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Beyond Words: Bridging Cultural and Linguistic Boundaries.

A Translation proposal of Juli Zeh's 'Über Menschen'

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„Die Tragik unserer Epoche besteht darin, dass die Menschen ihre persönliche Unzufriedenheit mit einem politischen Problem verwechseln. Die Unzufriedenheit der Leute ist ein politisches Problem, und zwar von gigantischem Ausmaß. Die Unzufriedenheit ist in der Lage, ganze Gesellschaften zu sprengen. Man braucht nur ein wenig Zündstoff, Flüchtlinge oder Corona, und schon droht das ganze Gebilde auseinanderzufliegen, weil niemand jemals wirklich an die Segnungen von Frieden und Wohlstand geglaubt hat.“

– Juli Zeh: Über Menschen

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Abstract:

The purpose of this work is to present the translation of two chapters from Juli Zeh's *Über Menschen* followed by an analysis of the novel's literary features and its main themes. Chapter one briefly outlines the author's career, her political and social engagement and the role her writing plays in the contemporary German literary scene. The second chapter touches upon the novel's plot and the socio-political circumstances after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter also explores Zeh's interest for themes such as human connection, social divide, and the difference between metropolitan and rural lifestyles. Chapter three discusses the author's unique writing style and the role of the translator as a cultural mediator. Moreover, it delineates the translation methodology and strategies employed, highlighting the challenges encountered and their respective solutions. The following translation work is a small step towards making Juli Zeh's literature accessible to the Italian readership, while at the same time reflecting on the interplay between language, culture and the translator's role in bridging these realms.

Lo scopo di questo lavoro è quello di presentare la traduzione di due capitoli di *Über Menschen* di Juli Zeh assieme a un'analisi delle caratteristiche letterarie e dei temi principali trattati nel romanzo. Il primo capitolo illustra brevemente la carriera dell'autrice, il suo impegno sociopolitico e il ruolo della sua poetica nel panorama letterario tedesco contemporaneo. Il secondo capitolo presenta la trama del romanzo e si sofferma sulla situazione sociopolitica in seguito allo scoppio della pandemia COVID-19. Inoltre, il capitolo esplora l'interesse di Zeh per le tematiche quali i legami intrapersonali, il divario sociale e la differenza tra uno stile di vita urbano e rurale. Il terzo capitolo analizza lo stile di scrittura caratteristico dell'autrice e la figura del traduttore come mediatore culturale. Infine, il capitolo delinea la metodologia e le strategie di traduzione impiegate, evidenziando le difficoltà incontrate e le loro rispettive soluzioni. Oltre a essere un tentativo di rendere la poetica di Juli Zeh più vicina al pubblico italiano, il seguente lavoro è al contempo una riflessione sull'interazione tra lingua, cultura e il ruolo del traduttore nel creare un ponte fra queste sfere.

Chapter 1

1.1. About the author:

Born in the former German capital city of Bonn in 1974, Julia Barbara Finck, née Julia Zeh, is a Doctor of Law, a constitutional judge and one of the most successful contemporary German novelists. Following in the footsteps of her father, Zeh studied law in Passau and Leipzig, majoring in international law. In 1998 and 2003 she completed two *Staatsexamen* (bar examinations), while in 2000 she graduated at the German institute for Literature (*Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig*, DLL), only to issue her first novel in the following year. Culminating with a doctorate at Saarland University in 2010, the subsequent prolific decade was marked by numerous publications, including four novels and essays, and three short stories and plays. For her doctoral thesis on the “Legislative Activity of UN Interim Administration Missions” she received the German Thesis Award (*Deutscher Studienpreis*) sponsored by the Körber Foundation of the city of Hamburg. Moreover, she has also obtained numerous awards, such as the Ernst-Toller-Preis in 2003, the Per Olov Enquist Prize in 2005, the Carl-Amery-Literaturpreis in 2009, and the Thomas-Mann-Preis in 2013. Together with 70,000 co-signatories, she submitted an open letter to the former Federal Chancellor Merkel, demanding the prohibition of illegal data collection by the United States intelligence agency NSA.

Zeh is a multifaceted author whose works are not confined to novels: beside her literary career, she is a journalist, writing articles and essays for the German newspapers *Die Zeit* and *FAZ*. Among others, she has also written children’s books and audio dramas. Since 2007, Zeh has been living with her husband and two children in the small town of Barnewitz in the Federal State of Brandenburg. Her works have been translated into 31 languages.

1.2. Works by Juli Zeh:

Zeh's journey as a writer is marked by a rich diversity of themes and profound engagement with contemporary social and philosophical issues. Her debut novel, *Adler und Engel* (2001) (*Eagles and Angels*, 2001), set a high benchmark in her career, intertwining the complex worlds of international law and the drug mafia. In her 2002 travel diary *Die Stille ist ein Geräusch* (*Even silence is a noise*), she captures the forgotten plight of the post-war Balkan region and it also led to her co-editing an anthology titled *Ein Hund läuft durch die Republik* (2004) (*A dog runs through the Republic*), featuring stories from young Bosnians. In *Spieltrieb* (2004) (*Gaming instinct*, 2004), set in a high school in her hometown of Bonn, Zeh delves into the philosophical questions of right and wrong. Despite receiving mixed reactions from the jury upon presenting an excerpt at the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 2004, the novel reached a wide audience and was well-acclaimed in German literary circles. The novel was subsequently adapted into both a stage play and a movie, proving Zeh's ability to convey a message through different media. Her 2005 work, *Kleines Konversationslexikon für Haushunde* (*The little encyclopedia for household dogs*, 2005), presents a unique outlook on life from the viewpoint of a dog. This was followed by *Alles auf dem Rasen* (*Full monty*), a compilation of 30 essays published in 2006. Zeh's 2007 novel *Schilf* (*Dark matter*, 2007) blended a criminal narrative with reflections on the nature of time and was notable for its adaptation into a stage play at the Munich Volkstheater, further affirming her versatile storytelling. The dystopian play *Corpus Delicti*, premiered in 2007 at the Ruhrtriennale, was later expanded into a novel by 2009 (*Corpus Delicti: Ein Prozess; The method*, 2009), exploring a society obsessed with health and prevention. This concept was further explored in a collaborative project with the German band Slut, resulting in *Corpus Delicti – Eine Schallnovelle* (2009), a unique fusion of audio play, music, and theater. Her co-authored work with Ilija Trojanow, *Angriff auf die Freiheit* (2009) (*Attack on freedom*, 2009), critically examines the intrusion of state surveillance into private lives, warning against the potential rise of a totalitarian surveillance state. This thematic boldness continues in her later works, such as *Nullzeit* (2012) (*Decompression*, 2014), a psychothriller reflecting her interest in scuba diving, and *Unterleuten* (2016) (*Among people*), a social novel offering a multi-perspective view of life in a Brandenburg village, later adapted into a television series. *Leere Herzen* (*Empty hearts*, 2019), published in 2017, is a dystopian thriller about state-sponsored terrorism in a near-future scenario, followed by *Neujahr* (2018) (*New year*, 2021), which delves into the complexities of family life and childhood trauma.

In 2020, Zeh revisited her play *Corpus Delicti* in *Fragen zu Corpus Delicti (The method – Questions)*, reflecting on its themes and evolution. In the following year she released *Über Menschen (About people, 2023)*, a novel about life during the pandemic, overcoming barriers and living in the countryside.

1.3. Committed literature:

The concept of a committed writer is oftentimes associated with the well-known French author and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) who saw words as instruments of action. In his widely studied work *What is Literature? (Qu'est-ce que la littérature?, 1948)*, Sartre claims that “prose is, utilitarian” (1988: 34).¹ Language therefore becomes a means to an end; it is a tool that the writer wields in order to feed the reader with his or her insights. In his view, prose is equivalent to disclosure of intention made explicit by words and sentences. Indeed, a writer of prose invites the reader to see the world through his or her lens to make them adopt a stance or react against it. Furthermore, the French existentialist went on to emphasize that the writer must be concerned with problems of the present, challenging the dominant narrative and adopting a critical attitude towards it. As he observed: “The function of the writer is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world and that nobody may say that he is innocent of what it’s all about” (1988:38)².

In other words, it is literature’s primary responsibility to make readers question the status quo, severing their ties with the dominant narrative of their times, so that they can reach self-awareness and seek transformation. Similarly, in a speech given upon receiving the Ernst-Toller Prize in 2004 Juli Zeh asserted that:

¹ Sartre, J.-P.: "What is Literature?" and other essays. Harvard University Press (1988: 34).

² Ibid., 38.

