced as Willi's daughter (and wife) earlier in the text. At any rate, their relationships with Willi become clear over the course of the ST, but I have added brief explanations here to avoid an unclear or ambiguous TT where the ST is clear and unambiguous.

<sup>30</sup> I have inserted a brief description to explain that these surnames refer to writers, as Gryphius and Andersch in particular will be less familiar to TL readers.

What I remember from the start of our walk<sup>31</sup> – or, more accurately, *all* I remember – is that from the side, Jutta resembled a haughty depiction of the Madonna from the Middle Ages. Face-on, she could have been any old dull and dopey schoolgirl, then – no sooner had she moved her head slightly and I saw her in profile again – there she was! The arrogant princess on the pea, ears embellished by discreet bell-shaped earrings.<sup>32</sup>

Around eight months later, Jutta would ask me what I'd thought about the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>33</sup> If I remember correctly, I reacted in a similar way to when she asked about Gryphius, Brecht and Andersch: like fate itself, indifferent and grumbling. Today I ask myself, in all the general commotion they cause, why does everyone criticise legal arms exports so compliantly, the legal arms exports to countries around the world?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I have retained the pseudo-cleft structure in the narrative, which is in fact more common in the TL than it is in the SL (Baker 2011, p.149; Hervey et al. 2006, p.190).

<sup>32</sup> Kronauer's use of the idiom "es faustdick hinter den Ohren haben" – meaning "to be sly or devious" but word for word "to have it thick behind the ears" (Essig 2019) – links coherently to the description of Jutta's earrings (though not in the strictest sense of the term "coherent", which applies to the connectedness of text *across* sentences). I have been unable to find an idiom in the TL with a similar meaning and which also refers to ears, and have therefore replaced the idiom with an adjective to ensure no semantic loss. I preferred this solution to using an idiom with a different meaning, such as "to be wet behind the ears", which would have resulted in a coherent text but at the expense of retaining the ST meaning.

<sup>33</sup> See p.32 for the rationale behind my translation.

<sup>34</sup> Rather than translating "man" as "one", which would be quite marked, or "we", which would perhaps misleadingly imply that Irene is including herself in her statement, I have chosen "everyone" as implied by the word "allgemein" ("general").



“Stop! Turn around!”<sup>35</sup> I was to guess which house belonged to the Wingses – but I hadn’t even noticed on my last visit whether the roof tiles were terracotta-coloured or black, so I didn’t recognise it. Suddenly, somebody came leaping<sup>36</sup> over the stony ground, arms swinging – it was really quite remarkably athletic for someone of Willi’s age.<sup>37</sup> He was pretending to be a gorilla. I could tell from the protruding jaw and monkey noises: exuberant ape-cries intended, presumably, to signify the beautiful simplicity of the animalistic soul. No, actually – in Willi’s case, they really *were* just the exuberant cries of a middle-aged man pretending, for reasons not immediately obvious, to be a gorilla. Hoo hoo! Ha ha ha!<sup>38</sup> Willi greeted us with gangling arms and flexed knees. He didn’t have to be pottering around in a vintage pharmacy to have a smile on his face, after all:<sup>39</sup> here, too, he seemed to feel on top of the world. In fact,

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<sup>35</sup> Although it is unclear in the ST who issues the command, which is reported indirectly, I have rendered the instruction as direct speech by inserting quotation marks. In any case, the ambiguity about the issuer of the instruction is maintained.

<sup>36</sup> I have transposed (Vinay and Darbelnet (1995 [1958], p.35-7) the adverbial phrase “kam [...] mit [...] großen Sprüngen” (“came with large jumps”) into the participle “leaping”, defined as “[j]ump or spring a long way, to a great height, or with great force (Lexico [no date]e).

<sup>37</sup> The ST mentions “Flohnhupfer” (“flea jumps”), referring to a conversation between Willi and Irene previously in the novel (Kronauer 1994, p.39). Rather than explaining the reference in the text or via a translator’s note, both of which would be unnecessarily distracting, I have simply omitted it. In a translation of the full text, I would of course include this reference in my TT (see p.22).

<sup>38</sup> The ST refers to Herbert Althoff, a character introduced previously in the novel (Kronauer 1994, p.8) who also imitates a monkey. As the character is not mentioned again in my ST, I have omitted the reference to him, which would slow down the pace of the narrative. In a translation of the full text, I would of course include this reference in my TT (see p.22).

<sup>39</sup> I have omitted a reference to a comparison made earlier in the novel between Willi and the title character of Jean Paul’s satire *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise*: “in der Apotheke vom Mißgeburtenbesitzer” [“in the pharmacy belonging to the collector of deformed foetuses”] (Kronauer 1994, p.58). Paul’s tale, published in 1807, revolves around a pharmacist who researches deformed foetuses (Meid 2006); elaborating on this SL cultural reference in the TT would take some explanation. I have substituted the reference for one which characterises Willi and nevertheless alludes to part of the comparison made earlier in the novel: “in einer dieser bräunlich-kupfern schimmernden Apotheken” [“in one of these brown-copper shimmering pharmacies”] (Kronauer 1994, p.58). In a translation of the full text, I would of course include this reference in my TT (see p.22).

he had always loved imitating animals – and once he had started, he couldn't stop. His family took it in their stride, until it all became a bit much, that is, and he injured his foot pretending to do his gorilla walk. That didn't prevent him from complaining about it in his monkey talk. Willi looked quite bad.

A woman ran up to meet us and greeted the family in an ostentatiously enthusiastic way. Willi quickened his pace – no sign of the gorilla now. Out of necessity, Ingeborg stopped to chat with the woman, who instantly brought to mind an old-fashioned, particularly fragrant variety of rose. "She's a customer and a neighbour. And probably my biggest fan,"<sup>40</sup> mumbled Willi. He did not look well. "I skipped my woodland jog and came straight here, as fast as I could." Had there been a problem with his employees? With the tax investigation?<sup>41</sup> I didn't ask. I wouldn't have been able to do anything about it anyway, and the wind was whistling lamentably around my ears.<sup>42</sup> Despite his rushing over here, Willi wouldn't be able to make the area any more welcoming, of course. But now that he had arrived, I at least felt a bit more positive about being here.

"Obviously it does look quite bleak at the moment, everywhere does at this time of year. You can ask Jutta – in summer it's so colourful. There are sheep here in between the plots they're still building on, and cows and poppies." We went up and

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<sup>40</sup> If the exact nature of admiration implied by "mein Fan" is ambiguous, the description of this customer later in the ST as "sehnsüchtig" makes her feelings quite clear (Kronauer 1994, p.62).

<sup>41</sup> Official terms in use in the UK are "VAT visits" (Gov.uk [no date]b) and "tax compliance checks" (Gov.uk [no date]a), but "tax investigations" seems to be the term in wider public use (Ali 2019; Lobel 2018; Sweet 2019).