Literature per se has a social and, in the broadest sense of the word, political function. People have a natural need to know what other people—as represented by the writer and his characters—are thinking and feeling. For this reason alone, in the realm of politics, literature cannot be replaced or repressed by journalism, and it cannot just hide behind its lack of expertise or specialization. Rather [literature] bears the responsibility to close the gaps that are exposed through journalism's attempt to present a supposedly "objective"—and therefore distorted—picture of the world. I want to give readers ideas, not opinions, and to give them access to a nonjournalistic, but nonetheless political view of the world.³

In 2005, in a conversation with the German author Martin Mosebach (1950), she stated that "man schreibt Geschichten nicht, weil „irgend etwas gut funktioniert, sondern immer nur über das, was „nicht klappt.“ (*Über Recht und Literatur*, 2007: 189)⁴. She maintains that the difference between reality and fiction is only marginal. Her characters, who for the most part are imaginary, do indeed embody ideas, political ideologies, and worldviews that are grounded in reality. They are, in fact, a reflection of the present-day zeitgeist, entities that one may stumble upon in one's daily life. Yet, not only does Zeh express her beliefs in her books, but she is also outspoken about taking a political stance regarding socio-political issues and urges others to follow suit. In the German election year 2005, she was invited to respond to a debate among several writers on the moral and aesthetic role of literature. She stated that social relevance requires political direction for that what a person wants, or, at least, against that what a person does not want. Zeh went on remarking that a novelist need not only address social issues, taboo subjects, or simply "call for morality" without pointing to what kind of morality they are advocating. A novelist needs a political direction, otherwise the "we" in one's political claims has no substance or concreteness. As she stated in the interview:

³ "Wir trauen uns nicht." [Ernst-Toller Prize Speech] *Die Zeit*, 4 March: 53, 2004. [Edited version as "Auf den Barrikaden oder hinterm Berg?" In *Alles auf dem Rasen*. 214–19].

⁴ *Über Recht und Literatur*. Ein Gespräch mit Juli Zeh und Martin Mosebach, geführt von Britta Lange und Hermann Weber, abgedruckt in: Hermann Weber (Hrsg.): *Literatur, Recht und Musik*. Tagung im Nordkolleg Rendsburg vom 16. bis 18. September 2005. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, Berlin 2007. 183-204.

Man kann aber nicht einfach wir sagen und nichts Bestimmtes damit meinen. Man muss sagen: wir Kommunisten, wir Materialisten, wir Antimaterialisten, wir Liberalisten, wir Anarchisten - oder was auch immer. Sonst trägt wir nicht die geringste Bedeutung.⁵

Zeh maintains that today's authors should not, however, confuse journalism for literature, but rather must make their views on political issues publicly known. In her view, it is journalistic writing that should provide space for authors to publicly display their political opinions, whereas literature should lay out ideas that give access to non-journalistic, yet still political view on the world:

Mehr als rechts und links, rot oder schwarz stützt mich der feste Glaube, dass der Literatur per se eine soziale und im weitesten Sinne politische Rolle zukommt, weil es ein natürliches Bedürfnis der Menschen ist zu erfahren, was andere Menschen – repräsentiert durch den Schriftsteller und seine Figuren – denken und fühlen. Allein deshalb darf die Literatur auf dem Gebiet der Politik nicht durch den Journalismus ersetzt oder verdrängt werden, und sie soll sich nicht hinter ihrem fehlenden Experten- und Spezialistentum verstecken. Sie steht vielmehr in der Verantwortung, die Lücken zu schließen, die der Journalismus aufreißt, während er bemüht ist, ein Bild von der Welt zu zeichnen. Damit hat sie eine Aufgabe, an der sie wachsen kann, und hier liegt der Weg, den ich einzuschlagen versuche. Ich möchte den Lesern keine Meinungen, sondern Ideen vermitteln und den Zugang zu einem nichtjournalistischen und trotzdem politischen Blick auf die Welt eröffnen.⁶

As the novelists Martin R. Dean, Thomas Hettche, Matthias Politycki, and Michael Schindhelm put it “the challenge [...], is not to bridge reality and fiction, but to conjoin morality with

⁵ Zeh, J. (2005). Gesellschaftliche Relevanz braucht eine politische Richtung. Die Zeit. [https://www.zeit.de/2005/26/_Gesellschaftliche_Relevanz_braucht_eine_politische_Richtung_\(25/02/2024\)](https://www.zeit.de/2005/26/_Gesellschaftliche_Relevanz_braucht_eine_politische_Richtung_(25/02/2024)).

⁶ Zeh, J. (2004). Wir trauen uns nicht. Die Zeit. [https://www.zeit.de/2004/11/L-Preisverleihung/komplettansicht\(25/02/2024\)](https://www.zeit.de/2004/11/L-Preisverleihung/komplettansicht(25/02/2024)).

aesthetics”.⁷ Likewise, in Zeh’s view, it is insufficient to merely be an “aesthete” if one wants to produce a moral effect:

Political or moral effectiveness requires a fundamental decision about that which one wants to bring to pass or, at the very least, about that which one wants to prevent. Such a decision . . . is a good beginning—but it is only a very, very small step, and if there is no follow-up, it’s worth nothing.⁸

Whether the main storyline revolves around gloomy dystopian realities or seemingly ordinary-looking small towns, writing for her is never, to quote the motto of the 19th century aesthetic movement, “art for art’s sake” (*l’art pour l’art*). Her characters are mostly embodiments of values and political views. They struggle with dilemmas to which there are sometimes no straightforward answers. It is then up to the reader to grapple with those ideas and, as a result, form an opinion. Zeh is nevertheless not simply a committed author on paper, but lives up to her own ideas and principles: During the 2005 German federal election, she was among the authors who signed Günter Grass's call to support the red-green coalition. In January 2008, Zeh filed a constitutional complaint against the biometric passport, citing the mandatory fingerprint capture as an unnecessary infringement of fundamental rights. However, The Federal Constitutional Court did not admit the complaint for decision, citing insufficient engagement with the pertinent provisions of the Passport Act. Another example of Zeh's political engagement was her response to the NSA scandal in July 2013. Together with a group of writers, she delivered an open letter co-signed by over 67,000 people to Chancellor Angela Merkel, calling for a suitable response and transparency regarding potential surveillance by the American secret service agency NSA. Moreover, she was a founding member of the Charter of Digital Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the *pep* coop movement, advocating for data protection through encryption. In 2017, coinciding with Martin Schulz's nomination as a chancellor candidate, Zeh joined the SPD and supported the SPD++ initiative, aiming to modernize the party's internal structures. Some years later, following

⁷ Gerstenberger, K., & Herminghouse, P. (Eds.). (2008). *German Literature in a New Century: Trends, Traditions, Transitions, Transformations*. Berghahn Books, 276.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 277.

the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zeh contributed to a public call in *Der Spiegel* for an immediate end to lockdowns, arguing that the restrictions infringe fundamental human rights. In August 2021, she opposed a general vaccination mandate, claiming that there was no need for such drastic restriction of individual freedoms. Furthermore, Zeh was one of the first signatories of an open letter published in *Emma* magazine, addressing Chancellor Scholz and cautioning against escalating the Russian invasion of Ukraine by supplying heavy weapons. This stance sparked a public response from Scholz at a May Day rally.

1.4. Juli Zeh and the contemporary German literary scene:

The turn of the millennium does not represent a clean break from the past, but rather a symbolic moment within an ever-changing landscape of multicultural trends and tendencies. It is a period of great momentum for German literature, which, through the contribution of a thriving generation of young male and female authors, manages to free itself from the widespread prejudice of being predominantly characterized by convoluted, tormented, excessively introspective writing, or strictly anchored to very serious philosophical, ideological, historical-political issues. Thus, on both international and national level, one can talk about the revival of German-language Literature that finally manages to compete, both qualitatively and quantitatively, with literature coming from abroad, especially from the English-speaking world, which has been dominating the market for years. The fact that in the last two decades, four prominent figures of the German literary world – Günter Grass (1999), Elfriede Jelinek (2004), Herta Müller (2009), and Peter Handke (2019) – have won the Nobel Prize is further testimony to the qualitative recognition of literature in the German language.⁹ The focus of male and female authors extends to the investigation of topics such as globalization, multiculturalism, national identity and the sense of precariousness. Their

⁹ Castellari, M., Goggio, A., & Paleari, M. (2019). Letteratura tedesca. Epoche, generi, intersezioni, Vol. 2: Dal primo dopoguerra al nuovo millennio. Firenze: Le Monnier Università/Mondadori Education, 427.

works are centered around a world characterized by technological advancement, the rise of unemployment rates and economic decline.¹⁰ Furthermore, beside a rich and multifaceted narrative landscape, the German literature of the new millennium is marked by the so-called 'return of narration' (*Rückkehr des Erzählens*), namely a return to a linear and traditional prose, as opposed to signature postmodernist techniques such as deconstruction and fragmentation.¹¹ A good portion of works published in those years could be described as a blending of seriousness, socially relevant themes and narrative simplicity. Indeed, literary trends popular during the nineties such as *Popliteratur* and the phenomenon of the *Fräuleinwunder* gradually disappear and give way to a new wave of writers with their own original stories told in their own way. Moreover, another noteworthy phenomenon in the German literary field of that era is the emergence of numerous female narrative voices like Julia Franck (1970), Tanja Dückers (1968), Eva Menasse (1970), Felicitas Hoppe (1960) and Juli Zeh - just to mention a few.¹² In particular, Zeh's writing often reflects on sociopolitical issues, challenging geographical and ideological boundaries of traditional narratives. Her narratives take place in broader sociopolitical and cultural frameworks of a globalized world, taking contemporary readers beyond the confines of narrow topographical realities. In this regard, Lars Richter observes how Zeh's *Corpus Delicti* (2009) and *Nullzeit* (2012) create transnational spaces which, as the term itself suggests, are not geographically bound.¹³ Indeed, he argues that Zeh's works embody the spirit of the new millennium's German literature, a landscape not confined by borders and yet aware of the existence of a nation, therefore offering the reader a dynamic engagement with the themes of identity, movement, and place. Through her storytelling, Zeh captures the essence of a society in transition, one that is increasingly interconnected, yet still grappling with the persistent echoes of national identity.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to remember the inherent ambiguity of the term "transnationalism" itself. As Richter remarked "The loss of the notion of home, that is of a fixed space situated within the boundaries of a nation, results in a longing for permanent movement that is unfazed by the concept of geographical and political borders."¹⁵ Yet, despite all the journeys one might undergo, Zeh

¹⁰ Ibid., 430.