<sup>42</sup> The ST ("der Wind pff einem erbärmlich um die Ohren") does not specify exactly whose ears are affected; as the two previous verbs referred to Irene personally, however, I have assumed she is speaking for herself.

down over little hills on the new paths, past lampposts, bins and benches, and alongside the red and white striped tape marking out the areas still under construction, fluttering in the wind. “They’re going to turn this into a planted slope with wild roses, and they’re putting a line of trees over there.” Jutta corroborated all of Willi’s statements. “Butterbur grows naturally in the poor soil here, like it used to when we were kids. It doesn’t really like the good soil they’ve used for the gardens. Nearby there’s an old leprosy hospital and a site where they used to hang people. They would get brought over there in little carts.” We were walking at quite a pace – always the way with Willi, as though we had given up all hope of Ingeborg ever being able to catch up with us. But that wasn’t our problem, we walked to and fro and in circles and had the best view – or an overview, rather – because there weren’t any obstacles yet, we walked along the earth with a sort-of bird’s-eye view of the landscape. This was the start of a new world and nothing had really come into existence yet. “The university has an animal testing laboratory over there. They do all sorts to them. And there’s a courtyard inside where they hold seminars. It’s really nice in summer, the students drink beer there,” said Jutta.<sup>43</sup> “Do you like it?” asked Willi. “Happy you finally made it down here?” he asked several times.<sup>44</sup> “Obviously, you have to imagine it without all the piles of hardcore.”

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<sup>43</sup> Repetition of “sie” (“they”) is avoided in the ST by use of “die” (“they”) or impersonal constructions (“Mit denen wird alles mögliche ausprobiert” [“With them, everything possible is tried out”]). To avoid introducing repetition in the TT which was not present in the ST, I have rendered one instance of “sie” as “the students”; the result is inevitably a more specific TT where the ST actually referred to a more general “they” (which might have included staff or members of the public, for example).

<sup>44</sup> As this instance of direct speech was repeated “several times”, I found it particularly important to avoid any marked language, and therefore chose a more communicative wording than something closer to the ST such as: “Are you happy that you’re finally seeing the area?”.

We crossed a main road which curved round as an enormous bridge over a stream flowing through marshland, also covered in flowers which had already begun budding. “The wind, the wind!” cried Willi. “It finally gets to blow out here, more so than anywhere else round here, from one end to the other. Wherever you look: there’s wind everywhere.” He laughed a wry, self-deprecating laugh. “The huge sky, the clouds, they drift over to Belgium and the Netherlands – or they come over from there. And the smell! Sometimes you can actually smell the sea from here, the ocean!”

“They deliberately break dogs’ legs here for research purposes, you can often hear them barking or whining,” whispered Jutta to me, not so much sympathetically as teasingly. Willi stood back up, having stooped down to examine something, God only knows what, on the ground. “This trail here, for example, has quite a unique character – whether they planned it that way or not. In summer it always blooms in alternating colours, yellow and blue. When one flower dies back, another takes over, but always in the same shade.” So Willi *does* appreciate my profession – he knows I like those sorts of observations. He had discovered some violets right next to his feet<sup>45</sup> which, totally unbothered by the draught blowing just above them, were enjoying themselves very much, because now even the sun came out. “Look, the sun, what luck!” called Willi. I replied: “You look quite bad.” “Work stress, don’t worry about it. The best thing for it is... these little trees here, ghastly, the whole path with those three posts all the way along and the fat rope, and the sapling in the middle, but still... The trouble they go to! They’ll even cut off the ends later.”

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<sup>45</sup> I avoided a close rendering of “Schuhsohlen”; “next to his shoe soles” would have been marked in the TT. Instead, to retain the idea that the flowers were very close to his feet, I have inserted the attributive “right”.

On the horizon, green and blue hills swept musically into the distance; around us, red pipes lay around and piles of rubble in diverse hues. The path, already paved in brown stone, wound its way on. In the distance we could see Ingeborg, still dealing with the enamoured customer. “There used to be some trees here, but they got chopped down by a motorbike gang,” said Jutta. Willi wanted to say something in reply, but then thought better of it and – to keep up appearances – gave his nose a good blow. I knew him all too well! He had also failed to hide his anger from Jutta. She bit her lower lip in a mixture of shock and satisfaction. “They also grow crops here, in between all the other stuff. My friend lives in an old farmhouse, we buy milk and eggs from her family,<sup>46</sup> a quarter of an hour from here,” she explained with a precocious look on her face, as if she felt the need to console her father.

The father, however, started jogging on the spot. Maybe he did regret sacrificing his forest run after all? It would probably have provided a more long-term sort of invigoration than a walk with his temporarily consoling daughter and her prematurely maternal chin (but only from the front). A helicopter flew over us, unusually close by, lights flashing. I ducked down but the other two were used to it; apparently it happens several times a day. In no time it had landed on the roof of the enormous hospital building, a hospital fortress, in fact, with countless towers and thousands of windows all keeping watch over the meadows, fields and residential areas – a veritable citadel of a hospital which had relocated all its supply pipes and tubes to the outside and

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<sup>46</sup> To indicate the friend’s gender without resorting to “my girlfriend”, I introduced a feminine possessive pronoun.

now flaunted them unashamedly as though it were a museum in Paris.<sup>47</sup> It reigned supreme in this rural landscape like the twenty-first century personified. And yet there was something utterly medieval about it, crowing over and threatening the area like a heroic and picturesque ruin.

I'd seen it from a distance, surrounded by fog and brightly illuminated: a surfacing or sinking battleship you would never overlook or forget and from which you could never hide, at night in the darkness, the whole complex as if just landed, a spaceship, glistening, hazy, twinkling.

"We always say it looks like a spaceship at nighttime," divulged Jutta, to my delight once again in profile, a smug princess from the thirteenth century or freshly arrived from outer space. "Every week there's a new scandal about it in the paper. Either something important is broken or they've left a corpse lying around somewhere, usually a sheikh's."

"At any rate, nothing can happen to us, so to speak, with this in the vicinity." Willi smiled wryly, even more so than usual. "You mustn't forget," he called, "that everything here is artificial: hills, valleys – compared to the ones over there, it's all man-made. The earth is moved round as quick as a flash,<sup>48</sup> they create little hills and

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<sup>47</sup> In this paragraph and the next, I have retained the long sentences. While more typically reserved for protracted descriptions of the natural world, Kronauer dedicates these 'Schachtelsätze' not just to a man-made structure, but to the "battleship" of a "hospital fortress". She once observed during an interview with Ittner: "writing requires coldness, no question about it, as a counterpart to flesh and sumptuousness and sensuousness" (cited in Ittner 2009, p.325).

<sup>48</sup> Although a wide variety of words exist for preparing earth in English – plough, furrow, cultivate, till, harrow and ridge, for example – I was unable to find a more succinct way of expressing "Erdumwälzungen statt[finden]".

knolls, there are machines for everything. They can sink troughs too, and sometimes they undo whatever it is they've just done, no idea why, apparently they're just trying out which landscape will work best. They plan the tree planting and work out how to place the shrubs; it's as though you were watching them at work over several centuries, but here it takes just a few weeks."<sup>49</sup>

I almost found it sinister, the machinery at work under my feet, but Willi's determination to be impressed was infectious. As a child, one assumes that elevations and inclinations are forever. "Everything is stashed away, the infrastructure under the meadowland, it's all been tunnelled through down there – if you look out for them, you'll see the exhaust and ventilation shafts. They protrude out of the ground here and over there."<sup>50</sup> It's all man-made, but there are some ducks which have already settled on the artificial ponds. The technical university oversees this whole area; the average passer-by wouldn't believe it." But why are there so many paths? A pointless network of trails, going round in circles, where should they lead? Who would wear their feet out following all the walkways up and down?

"The speed at which they build nowadays, the wonders of ready-made concrete!" continued Willi. "That's how you have to look at it – and nature, too, takes root at high speed, as if the plants and trees were fine with it all." As a schoolboy, he had a

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<sup>49</sup> This paragraph includes five instances of the word "man". Three instances ("Anhöhen wirft man auf", "Mulden senkt man ab", "hier macht man das in Wochen") clearly refer to the construction workers and one to those observing them ("es ist, als sähe man Jahrhunderten zu bei der Arbeit"). The remaining instance ("man weiß nicht recht warum") probably refers to the observers, as it is contrasted immediately afterwards with "sie [they, i.e. the construction workers] probieren offenbar"; nevertheless, I have tried to retain the idea that perhaps the workers themselves do not know why they "undo what they've just done".

<sup>50</sup> Although "[d]ie Enden der Rohre" might neatly be rendered using the TL word "ducts", the proximity to "ducks" in the next sentence could prove distracting.

holiday job on a building site and still remembered all too well how long everything used to take – hence his getting carried away now. As for me, I felt happy to be here – especially now that the sun was shining – below the thick clouds and among the still barely green, stony meadows. Just like one of the ducks, I too had already been won over.<sup>51</sup>

There was just one thing which I wanted to ask Willi about: “Willi, what will the earth look like in a hundred years?” Sure enough, Willi politely considered the question for a while, but eventually shook his head and answered, regretfully, “It’s difficult, very difficult to say.”

We watched Ingeborg, in her forget-me-not blue raincoat, valiantly attempt to catch us up. Yet none of us three actually stopped to wait; we just slowed our pace a little. In the same way that other people might rave about a meal, a novel, or a relationship, Willi now began – hurriedly, as if it had to be disclosed before Ingeborg arrived – to gush about National Geographic magazine. I heard once again the sobbing sound coming from his throat which he always makes when he is deeply moved by something, although he was trying hard to suppress it. I did not think in the slightest, wandering around with him like this, about my own life. This is one of my favourite qualities about myself. Willi was talking about a photo spread on hippopotamuses without noticing the disparity between this subject and our current surroundings; if anything, I had the feeling that as he described, full of reverence, the enormous bodies of the animals dipping and diving in their dark, underwater world, he relished

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<sup>51</sup> I have been unable to find an intransitive verb equivalent in meaning to “Vertrauen fassen” and preferred to stay close to the ST rather than introduce a new object after a transitive verbal phrase such as “I had come to trust”.



the area around us all the more, an extension into the wild, into virgin land,<sup>52</sup> like when, in the middle of a forest lush with foliage, he – or does he just want to gather these magnificent ideas together all at once, to make them even more glorious? – anyway, like when he’s amidst lush foliage and starts describing desolate desert landscapes. Ingeborg was now closing in on us, as we’d reached a crossing at a dual carriageway and had to wait at the traffic lights. She wouldn’t have managed it so easily otherwise.

A small boy stood next to us, as if he had suddenly shot up out of the ground. Strangely enough, he was wearing slippers, children’s slippers with a checked pattern. The only house in the vicinity was – apart from a green cabin for the builders which did not come into question – a stout farm building. It lay there like a white cow with a muddy underbelly. Before we had a chance to ask him, he requested something which, in hindsight, was very strange: “Help me across the street. I’m only very little.” The five of us, then, crossed over. Once we’d reached the other side, the small boy so full of pity for himself ran away immediately, with his baby doll face. I would have liked to have held onto him, even against his will.

Nobody knew where the child belonged and nobody could have anticipated that one week later at this very crossing, two cars would crash into each other at right angles. Both drivers initially survived at the scene of the accident and could be freed using

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<sup>52</sup> In the ST, the “Wilde” (“wild”) and “Keusche” (“celibate”) are ostensibly contradictory, and it is unclear how “keusch” can be applied to a landscape, as all definitions of this word refer to sex, morals or ethics (Dudenredaktion [no date]c). Similarly, in the TL, I have been unable to find any evidence of “celibate” having any meaning other than “[h]aving or involving no sexual relations” (Lexico [no date]a). In this personification of the landscape, therefore, I believe the author is alluding to the idea of “virgin” land, in the sense of “[n]ot yet used, exploited, or processed” (Lexico [no date]h).

hydraulic cutters<sup>53</sup> but died hours later in hospital, in the big hospital nearby. Willi and Ingeborg witnessed the rescue operation and heard the casualties speaking. And nobody at all could have anticipated that Clinton would beat his opponent Bush so deep into the ground, Bill Clinton who believes in social democratic interventionism – just as Umberto Eco believes in the necessity of dividing Europe up into cantons – now that the Gulf War was over and East Germany had long since become regular old “eastern Germany”, this good-looking Democrat from North America, no, Bush wouldn’t even have dreamed of it, not in early spring 1991, when his war was in full swing and it was all going so well for him.

Back to March 1990, then, where I now observed Ingeborg, whom the storm had rendered utterly unrecognisable to us, or to me at least. Willi, Jutta and I were certainly a little windswept around the edges – we looked as though a light wind had ruffled us up a bit, and we had become used to the sight of each other in this state. She however, inevitably compared with that other new face, that of the sprung-up child, and cruelly treated by the elements, did look a little foolish: spikes of hair had been swept up into mounds, and to top it all off, the wind had, mockingly, since dropped away. I can still see the image of her exaggerated and sharp swathes of hair before me now, unfairly prominent, as if there was a meaning to it.