¹¹ Ibid., 448.

¹² Ibid., 457.

¹³ Richter, L. (2021). 'Wo geh ich her? ... Wo komm ich hin?': Delineating Transnational Spaces in the Work of Juli Zeh. In C. Smith-Prei, E. Herrmann, & S. Taberner (Eds.), Woodbridge (UK): Boydell & Brewer, 2021, 228-246; here cfr. p. 237.

¹⁴ Ibid., 231.

¹⁵ Ibid., 236.

pessimistically writes “no matter how profoundly we think we change during our travels, the “old self” is always waiting for us at home”.¹⁶ With this metaphor, she emphasizes the difficulty of overcoming the concept of nation. To sum it up, Richter suggests reading Zeh’s work as “literary negotiations of the very concepts of nation and transnationalism”.¹⁷

Chapter 2

2.1. Synopsis

Located in a fictional small town in the German countryside of Brandenburg, *Über Menschen* is a social novel set during the early stages of the first lockdown in 2020, shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though serious and thought-provoking, the story is narrated with a witty undertone that accompanies the reader throughout the novel. As suggested in the title, at the heart of the narration are people, their life circumstances and the relationships they form with one another. It is a deep-dive into a segment of modern society, a glimpse into the minds and characters of ordinary men and women seeking to make sense of a world that is slowly drifting toward insanity. Moreover, the novel is also about overcoming mental barriers and finding common ground with people with divergent views and political affiliations, whether they happen to be our neighbors, family members, co-workers or partners. This journey is depicted through the lens of the 36-year-old protagonist, Dora, as she strives to navigate her way out of a life crisis. In her attempt to come to terms with herself and the world, she decides to move to the countryside,

¹⁶ Zeh, J. (2003). *Die Stille ist ein Geräusch: Eine Fahrt durch Bosnien*. München: btb, 11.

¹⁷ Richter, L. (2021). ‘Wo geh ich her? ... Wo komm ich hin?’: Delineating Transnational Spaces in the Work of Juli Zeh. In C. Smith-Prei, E. Herrmann, & S. Taberner (Eds.), *Woodbridge (UK): Boydell & Brewer*, 2021, 228-246; here cfr. p. 243.

far away from Berlin's madding crowd. The people she meets there challenge her worldview and force her to reconsider her beliefs and ideas. Confronted with a reality that significantly differs from her own, Dora experiences something akin to a "cultural shock" on a few occasions, but also finds a way to see and appreciate people for what they first and foremost are, namely people. The characters that Zeh presents and describes in the book reflect present-day thinking-patterns, ideas and outlooks. They might, in fact, resemble our neighbors and our family members, which makes it easier for the reader to put oneself in their shoes and, if only for a moment, just like Dora, abandon one's beliefs and try to see the world from a different perspective.

2.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic and the lockdown

In order to fully grasp the essence of Zeh's work, it is necessary to understand the global socio-political situation at the time of its publication. During the 2020–22 lockdowns, as concert halls, museums, and theaters were forced to shut down and as events like art exhibitions and film premieres across the globe were called off, it appeared that the 'COVID-19' pandemic had brought the entire cultural sector to a standstill. Many artists nevertheless strove to find ways to express themselves and address the global health crisis by engaging with their audiences online through streaming platforms and social media. But while the pandemic led to a significant halt in the realm of performative arts, literature has been generally unaffected. In fact, the role of literature during the pandemic has been notably distinct in comparison to other artistic disciplines. This resilience probably stems fundamentally from the minimal, if any, requirement for direct human interaction in both creating and engaging with literary works. As Puolakka writes:

the effects of the pandemic on literature have been partly quite contrary to those of the other arts. The basic reason is simple: both the production and experience of literature requires very little, if any, real-world human contact. The uneventful life caused by the pandemic also

created a fertile ground for the consumption of literature, as people now had more time to read.¹⁸

Indeed, along with the drastic increase in online browsing and in the consumption of multimedia content, time devoted to reading books experienced a significant rise. In Germany, three particular works - which could be labeled as “Corona” novels - were published during that period: *So ist die Welt geworden* (2020) by Marlene Streeruwitz (1950), *Trost. Briefe an Max* (2021) by Thea Dorn (1970) and *Über Menschen* (2021) by Juli Zeh. By creating characters from different walks of life, the three established authors hold a mirror up to society and try to work out possible solutions within the confines of a fictional literary space. Dorn and Zeh went a step further and openly expressed their criticism of the measures taken by the German government to counter the pandemic. In an interview with the left-liberal newspaper *Zeit online*, the two authors stated their concern for democracy during the proclaimed state of emergency (*Ausnahmezustand*). “The relation between politics and science will become the most important matter in shaping our future,”¹⁹ pointed out Zeh. The essence is that politics should be open to experts, but its future viability should result from the totality of needs and perspectives, and not from model calculations. Admittedly, both Dorn and Zeh share the same skeptical attitude towards experts relying on data and computer simulations. They claim that in case someone dares to question or express an opposing view to the mainstream political narrative, they are quick to be labeled as deniers. As a result, they stress the need to question government anti-COVID measures and their efficiency, since, in their opinion, the German government seems to care mostly about wanting to prove to the world that they are quick to take action and manage the crisis, rather than also tending to fundamental human needs.

¹⁸ Puolakka, K. (2022). The Literary Space in the COVID-19 Pandemic. In I. V. Jovanovic, & V. Stupnik (Eds.), *Social and Technological Aspects of Art: Challenges of the ‘New Normal’*, 229-248; here cfr. p. 229.

¹⁹ Zeit Online. (2021). "Es geht nicht darum, wer recht hat". <https://www.zeit.de/2021/18/corona-politik-juli-zeh-thea-dorn-daniel-kehlmann> (25/02/2024).

2.3. The COVID-19 Pandemic in *Über Menschen*

Despite her critical stance towards anti-COVID policies in Germany, Zeh leaves out any direct criticism towards the government in her novel. Instead, the pandemic and its repercussions are expressed through interpersonal relations and embodied by the relationship between Dora and her partner Robert. With the outbreak of the pandemic, Robert turned into a religious follower of government anti-COVID policies, showing no sympathy for those who do not take the situation as seriously as him, including Dora herself.²⁰ He epitomizes the part of society who, right after the outbreak of the pandemic, developed a tunnel vision. Through him and Dora the author illustrates the extent to which the pandemic could influence society and how, in some cases, it led to tensions and separations. The pandemic, one could argue, only exacerbated an existing divide in society and amplified some tendencies that, in turn, led to what is now well known as polarization. For instance, on one side, it gave rise to COVID-deniers, but on the other to COVID-supporters like Robert. Yet, such a world of two opposite extremes does not leave room to Dora's doubts, logical questions and skepticism. One has to pick a side as, for some reason, such situations do not allow for middle ground. One is in fact either right or wrong and therefore the truth cannot be nuanced.²¹ Furthermore, such mentality could permeate even family dinners: When Dora travels to Berlin to meet her brother Axel and her father Jojo, the topic that dominates their conversations is the pandemic. She is appalled at how no one wants to know about her situation with Robert and at how no one has anything better to discuss than the virus. No one asks if she likes her new house, if she is lonely. Her new life in Bracken seems completely irrelevant. The evening portrayed by Zeh stands as a typical COVID-19 dinner; it conveys the feeling that because of the world health crisis nothing else matters. As a consequence, the pandemic is and remains the only topic of discussion; that's also the reason why, in the news, everything revolves around anti-COVID rallies, Angela Merkel and the daily death toll.