Jutta, who had in any case grown bored of Willi and me, now stayed with her mother, a few steps behind us, and straightaway Willi confided: “When I’m round here, of

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<sup>53</sup> Although the SL dictionary definition (Dudenredaktion [no date]f) and most translations of the term “Schweißgerät” – including those listed in the European Union’s Interactive Terminology for Europe (IATE) terminology database (Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union [no date]) – retain the element of “sealing” or “welding”, the idea here is obviously that the metal is being cut apart rather than joined together.

course, I often think of Attila the Hun, my old favourite.”<sup>54</sup> He laughed to himself in an obviously childish way, although he couldn’t fool me. With Jutta’s departure, we would now have some time to talk away from his family, at least for a little while.<sup>55</sup> He nevertheless turned around every so often, kept an eye on them, made sure they were okay, and even waved at them when they fell further back. “It’s not just my soft spot for Attila. I even made myself a cardboard cut-out of him when I was eight or nine,<sup>56</sup> but it’s also the grey weather and the wind, which bothers Ingeborg the most.<sup>57</sup> We’re going too fast for her.” Willi ostensibly wanted to reduce our speed; he only managed for ten seconds. “On top of that, she has a blue bruise on her bottom at the moment. She slipped on some oil. The changing colour is inspected every evening. It’s not really a proper blue anymore, but it still hurts.”<sup>58</sup>

Attila as a cardboard cut-out? I didn’t remember that. Did Willi see himself as the King of the Huns, or rather as part of the entourage? As for me, the changing weather began to make me feel like phytoplankton or zooplankton, like a tiny, drifting food particle roaming around in the damp, mild air between heaven and earth, and I was now breathing deeper than I had been for the rest of the walk so far, no more

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<sup>54</sup> Willi’s passion for Attila the Hun was mentioned earlier in the novel (Kronauer 1994, p.47). As the figure is alluded to several times in the ST, I have retained the reference and added a brief explanation at the character’s first mention.

<sup>55</sup> Retaining “Nabelschnur” (“umbilical cord”) would be too marked in this context, despite the neat metaphor it would provide for Willi’s connection to his family.

<sup>56</sup> I have changed Willi’s estimated age (In the ST: “acht oder zehn”) to two consecutive numbers. Acceptable alternatives, such as “eight, or maybe ten”; “eight, or was it ten?”; “eight, nine or ten”, would slow down the pace of the text over an already convoluted series of sentences.

<sup>57</sup> I have retained the marked ST punctuation in this sentence and the preceding one, in order to retain the impression that Willi is mixing together his wife’s problems with his childhood fantasies about Attila the Hun.

<sup>58</sup> See p.25 for the rationale behind my translation.

pauses to take stock of particular views, I was being rinsed through, straying to and fro, more or less blindly nudged by the atmosphere, directly connected to the environment, nothing more than a knot, a concentration in the area, made out of its matter.<sup>59</sup> I loved it, I loved it more than nearly anything else, and wondered whether it wasn't the same heavy atmosphere there is in films from the deep sea, in slow motion, from the realm of the microworld and from outer space?

The sun slipped pallidly between the hurrying clouds, some lighter, some darker, as if it were sliding slimily around on an oily surface, a soft-boiled egg, just an egg yolk, then the yolk of a fried egg which has been tarnished white as a result of the pan being covered. I didn't find the comparison particularly original, but communicated it anyway.

Willi was disgusted – he gets disgusted more easily than anyone else I know. “Do I still look bad now?” he asked vainly. He never looks *really* bad, I thought to myself. He has a good figure, black hair as strong as rope, and eyelashes any woman would envy. He could become Chancellor with looks like that! And he could, if he wanted, be a first-class Casanova. “A chap I know at the Schwan pharmacy has committed suicide.<sup>60</sup> I just heard about it earlier. His wife ran off with one of his best friends

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<sup>59</sup> I have retained the long sentence here to express the mixing together of reality (the changing weather, Irene's breathing deeper on her walk) and metaphor (her feeling like plankton).

<sup>60</sup> I avoided “acquaintance” as it is rather formal in tenor; at the same time, it would be misleading in the context of the story – since he has recently committed suicide – to describe this character's relationship with Willi as that of a “friend”. I have borrowed the SL name of the pharmacy in line with my strategy; unfortunately, this may render the meaning of the name “Schwan” (“swan”) unclear to TT readers, which will diminish the text's semantic network of references to nature (see p.23).

about a year ago.<sup>61</sup> After that it all went downhill with him and the business. Then it finally happened yesterday.” I pictured the woman running away, escaping in a billowing white pharmacist’s coat. Ridiculous, of course – I had no idea whether she even worked in the same profession.

We continued on through the changing landscape, charging Huns and floating plankton in the hazy air,<sup>62</sup> and Willi started talking about loyalty. Even though Willi never looks absolutely terrible, he does seem pinched sometimes, almost lipless: “The wife did a runner, she was too good-looking for him from the word go, the poor guy. She was the kind of person who gave herself away by randomly introducing new words into her everyday vocabulary. Very haphazard.”

A little more relaxed now, Willi complained about his daughter’s unpredictable mood swings. It was hard to keep up, he said: one minute she was snorting with laughter like a madwoman, the next she would start whingeing and saddle herself with a whole programme of new activities and hobbies which would soon be dropped and forgotten. That Jutta back there, he explained, was always up to the same old tricks. “But Willi, at least she’s predictably unpredictable,” I pointed out, predictably. “That’s nonsense. As a child she was downright obsessed with dressing up. Why doesn’t she still do that? She used to like it.” He smiled at me with the crooked smile I’d seen so often before and added, “I, on the other hand, am still the same old idiot.”

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<sup>61</sup> Staying too close to the ST here – “with his friend” – would imply that the pharmacist had only had one friend, which in the absence of a modifier such as “einzig” was presumably not the case.

<sup>62</sup> As I have been unable to find a comparably versatile SL word for “treiben” – which in the ST describes both the Huns and the plankton – I introduced the more general verb “continued” and retained one meaning of “treiben”, “to float”, as a participle modifier for “plankton”.

My vague, in any case superfluous attempt to reassure him – “sometimes that’s just how it is, we swing from one mad idea to the next”<sup>63</sup> – was now drowned out by a gesture, or rather by the din which accompanied and outlasted it. This was Willi’s way of stamping and signing off the conversation after his final sentence. He pulled out one of the corners of his handkerchief and – with thumb and index finger – wound it round the back of his other hand, letting it twist until it was in the exact desired position. Unbelievable! The older gentleman’s signatory flourish of choice! He blew his nose twice, releasing orgiastic trumpet blasts, a neighing, a little death, and to round it all off he ceremoniously roamed around under his nose with the hanky, which had in the meantime been wrapped around his extended stake of a forefinger. I’d observed this spectacle many times before, but today he stopped still, eyebrows suddenly very suspicious, listening, as if he were struggling to discern an unrecognised noise or ascertain whether an unexpected, eerie silence had fallen over us – he stood there listening, obviously unsettled. The handkerchief he now held in his hand was worn out, an overworked utensil he had now forgotten.<sup>64</sup> He used his other hand to rub his eyes, which apparently could not see well right now.

In the meantime, Ingeborg and Jutta had caught up with us considerably. Willi pulled himself together, noticed that I was looking at him and it seemed like he wanted to hide his handkerchief – but then he changed his mind and showed me its green

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<sup>63</sup> I have been unable to find a TL term encompassing the exact meaning of “hangeln” – defined as “sich im Hang fortbewegen, wobei die Hände abwechselnd weitergreifen” [“moving along while hanging, using the hands alternately to grasp onward”] (Dudenredaktion, [no date]b) – but have tried to retain the idea of moving forwards and backwards in a similar way.

<sup>64</sup> Since I have not retained the cleft structure from the ST, I have compensated by introducing the word “overused” to emphasise how “verschlissen” the handkerchief was.

edging: “I can’t part with it, it’s my favourite. It’s so worn that I’ve often had to save it from being thrown away, but each time I’ve mended it myself. The rest of the family just uses disposable tissues anyway.” We tried inconspicuously to regain our advance on the others. “I got a bit dizzy just then, nothing serious, it sometimes happens after I blow my nose.”

I can’t imagine there is anyone who loves blowing their nose more than Willi does. He looks as happy as a clam at high tide after he’s done it. It must be a rush, a kind of drug for him, although he of all people could easily get hold of something stronger. “My father and I would often argue over the handkerchiefs,” Willi confided. “We both used to stare enviously at Hilde to see which one of us would receive the larger parcel of hankies after she’d ironed them, whether she’d given us one too many or too few by accident, or perhaps deliberately, as a means of conferring or withdrawing favour.<sup>65</sup> It was one of the main forms of currency in our relationship.”

He held his hanky up above his head like a snotty flag,<sup>66</sup> beckoning Ingeborg and Jutta with it, before we marched on at high speed. “We recently spent a lovely day in Oostende,<sup>67</sup> now that my nose is clear I can smell the sea from here. It’s a bit like the seaside here. Of course I know that the sea isn’t *actually* here. Such a nice day! Last year in spring I secretly sprinkled some poppy and cornflower seeds on this land

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<sup>65</sup> Although she is mentioned again later in the ST and her connection to Willi is not entirely clear from my translation, I have not clarified the relationship between Willi and Hilde, his mother. I preferred to retain his detached way of referring to her, using her first name rather than “my mother”, for example.

<sup>66</sup> “Rotzfahne” is a crude synonym for handkerchief which translates word for word as “snot flag” (Häuser 2012).

<sup>67</sup> The ST uses the Dutch name rather than the German “Ostende”; I have retained this in favour of the English “Ostend”.

here, a grain field. It worked a treat, and apart from that I'm also planting oak saplings<sup>68</sup> around the edges – some stay standing, but most of them are snapped off and pulled out by the council and their machines. The young trees don't grow fast enough to get past their critical phase. Ah, what I wanted to say – did you know that birds can not only visually process the buzzing of hummingbirds, for example, as individual wing flaps, but also that some of them can also perceive the extremely slow movements – unrecognisable for us, can you imagine? – of heavenly bodies across the sky? Now *that* would make us all feel dizzy, if we could only see it!" The semifluid, nearly white sun rolled among the clouds; even with our normal eyes we could observe it dodging between them at high speed.

What I remember clearest of all from this stage of the walk – along with Ingeborg's stiff, upswept hairdo – was Willi's story about some tanks he saw being transported in the middle of a peaceful heathland one evening. He was waiting at a barrier, there were cuckoo calls, something glistened in the undergrowth, and then a long chain of tanks came past, being transported from A to B, without any explanation or fuss, just a faint, mechanical rattling, then one with a red cross painted on, then another chain of them. Had he experienced it recently or was it another recollection from long ago? Just a year later, I myself experienced something similar. Perhaps I'm confusing things. Because back when I was very small, I *also* saw something similar, and Willi – why was he talking about it then? When did he say it had happened? Maybe he was confusing things, not me? The point was that the rolling, nearly silently rolling

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<sup>68</sup> Although it may seem unlikely that Willi is covertly planting actual trees rather than seeds, the ST is quite clear: he plants "Eichen" ("oaks") rather than "Eicheln" ("acorns"); "*manche bleiben stehen*" (emphasis added) implies that the saplings are already "standing" at the time of planting; and in order to be removed by the council, these must be "*weggeknickt und ausgerissen*" ("snapped off and pulled out"), suggesting they are substantial in size.



procession did not in the slightest fit in with the mood, with the grey spring mood – I mean, with the evening, twinkling heathland mood – it stood in stark contrast to it, to the harmless camouflaged hedges to the right and left.

Willi used his foot to test various building materials next to a strapped-up sapling and a lamppost which had already been fully installed but might need to be moved somewhere else. “There’s some land near Hilde’s where not an inch has changed over the past forty years – a beech grove, a stadium in the middle, alongside it a path, nettles on one side and a stream on the other. Behind that there’s a huge meadow with cows, in the distance a farm, beyond that a hill, and in between a reservoir. All around are planning approvals and modernisations, but in those parts nobody’s touched a thing!” He stuck the toe of his shoe inquisitively into a pile of agglomerated sand, kept his head down and asked if it was wrong to keep the landscape unchanged like that, like an open-air museum – the thought had just crossed his mind for the first time, he said – like locking away a vintage pharmacy display in a cabinet of curiosities? I knew it was painful for him just to say that out loud and replied “no”, which wasn’t really enough. “A vintage pharmacy display with a pharmacist made of wax,” he repeated, stubbornly, and kicked at a red plastic tube.

“She,” he continued, gesturing to the two women that he hadn’t forgotten them, “Hilde, that is, smiles less and less, unless you make an effort, even the untouched land I mentioned doesn’t help. It wouldn’t make a difference if you’d flown over from Africa just to see her – she doesn’t want to know. But when she’s in a good mood, she cracks one joke after the other,” he added hastily. “Then she’s cheeky, funny,

ballsy and wants to go down the pub, the fuller the better.” He himself laughed now, softly, as though he could see her in front of him.

We had only just reunited with the others when a sausage dog turned the corner.

“Paul Bürger,” hissed Ingeborg at me. “Dodgy Peter and dicky Paul!”<sup>69</sup> You’ve already met Peter Emmerich, this one’s even worse.” The dog, who was indeed followed by a man, jumped up impartially at everyone in turn, each for the same short while.

Everything about the man seemed to be very soft: his face, his handshake; his voice was almost treachery. The very awkward conversation focused on the dachshund. Paul Bürger obviously wanted just one thing – to continue his walk – and Ingeborg too – to be shot of him, but at the same time, for some inexplicable reason, to *not* let him go and to pierce him (with her eyes at least), which the soft man undoubtedly sensed.

Unhappily, we were all standing around in mud, which the dog joyfully conveyed onto our clothes. I saw neither dog nor master again. Barely a year later, however, I heard that Bürger was terrified that his son, who had recently joined the Bundeswehr, would be deployed to Turkey in connection with the Gulf War. Out and about,<sup>70</sup> he would begin bawling and sobbing of his own accord – never in a million years, not his son, not on your life. In the end, nobody wanted him in Turkey anyway.

Back on our walk, Willi revealed something else about Bürger’s son. Try as he might, he couldn’t pass his driving test. The brand new car was already parked on the drive, he said, waiting to be taken for a spin. The neighbours had even begun to ask

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<sup>69</sup> I have attempted to compensate (Baker 2011, p.86) for the lost alliteration (“Das windige Pärchen Peter und Paul!”) by retaining an element of the ST’s consonance.

<sup>70</sup> To avoid a domesticating translation such as “pub” or a marked translation such as “tavern” or “inn”, I have chosen to adapt “[i]n Wirtshäusern” quite freely.