Als wären der Krieg in Syrien, das Leid von Flüchtlingen, Nazi-Terroristen und die Armut überall auf der Welt niemals reale Probleme gewesen. Nur Infotainment, ein Zeitvertreib für

²⁰ Zeh, J. (2021). *Über Menschen: Roman*. München: Luchterhand Literaturverlag: 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

gelangweilte Medienkonsumenten. Jetzt, da es eine Pandemie gibt, braucht man den anderen Quatsch nicht mehr. Das macht Dora fassungslos. Ihr wird übel, wenn sie die Schlagzeilen liest. Gleichzeitig schämt sie sich heimlich dafür, dass sie die neuesten Infektionszahlen nicht kennt. Als gäbe es eine Mitmachpflicht in Sachen Medienkonsum. Wie Robert glaubt, der ihre Abstinenz verbrecherisch findet. (*Über Menschen*, 29-30)

Such circumstances and differences in opinion lead Dora to feel alienated from her family, as well as from herself. Admittedly, the reproach and criticism she receives from Robert, her brother and her father lead her to self-doubt, whereby she is unable to tell if she is the one who is right or if the whole world has lost its sanity. As a result, she is perpetually conflicted about whether she should keep up with infection rates and get involved in the COVID-19 collective panic like everyone else:

Ihr wird übel, wenn sie die Schlagzeilen liest. Gleichzeitig schämt sie sich heimlich dafür, dass sie die neuesten Infektionszahlen nicht kennt. Als gäbe es eine Mitmachpflicht in Sachen Medienkonsum. Wie Robert glaubt, der ihre Abstinenz verbrecherisch findet. (*Über Menschen*, 30)

Although the pandemic is not the protagonist in *Über Menschen*, it is still represented as the catalyst of societal polarization in 2020. During that time, countless of people all across the globe became like Dora, facing challenges and trying to make sense of the new changes in society and interpersonal interactions.

2.4. *Über Menschen* - Tone and Genre

There are several reasons why *Über Menschen* can be considered a social novel. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, a social novel can be defined as a “work of fiction in which a prevailing social problem, such as gender, race, or class prejudice, is dramatized through its effect on the characters of a novel”.²² Also called ‘sociological novel’, such genre places an emphasis on the idea of social change, as opposed to the proletarian novel, which is more of a political form of the social protest novel that can also emphasize revolution. In this regard, Zeh’s work delves into various societal issues that have been exacerbated and brought to the forefront by the pandemic. This includes themes like social division, isolation, the impact of technology on human interaction and the psychological effects of a global crisis. The author in fact explores how individuals react to crisis situations, how they make or break social connections and how they navigate moral dilemmas in times of uncertainty. Such form of inquiry and critique of human behavior align with the characteristics of a social novel. As far as the narrative form is concerned, unlike in her previous book *Unterleuten*, Zeh does not dive deep into a vast variety of characters, but rather centers the entire plotline around the protagonist and her cross-breed dog. The story is therefore linear and straightforward, and, as such, leaves the reader sufficient room to follow Dora’s train of thought and experience her personal journey more intimately. Overall, the novel consists of 50 chapters that are, in turn, divided into three parts: *Rechte Winkel* (Right-angles), *Saatkartoffeln* (Seed potatoes) and *Raumforderung* (Mass). The carefully crafted characters could, on the surface level, be seen as walking clichés that one could easily run into whether in the city or in the countryside. Yet upon close inspection, it becomes clear that there is more than meets the eye. The characters, whether perceived as good or bad, right-wing or left-wing, COVID deniers or supporters, defy easy categorization. In fact, Zeh indirectly raises the question of whether such labels are even necessary. Also, does identifying with the left necessarily imply coherence with every future political choice? What the author seems to suggest is that the truth is oftentimes more nuanced, namely neither black nor white. Moreover, almost as if they were two additional characters, sarcasm and irony are ever-present throughout novel. One could argue that they are one of Zeh’s go-to instruments for addressing delicate issues and controversial topics. The instances where Dora meets the people from Bracken and where their personalities and worldviews clash are always imbued with a touch of irony. For instance, Tom and Steffen, a homosexual

²² Encyclopædia Britannica. (2012). "Social problem novel". Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. <https://www.britannica.com/art/social-problem-novel>.

couple make repeated use of mockery in their conversations with Dora to point out what, in their regard, are her prejudices about the life in the countryside. When the protagonist asks Steffen about the origin of his employees, he simply goes along with the false assumption that people who vote for the AfD party are probably racist and therefore exploit foreigners and refugees. However Dora quickly understands his mockery and changes topic:

»Eure Leute«, fragt sie, »sind das Flüchtlinge?« Steffen nickt gewichtig. »Das sind Boat People aus Aleppo. Wir nutzen ihre Notlage aus, indem wir sie quasi umsonst für uns arbeiten lassen.« »Doofe Frage, doofe Antwort?« Steffen setzt sein gewichtiges Nicken fort. (*Über Menschen*, 118)

In addition, through the right-wing character Heinrich, referred to as R2-D2 in the novel, Zeh shows another form of irony, one rooted in racism and xenophobia. Indeed, Dora's morally questionable neighbor who helps her with the gardening does not notice her distaste for his jokes on migrants and other stereotypes. Quite the contrary, he seems to enjoy them himself, as such xenophobic humor is commonplace in Bracken, whereas in Dora's circle of friends in Berlin no one would ever dream of saying anything similar like:

»Wie viele Araber braucht man, um eine Wiese zu mähen?«, fragt R2-D2 strahlend und ein wenig zu laut, wie alle Menschen, die nichts hören. Doras Mund klappt auf, allerdings kommen keine Wörter heraus. Das schadet nicht, denn R2-D2 gibt sich die Antwort ohnehin selbst. »Keinen, denn das können wir selber.« (*Über Menschen*, 63)

As if that was not enough, he doubles down in another instance by asking Dora how to make a blonde laugh on a Monday morning:

»Wie kann man eine Blondine am Montagmorgen zum Lachen bringen?«, wechselt R2-D2 das Thema und fügt gleich hinzu: »Freitagabend einen Witz erzählen.« (*Über Menschen*, 65)

In crafting characters such as Heinrich and Gote, Zeh aims at recreating stereotypical beliefs that city people have about East-German small towns, such as them being right-wing conservative hubs where liberals have no business and won't ever feel completely at ease. On the other end of the spectrum, the author uses Dora to draw a portrait of a typical city dweller who follows trends which align with the current left ideology.²³ And by making Dora's misconceptions collide with reality, Zeh indirectly points out the shortcomings of people who live inside their urban left-leaning bubble. Yet, people from the countryside like Tom and Steffen are aware of some beliefs that people like Dora subscribe to. As a result, they are quick to react, dismantle such erroneous assumptions and prick their bubble with stinging irony.

2.5. A blending of fiction and reality:

As reported by the Swiss broadcasting company SRF and by the German broadcasting radio station *Deutschlandfunk*, *Über Menschen* is the first "Corona" novel in the German-speaking world.²⁴ Unlike Zeh's earlier 'Dorfroman' ('village novel') *Unterleuten*, *Über Menschen* employs a singular narrative perspective instead of multiple viewpoints. However, both novels share a commonality in their setting – a partly fictional, yet realistically depicted East-German rural environment. This blending of the imaginative with the authentic is a distinctive feature of Juli Zeh's writing style. By interweaving fictional elements within a framework that closely mirrors reality, Zeh crafts a narrative space that is both relatable and slightly removed from the familiar. This approach encourages readers to step back from their own experiences, prompting them to reconsider and critically evaluate aspects of life that are often taken for granted or overlooked. In

²³ Zeh, J. (2021). *Über Menschen*: 19.

²⁴ Stettler, L. "Juli Zeh schreibt über eine Gesellschaft im Virus-Fieber". SRF. <https://www.srf.ch/kultur/literatur/der-erste-corona-roman-juli-zeh-schreibt-ueber-eine-gesellschaft-im-virus-fieber> (25/02/2024).

a video interview published in the 12 November 2010 online edition of *Zeit Online*, Zeh stated she did not invent anything new in writing *Corpus Delicti*. Instead, she claimed only to have put together: 'things, tendencies and trends'. 'Plus', she went on to explain, 'the story is not really thought of as futuristic, but rather as a distillation of the present (Gegenwartsverdichtung)'.²⁵ Indeed, as literary critics Marcus Schotte (1979) and Maja Vorbeck-Heyn remarked about *Corpus Delicti*: 'it is a literary diagnosis of the present under the guise of a utopia that invites the audience to engage critically with the current political discourse'.²⁶ Through exaggeration, the author is able to amplify the potential reach of some seemingly innocent issues and thus try to shake the reader out of their everyday life. Likewise, in *Über Menschen*, Zeh attempts to compress today's problems within the confines of a small town, deliberately crafting characters that embody some of the most controversial stereotypes and political tendencies of the moment. Since these characters are grounded in reality, one might actually find common traits and see oneself in them, even if only in part. In this regard, the greatness of countless renowned authors is their unique ability to articulate what many of us only feel and are unable to express. Through their words we get to know ourselves and the others better. Echoing the wisdom of the great Greek philosopher Socrates, the author brings to light ideas that are latent in us. It is that precise moment of realization and recognition that leads us to reflect further and subsequently act on our ideas. In times of social and political turmoil, when divergent mainstream ideological tendencies threaten to fragment society, a work of art such as a literary novel can have a major cathartic impact on its readers, encouraging them to reconsider their stance or become more gentle and considerate towards others.

2.6. Über Menschen or Übermenschen?

²⁵ Horn, S. (2011). "Fragen an Juli Zeh". Zeit online. <https://www.zeit.de/video/2010-11/672198124001/videointerview-fragen-an-juli-zeh> (27/07/2021).