Bürger, teasingly, about his son's progress, and as a result the long-suffering father had taken to driving the thing back and forth in the darkness of night so that it finally looked like it might have been used.

Ingeborg glared after Bürger, furious at him for being able to walk away a free man. "He owes us twenty thousand Deutschmark and is relying on the fact that Willi has the decency to not take legal action. He's in debt but owns property. Twenty thousand, interest-free, he's been staving us off for years. Willi!" "I'll give him another call," said Willi lethargically to himself.

With just a couple of authoritative gestures, Ingeborg had restructured the group. Willi and Jutta were now marching ahead ("Those two need to talk to each other") and the two of us were behind. The defining features of the conversation which followed were on the one hand that I no longer noticed a single thing about the surroundings, and on the other that I was not really listening properly. A part of my brain occupied itself from the first few metres onwards with a miniature parody (a woman spends months staring, in raptly desirous reminiscence, at a picture of herself with a lover who has in the meantime abandoned her, until one day she realises that she has, for several weeks, not been gawking at a couple but rather just at herself, lovestruck and full of pity, and presently proceeds to have an intimate relationship with herself. She then considers herself the liberated or fulfilled woman par excellence).

"Paul Bürger and Peter Emmerich, the crook and the trickster! Hangs around in our home, standing proud in our living room as if we were the provinces and he were the

whole wide world – and Willi is thick as thieves with both of them!<sup>71</sup> Everyone likes Willi, but his family? He forgets about them. You should see the lengths he goes to, to make sure these two layabouts feel comfortable in our home. He gets his favourite magazine out, the National Geographic, and his anthologies full of little owls and minerals so they have something to look at. And what angers me most of all: he lets them spread out and stretch their legs while he squeezes in somehow, he barely says a word, just listens to their showing-off<sup>72</sup> and very occasionally stutters something in between. But the thing is, he's more intelligent<sup>73</sup> than both of them put together! Thank goodness I can be open with you. Willi is a grown man, for heaven's sake! Why doesn't he let them have it? That's why I have to do it for him."

I didn't look too closely, but I suspected that Ingeborg had tears in her eyes – like she did in Bedniak's campervan. Except in this case, she could hardly have been emotionally blackmailing me. I suddenly had an idea for a story I was working on – it was about toenails. I made a mental note – and I told myself I mustn't forget it – of the word "toenails".<sup>74</sup>

"But the thing is," complained Ingeborg, more cheerful, livelier, she was now in her element after all, "I don't want to complain about Willi." "No," I answered, and thought: it wouldn't really make a difference anyway. "No, I'm sure you don't, Ingeborg. We're far too fond of him for that."

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<sup>71</sup> It is unclear whom Ingeborg is referring to in this sentence; I have maintained the ambiguity.

<sup>72</sup> "Gestrunze" is defined as "Angeberei" in a collaborative dictionary of Rhenish slang collated by the LVR-Institut für Landeskunde und Regionalgeschichte in Bonn ([no date]).

<sup>73</sup> I avoided staying close to the ST here, as a rendering such as "He knows much more than both of them" would require a modifying prepositional phrase (for example "about nature").

<sup>74</sup> See p.25 for the rationale behind my translation.

“There are some quite different problems which I wanted to ask your advice on. Martina and Bedniak.” I was very happy about this unexpected turn in the conversation – finally we were talking about something I was interested in. Willi is entirely unsuited to this sort of gossip. How on earth did this rugged old man and the prim, much younger Martina spend their time? She can’t have been older than twenty-five, and only ever showed up when chaperoned by this loudmouth exhibitionist. I knew that after Ingeborg’s divorce from her first husband – one Erich Schuller, stockbroker? estate agent? bank manager? since deceased – Martina was handed over at the age of four or so to her grandmother, Frau Luchs, and her elder daughter Erika, and the child had chosen to stay with them, even after her mother had remarried, but in the meantime she had grown up and moved out, and under the guidance of Auntie Erika – a very successful tax adviser – had now gone into banking and finance, still studying but already earning.<sup>75</sup>

“Bedniak’s a wealthy man, nobody is entirely sure how. He spoils Martina. She’s ambitious, and he likes that. He’s done up two stylish rooms for her in his place. He goes travelling with her, and he’ll be good for her career, since he has accounts and connections in her exact practice area. By the way, he’s also worked in the red light district in Hamburg, as a projectionist on the Reeperbahn, apparently. Your turn – tell me what you think.” “Me? Why?” I asked, astonished, what on earth was I supposed to say to that? “He lets her make all her expensive calls to America on his phone!” “America?” “Of course, her fiancé Rainer – virtually her fiancé, anyway – Bedniak’s

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<sup>75</sup> See p.27 for the rationale behind my translation.

son, is studying medicine over there. Didn't you know?" Was I now supposed to proffer an opinion which would be used to impress Willi later on? Was that her plan?

Instead of enquiring about the future son-in-law, then, I asked: "Aren't Bedniak and Martina sleeping together?" "Of course Martina and Bedniak aren't sleeping together!" Ingeborg might have replied. Or, using the same words, "Aren't Martina and Bedniak sleeping together? Of course!"<sup>76</sup> Instead, she just hung her head and lifted her shoulders, as if she would have liked nothing more than to pull them over her head like a blanket.

As for me, it was like an engine had been ignited, sparking and shuddering, and didn't want to stay still: I'd had another new idea for a story, and I made a mental note of the keyword "Wiener schnitzel",<sup>77</sup> so I might recall it later. "Toenails", "Wiener schnitzel", I recited to myself.

Does Martina really devote herself sexually to Bedniak? Is that how I should have phrased it? Ingeborg now professed, once again adventurously loudly: "I can't hold it against Willi that he's not interested in Martina's fate. But his own daughter, his flesh

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<sup>76</sup> See p.31 for the rationale behind my translation.

<sup>77</sup> I have assumed that TL readers will be familiar with this SL term; searches of electronic corpora (Hatim and Munday 2004, p.249) for the period between 2000 and 2008, the most recent data available, suggest that the frequency of the term "schnitzel" in British English was roughly equivalent to that of other international drinks and dishes such as "carpaccio", "sangria" and "tiramisu" (Google Books [no date]). According to the same data, "Wiener schnitzel" was more common than "wiener schnitzel", "Wiener Schnitzel", "Viennese schnitzel" and "Viennese Schnitzel". Fortunately, this is consistent with my strategy to capitalise borrowed SL common nouns unless they are widely used (see p.21); as "schnitzel" can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary (Lexico [no date]g), I have not capitalised it. At any rate, the exact preparation of the dish is irrelevant here, and explaining the meaning of the term in the TT would impact negatively on the humorous effect created by its random appearance at this point in the text.

and blood, Jutta – it's her he needs to care about." "But he's walking with her now, even from behind you can tell from their gestures that they're having a lively discussion over there." I was foolish enough to defend Willi too quickly. "He listens to you, Irene, there are some things where he listens to you more than to his own wife." That flattered me, but only a little, because it dawned on me why she was saying it – even if it were true. Sometimes. At any rate, what did I have to do with their family affairs? These dramas didn't even feature in my conversations with Willi, and besides, I needed to remember – in addition to "toenails" and "Wiener schnitzel" – the phrase "burst water pipe". But it wasn't just the phrase itself; the whole scenario which it represented needed to be reconstructible later on. "He doesn't understand her, all he does is get angry, like when he's in a good mood and expects everyone else to be all chirpy too, but she doesn't join in and sits there at the table, sulking, a roll of toilet paper next to her, blowing her nose with it."

I sighed, and nothing more was required of me, because Ingeborg was keen to buy time for the next topic of conversation. We parked the issue of Willi's unsatisfactory fathering skills and moved onto another point, a matter close to her heart: "When Willi stands there in the pharmacy, dealing with the old customers who have always stayed loyal... I don't know, appearances can be deceiving."<sup>78</sup> As she paused here, perhaps secretly counting to ten (presumably to unnerve me), I was able to quickly envisage for myself how Willi might intentionally or through incompetence be administering wrong, perhaps even deadly advice; or that – under the guise of being a respectable gentleman – he could be dealing illegal drugs in the most cold-blooded

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<sup>78</sup> I have attempted to provide a translation of this statement which is as ambiguous as the ST.

way; or that he might be standing there blind drunk and needed, in order to help him stay upright, to jam himself in between the shelves so that he might not drift too far from the vertical position we expect our pharmacists to be in. "For heaven's sake, what do you mean by that?" I blurted dutifully out, having lost both my patience and the rhythm of my stride. "Burst water pipe", "toenails", "Wiener schnitzel" – all the while I was trying desperately to keep these things in my mind.

"I'm not saying that he isn't an outstanding pharmacist – I mean, he could be if the times hadn't changed so much, or if he didn't need to be a manager and businessman at the same time. Willi knows about natural remedies and the latest medicines, he keeps himself informed, does his professional development. I can hardly accuse him of not being diligent, but ideally I wouldn't let him anywhere near the bookkeeping. My God, if I ran the whole thing by myself, it would be in a better state than it is with him now. He's just so unbearably pernicky. He doesn't get that there's a keen wind blowing nowadays, how easy it is to go under. Out here he plays gorilla and at work he's the worst sort of bureaucrat. He's had to hide the barometer from himself because he spent too much time in his office checking it."

I'd always thought of Willi less as a pharmacist and more as an interior designer for pharmaceuticals, so I wasn't too surprised by what Ingeborg had said. I could have explained it to her there and then. Willi had always been like that, even back in our schooldays. Out of antipathy towards the imposed order of things, he conformed to it meticulously. (Even cutting out a cardboard Attila for himself at home!) Still the same old Willi!



Ingeborg continued as if she had read my thoughts – no idea what was growing alongside the path, but up ahead the two figures, the taller one gesticulating, the smaller one crouched down, either resisting something or trying to get some sleep<sup>79</sup> – yes, I could see them well. “Irene,” she addressed me once again using my first name; did she really want to bribe me? “Our garden is small, thank God, otherwise it would be utter hell with Willi there.” I was enjoying our dialogue and playfully got into the part, replying: “For *heaven’s* sake, ‘with Willi utter *hell*?’” Ingeborg didn’t even grace such nonsense with a reply – I had spoken the sentence more for myself, and the gods.

“Just imagine him in a larger garden. He would get so carried away with making compost in accordance with the regulations that he wouldn’t get around to doing anything else, and I don’t even know myself whether he would go for a woodland plantation or a tropical rainforest, one of the two.<sup>80</sup> In either case, it would be dreadful. Although it’s dreadful enough as it is, actually, because the wretched garden is too small.” I had a soft spot for Ingeborg when she was like this: without breaking off, she turned into an illustrious business woman, speaking utter nonsense

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<sup>79</sup> The phrase “vor sich hin”, often used with verbs such as “vor sich hin murmeln” (“to mumble to oneself”) or “vor sich hin pfeifen” (“to whistle to oneself”), but also in “vor sich hin rosten” (“to rust away”) or “vor sich hin dümpeln” (“to stagnate, make no progress”), has quite an opaque meaning here. I have interpreted it a means of stressing the contrast between the two explanations proffered by Irene for the crouched-down figure (“aus Widerstand oder um vor sich hin zu schlafen”).

<sup>80</sup> The definition of “Plantage” – “landwirtschaftlicher Großbetrieb in tropischen Ländern” [“large agricultural business in tropical countries”] (Dudenredaktion, [no date]e) – is not exactly equivalent to the English “plantation”, defined as “[a]n estate on which crops such as coffee, sugar, and tobacco are grown” (Lexico [no date]f) or “[a]n area in which trees have been planted, especially for commercial purposes” (ibid.). As Ingeborg’s key idea here is to provide two alternatives which are both postposterous, I have adapted the ST slightly.

but with no stamina:<sup>81</sup> “Willi forgets that a small domestic garden like ours has a purely aesthetic function, perhaps an element of recreational value, but that gets ruined by grand ambitions.”

It had occurred to me that Willi had recently become a much more manly man, either because he was getting older or just growing into himself a little; indeed, Willi could certainly catch a woman’s attention, looking at him now. Hadn’t Ingeborg noticed?

“And what does Willi do with our cosy little garden, instead of simply making room for a couple of kitchen herbs, some crocuses in springtime, some marguerites in summer? Not only does he plant all manner of shrubs, but also fruit trees every few yards, and even chestnut trees he’s cultivated himself. These huge things in the small space we have – and no concept of how it will turn out.”

That sounded just like him – my Willi had remained so true to himself over all these years. Chestnut trees in that tiny garden! He could just as well have sowed his signature in cress seeds.

“If it gets too much, you can just dig the biggest one out again, Ingeborg.” I too wanted to address her ceremoniously using her first name, but at the same time I also had to remember “petits fours” now, and continuing that chain of thought, “strikebreaker”.<sup>82</sup> That made five things to keep in mind, and I quickly ran through

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<sup>81</sup> Irene’s description of Ingeborg as a “Nonsensdichterin” (word for word “[female] nonsense poet”) implies something stronger than simply “speaking nonsense”, hence my introduction of “utter”, a typical collocation (Hatim and Munday 2004, p.249).

<sup>82</sup> In the SL, this could be singular or plural; it becomes clear later in the ST that the singular would be more appropriate.

them all in my head to make sure I had memorised them – though I needed, while listening to Ingeborg, thirty seconds to recall “Wiener schnitzel”. At any rate, it was of the utmost importance to me that I keep my little cohort of keywords together. “He refuses to throw out old things at home, no matter how useless they are; it’s the same in the pharmacy, and in the garden.” “It’s his way of staying faithful, Ingeborg – you should be happy!” “Lucky you, he’s much better-looking than you are! Just enjoy it now, chop chop!” is what I really thought.