²⁶ Navratil, M. (2022). Juli Zehs Poetik des Dystopischen. In Kontrafaktik der Gegenwart. Politisches Schreiben als Realitätsvariation bei Christian Kracht, Kathrin Röggla, Juli Zeh und Leif Randt. Berlin: De Gruyter, 445.

One thing that immediately draws the reader's attention is the potential wordplay in the novel's title. Although when spelled separately, the title translates to 'About people' and stressing the first word can shift its interpretation to the Nietzschean concept of 'Overmen'.²⁷ The philosopher Giorgio Penzo explains this as "a figure that constantly overcomes the established values and norms, embodying the dynamism of life itself" (Penzo, "Übermensch", p. 343). This notion finds resonance in Zeh's narrative, particularly in Dora's transformation and her evolving perceptions of her community, mirroring Nietzsche's ideal. The question that therefore arises is whether Zeh presents the reader with a quasi-sociological analysis of a portion of society in a particular context or whether she is trying to allude to something deeper and not straightforward. Furthermore, another possible interpretation of the title could simply be the reference to Dora's neighbor's stand-up comedy program. Also called *Über Menschen*, chapter 30 of part two unfolds with the protagonist going to confront her neighbors Tom and Steffen about a rumor she heard concerning her neighbor Gote. Just as it is common practice in Bracken to show up unannounced, she sneaks in and eavesdrops him performing his comedy skit in his living room. She sees Steffen singing a satirical song, criticizing right-wing attitudes and the hypocrisy of societal norms. He acts passionately, using gestures like the Nazi salute and socialist fist, in a parody of various political ideologies. He makes clear references to Gote and his neo-nazi friends, calling them out for being the opposite of what their ideology represented in the past. Indeed, a far cry from being *Übermenschen*, Steffen describes them as drunkards who smoke polish cigarettes, and not the 'Overmen' that they consider themselves to be:

»Wisst ihr noch? Ist gar nicht lange her. Vor siebzig, achtzig Jahren. Da wart ihr Übermenschen. Da wart ihr Herrenmenschen. Blonde Rassehengste auf dem Weg zur Weltherrschaft. Philosophen haben euch beschrieben, Komponisten haben euch besungen, fremde Länder haben vor euch gezittert, und das Volk ist euch hinterhergedackelt. Und heute?« Steffen macht große Augen. »Heute sitzt ihr am Campingtisch. Hinter euch der Bauwagen, vor euch ein warmes Bier. Ihr raucht polnische Zigaretten, salutiert vor der Reichsflagge und malt eure eigenen Personalausweise. Übermenschen im Unterhemd.«

²⁷ Penzo, G. (2011). Übermensch. In H. Ottmann (ed.), Nietzsche Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung, Sonderausgabe. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 342-345.

Steffen simuliert einen Lachanfall. »Ihr rettet nicht Deutschland. Ihr rettet die Feinripp-Industrie.« (*Über Menschen*, 65)

It is evident that Steffen is using Gote as the eponym of the neo-nazi movement which he attempts to ridicule through comedy. He goes as far as to call people like Gote ‘scum’ (Abschaum), who believes anything they see on the internet and grows potatoes for the D-day. His performance is being recorded for a YouTube video, but Dora knocks the rosemary pot off the ledge by mistake, leading to a tense interaction with Steffen. Although it was not her intention to interrupt her neighbor, she could not stand him talking in such a harsh way about Gote. She acknowledges that Steffen is right about his criticism, but, in the meanwhile, she had developed sympathy for the small-town nazi and even started to grow fond of him. Eventually, they have an argument and Dora winds up leaving angry and resentful.

In another instance, Steffen’s partner Tom finds himself conversating with the protagonist at his house door. While making small talk, they drift into politics as Dora notices a sticker of the German right-winged party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland). When asked whether he voted, Tom replies that there is no other way around it, since “those up there” treat them as idiots. Upon inquiring who “those up there” are, Dora learns that her neighbor is referencing the government in Berlin, whom he deeply despises. Indeed, Tom blames the ruling party for handling the pandemic in an incompetent way and doing harm to agriculture and economy in general. As he remarks:

Währenddessen quatschen die Politiker hochwichtig herum, machen die Volkswirtschaft kaputt, ruinieren die Existenzen der kleinen Leute. Hocken im Fernsehen ohne Maske und reden davon, wie gefährlich die Pandemie ist.[...] Das Problem sind nicht die Maßnahmen«, sagt Tom. »Sondern, dass sich die Leute verarscht fühlen.« (*Über Menschen*, 96)

Such assertion leads Dora to ask who are those that are being duped. Tom promptly retorts that they in the countryside are the ones in question. However, he goes on to say: »In Bracken ist man unter Leuten. Da kann man sich nicht mehr so leicht über die Menschen erheben. Wirst dich dran

gewöhnen müssen.«²⁸ At that point, Dora cannot help but think of her partner Robert, whom she once accused of placing himself above other people:

Dora muss wieder an Robert denken. Ihm hat sie tatsächlich einmal vorgeworfen, dass er sich über andere Menschen erhebt. Dass er sich für einen Supra-Menschen hält. Vielleicht nicht direkt in Nietzsches Sinn. Aber für einen, der mehr weiß, mehr kann und mehr darf als die anderen. Weil er im Besitz einer höheren Wahrheit ist. Robert ist wütend geworden. Er hat gesagt, dass er nur das Beste für die Menschen will. (*Über Menschen*, 96)

Hence, another hypothesis of what the book's title refers to could, in fact, be people like Robert: Self-righteous, self-appointed activists who rise above the mob and believe they know better than everyone else; people who think they are holding the truth in their pockets and only want the best for humanity. Such individuals more or less consciously consider themselves to be morally superior. As a result, it could be argued that Zeh has ironically labeled them 'Übermenschen'. As Penzo pointed out, the Übermensch is not a symbol of perfection, but rather a challenge to continually evolve and confront our own limitations.²⁹ It is an ideal figure in Nietzsche's philosophy, representing a being who transcends traditional human limitations and societal norms. Conversely, because of the contemporary lack of ethical anchors and moral vacuity, people like Robert seek a sense of meaning and belonging in political ideologies, that, in turn, give them the false sense of superiority. Instead of rising up and creating their own values like real Overmen,³⁰ they conform to dominant societal norms, which gives them the feeling of moral righteousness. They think they are fighting for the right cause. Yet, such attitude is nothing like what Nietzsche had in mind. The perpetual self-overcoming that he wrote about only leads to the betterment of the human spirit. The Übermensch is therefore not an excuse for arrogance or moral dogmatism. In this context, characters like Robert symbolize a deviation from this ideal, mistaking self-aggrandizement for genuine philosophical or moral advancement.

²⁸ Zeh, J. (2021). *Über Menschen*: 96.

²⁹ Penzo, G. (2011). *Übermensch*: 343-344.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 343.

2.7. The barriers that divide us

Schweigend betrachten sie sich gegenseitig, er sie von oben bis unten, sie ihn vom Hals aufwärts, weil der Rest seines Körpers von der Mauer verdeckt wird" (*Über Menschen*, 35)

One of the numerous issues that Juli Zeh raises in writing the novel in question is whether people are as fundamentally different as they might appear on the surface level. Once we've shed our ideological and cultural layers, who are we at our core? Is there really more than meets the eye? And if so, what do we all share at the bottom? What the author seems to suggest through her work is that, in order to understand one another, it is necessary to overcome our own barriers. Whether mental or physical, political or geographic, Zeh sees them as the main cause of today's divide in society. As she stated in an interview with Madlen Reimer (1987) and Elsa Antolin from the literary publisher Luchterhand, she would hope that her book can help overcome some barriers: "Vielleicht kann das Buch ja sogar dabei helfen, gewisse Barrieren zu überwinden - dann wäre es aus meiner Sicht ein voller Erfolg."³¹ Moreover, while big cities come with a slew of opportunities that enable us to easily change our circle of friends and reinvent ourselves, life in a small community like Bracken does not allow to simply avoid the people with whom we happen to disagree. As Zeh observed:

Man lebt mit dem, was man vorfindet. Das stellt einen vor die Herausforderung, sich Konflikten wirklich zu stellen. Man lernt andere Menschen, aber auch sich selbst auf ganz neue Weise kennen.³²

³¹ Zeh, J. "Zehn Fragen an Juli Zeh zu »Über Menschen«". <https://www.penguin.de/Zehn-Fragen-an-Juli-Zeh-zu-UEber-Menschen/aid88049.rhd> (25/02/2024).

³² Ibid.

Such circumstances force us to become more flexible and, like the protagonist in *Über Menschen*, give a chance to our neighbors, despite them being different. In this regard, the wall separating Dora's and Gote's properties symbolically represents the divide between two political ideologies, two mentalities and approaches. In the quote referenced above, the two characters face each other for a moment, seizing each other up as if they both came from a different universe. Then, the man reaches out to her and introduces himself. The wall subsequently becomes the place where they interact, make small talk and smoke cigarettes together. In spite of their opposing world views, they grow fond of each other and overcome their fundamental differences. Furthermore, it is important to notice that Zeh does not side with either party in her book. She is concerned with both sides equally and as a result tries to emphasize their humanity regardless of their background. Indeed, through the mouth of Dora's father Joachim Korfmacher, alias Jojo, she expresses the core message of her work:

Die Tragik unserer Epoche [...] besteht darin, dass die Menschen ihre persönliche Unzufriedenheit mit einem politischen Problem verwechseln. [...] Die Unzufriedenheit der Leute ist ein politisches Problem, und zwar von gigantischem Ausmaß. Die Unzufriedenheit ist in der Lage, ganze Gesellschaften zu sprengen. Man braucht nur ein wenig Zündstoff, Flüchtlinge oder Corona, und schon droht das ganze Gebilde auseinanderzufliegen, weil niemand jemals wirklich an die Segnungen von Frieden und Wohlstand geglaubt hat. (*Über Menschen*, 129)

As Zeh's message is universal, it goes beyond the boundaries of Germany as well. The literary critic and scholar Lars Richter maintains:

Juli Zeh's texts, [...] can be read as literary reflections of today's globalized world, a world characterized by accelerated mobility, migration, and an oscillating relationship between deterritorialization and reterritorialization.³³

Such idea also permeates many other writings published prior to *Über Menschen*. Finally, since globalization has rendered traveling and migration easier than ever, it has, in some sense, opened cultural and national boundaries to new influences and foreign values. Thus, overcoming our own inner prejudices and understanding our neighbors might be the first step towards embracing an increasingly interconnected world and, to use Richter's term, adopt a "transnationalist" perspective.

2.8. City life vs Countryside

Throughout the history of literature, the search for tranquility has always been one of the recurring themes that has resonated across different cultures. The contrast between peaceful, natural surroundings and frenetic urban agglomerates is what some of the most successful and renowned works of literature – both modern, but also classic – are centered around. From building a cabin near a pond and finding oneself, to simply praising the beauty and serenity of countryside landscapes, literature seems to offer a window into a deep-seated human need for a simple and harmonious existence. While every historical period bears its own challenges and while societies have evolved across centuries, a temporary withdrawal into nature and solitude remains to this day a sought-after path towards restoring one's peace of mind. However, unlike in the pre-modern era, the noise generated by the revolving cogs of human progress has rendered silence increasingly elusive. Ever since technological devices and their addictive nature have come to permeate numerous areas of our life, including our free time, idleness has become an ever-so-rare

³³ Richter, L. (2021). 'Wo geh ich her? ... Wo komm ich hin?': Delineating Transnational Spaces in the Work of Juli Zeh. In C. Smith-Prei, E. Herrmann, & S. Taberner (Eds.), Woodbridge (UK): Boydell & Brewer, 2021, 228-246; here cfr. p. 242.

indulgence. Furthermore, modern life has become increasingly frantic. In the first chapter of *Über Menschen*, Zeh writes, “People are trapped inside the vicious cycle of projects: one project ends and another one begins right after.”³⁴ She goes on to say, “There is no moving forward. Everyone is simply moving in orbits from the fear of stagnation.”³⁵ However, the 36-year old protagonist, Dora, is conscious that such a cycle is a trap that threatens to transform that same desire to escape into yet another project. She believes that only beginners are convinced that they can make it, that they can escape the vicious cycle of productivity. She knows that the modern narrative rests on the illusion that there is such a thing as a finish line and that reaching it is purportedly feasible. Still, she quietly accepts it as the human condition until the outbreak of the pandemic. During the 2020 global health crisis left in its wake, countless people would be brought to despair and interpersonal relationships would grow more tense. Dora’s way of weathering the storm and facing the inner and surrounding social turmoil is buying a plot of land and a new house in the countryside. In *Über Menschen*, the contrast between the city and the countryside is the focus of the narrative right from page one. The reader immediately learns about Dora’s move and her new life motto “weitermachen, auch wenn es sich unmöglich anfühlt”.³⁶ Ever since she decided to turn her back on Berlin’s city life, she found herself forced to become acquainted with a totally different way of living, a lifestyle she had never considered before. Indeed, Dora is quick to realize that she wound up in a world completely alien to her, a world where time stands still and COVID does not seem to exist. She is suddenly outside her comfort zone, in a small town with a population of just 285. Still, Dora is not the typical person who runs away from a big city. Unlike many, she does not daydream of finding idyll, yet the infrastructure of the East-German small town appears to defy any expectations and the townspeople seem to live up to the prejudices that city people have. In other words, Bracken is not quite the idyll that one would think or dream of:

Bröckelnde Straßen, halb eingestürzte Scheunen und Ställe, von Efeu überwucherte ehemalige Kneipen. Schrottberge auf den Brachflächen, aufgeplatzte Mülltüten im Wald [...] Ein

³⁴ Zeh, J. (2021). *Über Menschen*: 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

typisches ostdeutsches Straßendorf. In der Mitte eine Kirche mit Dorfplatz. Bushaltestelle, Feuerwehr, Briefkasten. (*Über Menschen*, 10-11)

Moreover, the interactions Dora has with the locals have a deep impact on her world view. Even though her father warned her about the strong presence of the radical right in that province, she nevertheless wanted to have it her way. And, against all odds, the first person she meets is Gote, who unabashedly introduces himself as a nazi. The more time Dora spends with him, the more her deep-seated views are shaken. Though, just like Dora, one would think that a nazi neighbor cannot possibly be good, it turns out that he is, as a matter of fact, a very affectionate and kind person, who helps Dora furnish and paint her new house without asking anything in return.³⁷ The same goes for the AfD supporters Tom and Steffen who, on the face of it, might seem to have questionable moral views. Nonetheless, they still act hospitable and welcoming towards Dora, giving her a ride and even lending her their bicycle.³⁸

However ramshackled and desolate Bracken might appear to the reader, it still has some potential advantages to offer to a big city dweller such as Dora. Or, to phrase it in a slightly different way, such advantages are given by the absence of some typical unnerving big city features. As Zeh writes “Kein Häusermeer, Kein Autochaos. Keine Fahrradfahrer, keine Fußgänger. Keine Hochbahnen, keine Werbung, keine bunten Lichter”.³⁹ Indeed, to sum it up in one word, such dense urban agglomerates are mostly characterized by excess. Zeh describes the city as a world of deadlines, meetings, and high-pressure competitive agencies, where trams are packed and weird people walk down the streets. Yet, in her view, it is organized chaos. Contrary to Bracken, day-to-day stress in Berlin is structured and scheduled. Slowly, then, Dora begins to grasp that she finds herself in another universe where, as she calls it, the ‘anarchy of things’ sets the rules:

³⁷ Ibid., 109.

³⁸ Ibid., 94.

³⁹ Ibid., 98.

In der Stadt sind die Dinge halbwegs unter Kontrolle. Städte sind Kontrollzentren für die dingliche Welt. Für jeden Gegenstand gibt es dort mindestens eine Person, die zuständig ist. Es gibt Orte, an denen man Sachen bekommt und an die man sie bringen kann, wenn man sie nicht mehr will. Hier draußen auf dem Land herrscht eine Anarchie der Dinge. (*Über Menschen*, 9-10)

Furthermore, the feeling of loneliness and dissatisfaction is much less reflected in the city, where one is surrounded by crowds on the streets, at work, and in numerous mundane situations. Indeed, living in Berlin drowned Dora's actual inner turmoil. She did not have to admit to herself that she was overworked and *unhappy*. The countryside, on the other hand, had the exact opposite effect on her. The lack of noise, crowds, advertisements, colors, and a city adorned with countless impressions, forced Dora to look deep into herself, to pay attention to her inner voice that the city was suffocating. For instance, in Berlin, it was easier for Dora to overlook the fact that she has no real friends, but in Brackenheim "wird die Nicht-Existenz von Freunden zu einem dumpfen Grollen am Horizont".⁴⁰ But what is idyll then? Perhaps, after all, as Dora's real-estate agent remarked, "Idylle ist, wenn man sich's gemütlich macht".⁴¹

Chapter III

3.1 Introduction

Upon its release on March 22 in 2021 by the German Munich-based publishing house *Luchterhand Literaturverlag*, *Über Menschen* immediately became a best seller. In the German website

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁴¹ Ibid.

*charts.de*⁴² the COVID-19 novel ranked first four times, second five times, and third once in the fiction/hardcover category during the 10 weeks after its publication. According to *Börsenblatt*, the weekly magazine for the German book trade, Zeh's work was the best-selling book in the first half of 2021⁴³. As a result, the author subsequently received the Media Control Award for the number of copies sold. Indeed, four months after the novel's release, *Luchterhand Literaturverlag* reported that 350,000 copies had been sold up to that point and that the eighth edition was in print. In the entire year of 2021, *Über Menschen* was the second most successful book in Germany⁴⁴.