“Whatever I say, you stick up for him; it’s no good telling you all this. You interpret everything in his favour.” Ingeborg smiled as she said this in order to disguise the sourness in her voice, the acidity, bitterness – an idiosyncratic tone of voice which she often goes for. I smiled too, I smiled back as I presented a spiteful little remark, the first of the afternoon: “Stick up for him? In his favour? That would be because we’ve known each other ever since we were small.” Now at least she had a name for the emotion she was currently experiencing – jealousy, that is – so in that sense I wasn’t doing anything wrong; at the same time, I made up an imaginary story,<sup>83</sup> a special memorisation technique in which my keywords would have to be in a compelling sequence, although the exact order would be of no consequence later on: a strikebreaker, who at long last has some free time and gets round to cutting his toenails, is served a Wiener schnitzel by the wife in his kitchen. It’s an average day, but he is daydreaming of pampering her with petits fours in Paris one day, when suddenly both of them are surprised by a burst water pipe. These sorts of things are

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<sup>83</sup> I have been unable to locate any parallel texts containing the terms “Scheingeschichte” or “Vehikelgeschichte”; at any rate, the fact that the author uses the word “sogenannte” (“so-called”) and two different terms to express the idea suggests they may not be – or have been – in wider use.

very popular on TV entertainment shows – except that thinking logically, the strikebreaker of all people would hardly have had any time for his toenails, schnitzel, petits fours and burst water pipe.

The Wings' family home was now ahead of us, along with two fields and a street in between. We had an unimpeded view of the space. Willi and Jutta were waiting for us. They were facing us, and I could recognise the joy on Willi's face that the two of us women, Ingeborg and I, were chatting so animatedly. Since he was no macho,<sup>84</sup> however, he refrained from making a dumb observation along the lines of: Well then, you two pretty little things, have you been gossiping about me? – a male stereotype for these sorts of occasions. That has been said millions of times, in the western half of the world at least, but my Willi kept his lips tightly pressed together so that it couldn't slip out of him, instead whispering to me from the side that he was thrilled to see the two of us, Ingeborg and I, getting along so well. Little did he know that in the end, Ingeborg had only needed to use the words "my husband", an affront which both of us knew I would interpret without difficulty.<sup>85</sup>

Willi's happiness about my apparently blossoming relationship with Ingeborg now spread to the rest of the group, as we caught sight of something quite extraordinary. Over the field straight ahead of us, or rather not directly over it but along the narrow paths running at right angles around the side of it, a black, fanatic<sup>86</sup> scarecrow was

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<sup>84</sup> One definition of "Gockel" is a "Mann, der sich besonders männlich gibt und auf sexuelle Abenteuer aus ist" ["a man who behaves in a particularly masculine way and is out for sexual adventures"] (Dudenredaktion, [no date]a).

<sup>85</sup> One definition of "spielend" is "müheles" ["effortlessly"] (Dudenredaktion, [no date]g).

<sup>86</sup> There appear to be different opinions regarding the meaning and grammatical categories of "fanatic" and "fanatical". One dictionary states that fanatical is an adjective meaning "[f]illed with excessive and single-minded zeal" (Lexico [no date]d) or "[o]bsessively concerned with

coming in our direction, waving at us with one arm and pulling a straining dog back with the other.<sup>87</sup> The figure struggled on towards us, the terrier tried its best to charge off in another direction, and Frau Schüssler,<sup>88</sup> the neighbour – that’s who it was – very gradually managed to get closer; perhaps it was just us who were shortening the distance. “Oh God, not again,” groaned Ingeborg. The figure called: “Your sister phoned. Frau Luchs has had a fall in the kitchen and has been taken to casualty. They couldn’t manage to get hold of you. I needed to take the dog out anyway, I thought to myself: let them know yourself while you’re out.” Willi, who had become less tense during the walk, now looked the same as he had done when we’d set out, still under shock after hearing about his colleague’s tragic fate.

“A burst water pipe”? A short while ago, when I had to call the plumber about my new bathtub – I mean, the new one they lowered down on top of the old one – I heard the song “Greensleeves” through the receiver while the plumber’s wife was transferring my call to her husband’s workshop, to ensure that my wait wouldn’t seem too long.

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something” (ibid.), compared with fanatic, a different adjective defined as “[f]illed with or expressing excessive zeal” (Lexico [no date]c). The latter would be more appropriate in this context. A second dictionary, however, states that “[f]anatic means the same as fanatical” (Collins Dictionary [no date]); a third also describes the terms as interchangeable (Merriam-Webster [no date]). A fourth claims that “fanatic” is a noun and “fanatical” an adjective (Cambridge Dictionary [no date]). I have chosen “fanatic”, since – even if “fanatic” is considered by the reader to be a noun rather than an adjective – “fanatic scarecrow” may be interpreted as a compound noun.

<sup>87</sup> The SL terms “ziehen” and “wegstreben” would typically both be translated as “pulling [away]”. In order to find an appropriate synonym, I carried out concordance searches of electronic corpora (Hatim and Munday 2004, p.326), checking parallel texts for typical syntactic patterns. Most results simply corroborated the clear preference for “pulling” (Battersea Dogs & Cats Home [no date]; RSPCA [no date]), yet some used “straining” (Hail 2015; Jones 2012), which I chose to avoid introducing repetition in the TT which was absent in the ST.

<sup>88</sup> Frau Schüssler had been introduced earlier in the text (Kronauer 1994, p.54). Neatly, even the ST reader is reminded about her relationship to the family at this point.

Some weeks later, while the secretary in a Spanish office was forwarding my call, a different version of “Greensleeves” was played to distract me, and a few days ago, as I was ascending to the thirty-fourth floor of a hotel in Frankfurt, there was something very similar in the lift, but only for a few bars, since we raced up so fast. Up there, so high above the city, lying silent and stretched out in my huge hotel bed in the middle of the afternoon, I felt a sense of depression<sup>89</sup> rise hazily up to me unannounced from the distant city, so low down as if it had been beaten flat, how it came in effortlessly through the window and presumably out of the air conditioning too, so that I was caught in its grip and couldn’t get away. Because of the music and the plumber and the burst water pipe, I immediately thought of that walk at the end of March, of the story I’d tried to remember the keywords for; I couldn’t retrieve them all together from my memory. “Wiener schnitzel” came to mind, but the searching distracted me for ten minutes from the feeling which waited patiently and then returned, without providing a reason.<sup>90</sup>

It should be added that no sooner had she heard the news about her mother and before saying anything, quick-thinking Ingeborg comforted her daughter with a hug. Thus the scene ended for me with a tableau: mother and daughter pressed closely together and Willi, pale, dark circles under his eyes, just two metres away from them and yet alone, with the bleak field in the background.

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<sup>89</sup> Although depression is a mass noun in English, “I felt depression rising” would give the impression that this was a general feeling around the hotel, and the ST is quite specific that it was only the author who felt this.

<sup>90</sup> It is unclear from the ST whether the ten-minute searching applies to the remembrance of the keyword “Wiener schnitzel” or whether it was subsequent to this; I have retained this ambiguity in my translation.

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