Moreover, as reported by the German left-leaning newspaper *Zeit online*, a movie adaptation of the book is on the way⁴⁵. The 49-year-old author has agreed to give the rights to the production company Lucky Bird Pictures. Filming is scheduled for 2024 and Anno Saul, the director of *Wo ist Fred?* and *Irre sind männlich* will be in charge of the project. The producer Oliver Schündler stated that the film adaptation of "Über Menschen" is a very special opportunity:

Juli Zeh ist nicht nur eine meisterhafte Schriftstellerin, sondern auch ein unbestechlicher Seismograph und Spiegel gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung und Verwerfung in diesem Land.⁴⁶

Schündler went on to praise Zeh by claiming that she is the voice of reason in a country where people no longer have anything to say to one another when they happen to find themselves outside their echo chambers. As he remarked, the movie should entertain, touch the heart, but also encourage debate between readers and their own personal comfort zone.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that *Über Menschen* did not earn an important place in the contemporary literary landscape solely based on its commercial success. What makes the novel relevant is indeed the vast array of themes that are covered from the first to the last page. Besides giving a voice to countless individuals who just like the 36-year-old Dora grappled with loneliness and angst during the pandemic, the book also addresses some of the most widespread socio-political issues that many can identify with. *Über Menschen* belongs to the genre commonly known

⁴² TOP 10 BUCH CW 11-2021 <https://www.charts.de/buchcharts-cw-11-2021/>

⁴³ "Über Menschen" von Juli Zeh meistverkauftes Buch <https://www.boersenblatt.net/news/ueber-menschen-von-juli-zeh-meistverkauftes-buch-184703>

⁴⁴ Juli Zeh gelingt zweiterfolgreichstes Buch im Jahr 2021 <https://www.rbb24.de/kultur/beitrag/2022/01/juli-zeh-ueber-menschen-zweiterfolgreichstes-buch.html>

⁴⁵ Juli Zehs Bestseller "Über Menschen" soll verfilmt werden <https://www.zeit.de/news/2023-06/30/juli-zehs-bestseller-ueber-menschen-soll-verfilmt-werden>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

as *Gesellschaftsroman* (social novel), as it delves into societal issues that include the urban-rural divide, political polarization and the impact of lockdowns. Zeh's exploration of these themes offers an insight into the ethos of modern-day Germany, which is valuable to both German and international readers with a view to gain a better grasp of its current cultural and social dynamics. I think that through her compelling narrative and engagement with pressing issues, Juli Zeh has crafted a work that easily resonates with a wide audience and thus contributed to the enrichment of the German literary tradition.

In choosing to translate Juli Zeh's work, I have attempted to combine my passion for literature with my ambition to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, for I believe that exposure to different perspectives and worldviews leads to a deeper understanding of what is happening not only around us, but also within us. Hence, in translating the first and the third chapter of *Über Menschen*, I strove to convey the author's witticisms and nuanced exploration of human relationships, while at the same time focusing on staying true to her original message and style. This translation project stems from a personal desire to bridge the cultural and literary landscapes of Germany and Italy. By bringing Zeh's narrative to the Italian-speaking world, I am hoping that it will encourage readers to draw parallels with their own lives and communities. Furthermore, the translation process has proved to be a valuable learning experience in navigating the linguistic and cultural transposition necessary for literary translation, as it forced me to interplay between maintaining the author's original voice and at the same time adapt the text for Italian readers.

3.2 Theoretical Translation Framework

Translation has a significant role in bridging gaps between cultures and nations. In particular, literary translations can help these different nations find common ground⁴⁷. As numerous scholars have remarked, a good translation does not simply consist in transferring the propositional content

⁴⁷ Abulhassan, B. (2011). *Literary translation: Aspects of pragmatic meaning*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2.

of the source language (SL) into a target language (TL), but also a vast array of pragmatic and cultural features. The attention given to pragmatic facts and principles in the course of translation can enhance the understanding of the text and improve the quality of translation. Moreover, what distinguishes literary translation from translation in general is its aesthetics. Translation scholar and professor Bahaa-eddin Abulhassan Hassan claims that “literary translation must reflect the imaginative, intellectual and intuitive writing of the author”⁴⁸. Moreover, according to Riffaterre, literary translations must reflect all the literary features of the source text, including sound effects, figures of speech and morphophonemic selection of words (1992: 204-205). Since a writer’s style is distinguishable from the words he/she chooses and the way he/she crafts his/her sentences, Gutt (1991) stresses that in translating a literary work one should strive to preserve the style of the original text. And as literal translation of literature does not reproduce the effect of the original, rendering the equivalent effect of the original requires freedom to explore different interpretations. Moreover, when it comes to translating literary work, another relevant aspect that one ought to keep in mind is that of culture. Several questions can be raised in this regard: Can culture be translated? Can a text be translated in isolation of its culture? How does one navigate the fine line between domestication and foreignization in literary translation? What role does the translator’s own cultural background play in the translation of literary texts? Every language scholar is aware that language is interwoven with the threads of culture and that it is difficult, or rather probably impossible, to separate the two. Hence, it is safe to assert that translators are also cultural mediators who navigate between the source culture to the target culture, choosing as much as they think is appropriate to serve the aim of their translation work. Subsequently, as a result of this cultural blend, foreign elements are gradually integrated into the target culture and have the potential to either become fully incorporated or, in some cases, also completely rejected. As elucidated by Abulhassan Hassan (2011: 4) and Riffaterre (1992: 204-205), the essence of literary translation lies in its ability to mirror the author’s imaginative prowess, including the nuanced interplay of sound, syntax, and semantics. This endeavor requires a departure from rigid literalism in order to accommodate interpretative agility, so that translators can recreate the source text’s effect within the cultural and linguistic boundaries of the target audience. In this sense, the translator is an intermediary intervening in texts to achieve meaningful communication. The notion that a translator is involved in a process of mediating between cultures is central to Katan’s (2004, 2013)

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.

work, who likewise views translation as a way of bringing both languages and cultures into a relationship and recognizes the interconnectedness of culture and meaning and thus to the rearticulation of meanings in another language. Similarly, Liddicoat pointed out that:

viewing translation as an act of intercultural communication means that translation itself needs to be understood in more elaborated ways than the re-linguaging of texts and the scope of the translators' work in rewriting a text from one language into another similarly needs to be understood in more elaborated ways.⁴⁹

Likewise Clouet (2008) argues that:

it is the translator and interpreter's role to reformulate a message, to communicate ideas and information from one cultural context to another without altering what is expressed in the original text or speech through the language of the writer or speaker. This is the main reason why translators and interpreters actually mediate rather than merely translate, as their task is to facilitate the process of intercultural communication.⁵⁰

To use Venuti's (2006) metaphor, one could also argue that the translator should become invisible and therefore make the act of translation transparent whereby the audience reads a translation not as the product of another's language and culture but as a product of the language and culture into which a text has been translated (Liddicoat 2006: 4).

Another translation theory worthy of mention is the *skopos* theory, which arose in the 1970s and 1980s in Germany as a functionalist translation theory that sought to distance translation methods from reliance upon the source text (VanDemark 2022: 3). The theory posits that all translation method should be determined by the desired function, or *skopos*, of the target text. Additionally, it also aimed to be a "general theory" of translation (Reiss and Vermeer, 1984). The term *skopos* was introduced by Hans J. Vermeer first in 1978 to refer to the purpose of translation and the action of translating. He explained his theory in the following way:

⁴⁹ Liddicoat, A.J. (2016). Translation as intercultural mediation: setting the scene. *Perspectives*, 24(3), 349.

⁵⁰ Clouet, R. (2008). Intercultural language learning: cultural mediation within the curriculum of Translation and Interpreting studies. *Ibérica: Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos (AELFE)*, (16), 148.

Translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.⁵¹

Christiane Nord subsequently further developed Vermeer's theory, explaining that the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action (Nord, 1997: 27). According to Vermeer, there is a fundamental distinction between aim and purpose. The crux of his theory is that aim is the final result which an agent tries to achieve through an action, while purpose is the step in the process of achieving such aim. Another related term to *skopos* is intention which is considered as an aim-oriented plan of action on the part of both the sender and the receiver. Intention consists in the appropriate way of producing or understanding a text. With a view to eliminating the ambiguity resulting from the difference between function and intention, Nord (1991 :47) has suggested a distinction between these two concepts. In this regard, the sender is responsible for conveying intention and by using a text he or she aims to achieve a purpose. The receiver subsequently uses the text with a certain function, depending on their own expectations and prior knowledge and needs. Such distinction is significant to the field of translation since the sender and receiver come from different cultural background. As noted by Munday (2012), the *skopos* theory ensued from a desire for one translation theory to answer all methodological questions for any translation project and it is the fluid nature of the theory that ensures that it will be applied differently to every translation project in which it is used (Van Demark 2022). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the German word *Übersetzungsauftrag* plays a crucial role in the *skopos* theory. In this regard, the translator is seen as a barrister who, after receiving instructions from his client, is perfectly free to act the way he/she thinks best to fit the translation task.

3.3 A brief overview of the translated chapters

In chapter one of *Über Menschen*, the reader is introduced to Dora, a 36-year-old woman grappling with a pivotal turning point in her life. The narrative begins *in medias res* with a vivid depiction of an ordinary scene in which the protagonist is digging into the earth, dealing with stubborn roots

⁵¹ Reiss, K., & Vermeer, H. (1984). *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* [Towards a general theory of translational action]. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 20.

and experiencing back pain as a result of her lack of endurance. As the narration moves on, one might go as far as to assume that this gardening scene serves as a metaphor for Dora's attempt to root herself in a new life in the countryside, far away from her past life in Berlin and Münster. The protagonist reflects on her current life, living on a sprawling, unkempt and desolate property that she intends to transform into a garden. The land, referred to as “land lot” (*Flurstück*) in the real estate domain, might also symbolize the untamed aspects of her life that she intends to work on and cultivate. Already from the first chapter, one can sense a stark duality in Dora's life between her past life in the city and her present situation in Bracken, highlighting her disconnection from her urban identity and her struggle to adapt to rural life. The author explores Dora's motivations for purchasing the old and ramshackle estate, situated outside the earshot of the clamorous German capital. The protagonist views her move to Bracken as her last resort and only viable strategy for dealing with the emotionally overwhelming life she had been living with her partner Robert, who, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, became obsessed with an impending apocalypse. Indeed, Zeh portrays Dora's move as an escape, not only from Robert and the pandemic-induced lockdown, but also from an unfulfilling and stressful urban life filled with constant work pressure. Yet, despite her inexperience and lack of tools, Dora is willing to succeed and get acclimatized in her new environment. She is driven by a desire for self-sufficiency and a connection to the land. Her struggle with the unkempt garden could, in some sense, reflect her internal battle and her quest for stability in a world on the brink of insanity. As she reflects on her age, her past and her aspirations, she is striving to redefine her identity and purpose. Moreover, the chapter thematizes transformation, isolation and the search for belonging. It sets the stage for Dora's journey of self-discovery, laying the groundwork for the novel's exploration of human connections and the individual's quest for meaning in a rapidly evolving and unpredictable world.

As far as this translation project is concerned, I decided to skip chapter two and focus on chapter three, which seems more relevant as it covers the first interaction between Dora and her nazi neighbor around whom the narration happens to be centered. Chapter three touches one of the central points of *Über Menschen*, namely Dora's relationship with the most controversial character Gottfried Proksch, who goes by the nickname Gote. This chapter continues to explore Dora's experiences and reflections as she adjusts to her new life in Bracken. It delves deeper into her feeling of isolation and her interactions with her new rural environment. Dora finds herself sitting

on her land lot: the tranquility that starkly contrasts with her past urban life, allows her thoughts to run free and be heard. As a matter of fact, the absence of modern distractions such as television, the news, smartphones and the internet creates a serene atmosphere, makes it seem as if coronavirus was strictly an urban phenomenon. Such silence and calmness present an opportunity for Dora to reassess her priorities and life choices. As Dora reflects on the impact of the pandemic on her professional life and the temporary halt it has put on the usual pace of urban existence, she considers the possibility that everything might be okay despite the upheaval. Her refuge in Bracken becomes a time for introspection, questioning her career in advertising, her relationship with her ex-partner Robert and her future aspirations. However, the peaceful moment is interrupted when Gote confronts Dora about her dog, Jochen-der-Rochen, digging in his potato field on the other side of the fence. Their interaction is fraught with tension and misunderstandings and highlights the cultural and social differences between Dora and the rural community of Bracken. Gote's blunt and coarse manner and his self-identification as the "village Nazi" shock Dora, confronting her with the reality of her new surroundings and the people she must now live among. The encounter with Gote foreshadows Dora's challenges in her new environment, outside her comfort zone. It exposes her naivety about rural life, as well as her struggle to find her place in a community where people's mindset differs from the one she was accustomed to. Moreover, Gote's about fixing the fence and his threat towards Jochen encapsulate the tangible tension between Dora's idealistic expectations and the harsh realities of living in close proximity to individuals with completely different worldviews.

3.4 Juli Zeh's Narrative Style in *Über Menschen*

In the following paragraphs I shall proceed to analyze and comment on the author's signature writing style and the literary devices that she resorted to in the chapters I translated. In particular, I shall focus on syntax, language register and various other stylistic elements. Firstly, it should be noted that Zeh's writing is a distinctive blend of narrative depth, linguistic precision and thematic variety. With literary deftness and storytelling mastery, she mixes syntactical structures with a varied register to create a rich, immersive narrative experience. Her style is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging, marked by vivid imagery and an attentive eye for ordinary details, that might at first appear trivial. With her captivating prose, Zeh invites her readers into

the inner world of her characters, prompting them at the same time to think about present-day relevant societal and existential questions. Moreover, as far as syntax is concerned, the author deftly accelerates the pace with short sentences that often deliver quick, impactful observation and subsequently slows down with rich subordinate clauses, allowing for deeper contemplation of Dora's inner world. Indeed, Zeh's dynamic syntax creates a compelling rhythm that reflects the pace of the protagonist's thoughts and action. For instance, what is peculiar about her style are extremely brief constructions like "*Weitermachen. Nicht nachdenken.*" that speed up the narrative pace. The story is indeed rich in simple sentences with a straightforward subject-verb-object structure like "*Dora ist kein typischer Großstadtflüchtling.*". The translation process also involved the rendering of concise list-like short sentences where the author deliberately chose to omit or repeat the verb:

Natürlich ist das Leben in der Stadt oft stressig. Überfüllte S-Bahnen und die ganzen Spinner auf den Straßen. Dazu Deadlines, Meetings, der hohe Zeit- und Konkurrenzdruck in der Agentur. [...] Ein typisches ostdeutsches Straßendorf. In der Mitte eine Kirche mit Dorfplatz. Bushaltestelle, Feuerwehr, Briefkasten. 284 Einwohner. (*Über Menschen*, 9)

However, paragraphs of such brief formulations are occasionally interrupted by more complex multi-clause sentences:

Als Dora anfang, Immobilienanzeigen im Internet zu lesen, schienen Klimawandel und Rechtspopulismus die wichtigsten Probleme zu sein, und als sie das kleine Erbe ihrer Mutter sowie sämtliche Ersparnisse zusammenkratzte, um den Eigenkapitalanteil des Kaufpreises zu überweisen, wusste Dora immer noch nicht, ob sie überhaupt aufs Land ziehen wollte. (*Über Menschen*, 15)

Another example of a more complex syntactic construction is: "Als sie ihre Sachen die Treppe hinuntertrug, sah er sie an, als hätte sie den Verstand verloren, und dass es nicht um den Lockdown ging, hat Robert nicht verstanden." This sentence combines multiple clauses: a temporal clause "*Als sie ihre Sachen die Treppe hinuntertrug*", a comparative clause "*als hätte sie den Verstand verloren*", and two independent clauses "*sah er sie an*" and "*hat Robert nicht verstanden*". Such sentences often reflect the interconnectedness of thoughts and the complexity of the protagonist's experiences, whereas the use of short, impactful sentences, especially in sequences of action or in

moments of realization, is aimed to increase the narrative tension and focus the reader's attention on crucial moments. Thus, Juli Zeh skillfully creates dynamism and gives the narrative an engaging flow that mirrors the protagonist Dora's internal and external experiences.

Another important linguistic aspect that a translator ought to keep in mind during the translation process is that of register. As Halliday (1978: 111) phrased it, register can be seen as “the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type”. Thus, it becomes the necessary link between a communicative act and the context of situation in which it occurs⁵². Although literary text does not depend on the constraints of external situations outside the narration, they cannot help but give rise to their own internal situation as a precondition for their intelligibility⁵³. Borrillo went on to remark how:

Literary texts are thus embedded in a double contextual frame, the outer context of situation, in which communication takes place between two real-world participants — the author and the reader —, and the inner context of situation, in which the participants in the communicative act are fictional (2000: 2).

In this regard, it can be argued that recognizing the given register configuration is a significant step towards interpretation and constitutes *per sé* an interpretative attempt since literary texts have no context outside the language itself.

As Halliday (1985: 36) puts it:

... there are certain kinds of text — literary text is an obvious example — in which there is no situation except the external situation of ourselves as readers, and we have to construct the inner situation entirely from our reading of the text.

The translator must, in some sense, construct his/her own inner situation and, as a result, the notion of register becomes crucial for a quality translation. It is therefore necessary to “search actively for a context” (Semino 1992: 138), which Semino defines as “a cognitive space that is actively constructed by participants in the course of the interaction” (Semino 1992: 138).

⁵² Borrillo, J.M. (2000). Register analysis in literary translation: A functional approach. *Babel*, 46(1), 1-2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

Furthermore, in more concrete terms, register refers to the degree of formality, the author's tone style of language used, which significantly differ depending on the target audience, writing purpose and narrative situation. Indeed, register is akin to a spectrum that ranges from formal language to informal language, including specialized jargon of different domains, colloquialisms and oftentimes even slang. The author's choice of register in a novel serves to create a certain kind of atmosphere, but also to establish social dynamics, and psychological depth of the respective characters, providing information on the cultural context in which the story unfolds. As a result, when translating a novel, maintaining the original register is crucial for preserving the author's voice and his/her personal textual nuances. A shift in register can considerably change the reader's perception and idea of characters, potentially distorting the book's tone as well. For example, an overly formal language in a dialogue meant to be casual can make characters seem distant or inauthentic, while, on the other hand, making formal discourse too informal might undermine the author's seriousness. For this reason, it is necessary for a translator to have a good grasp of the nuances of both the source and target languages' registers. This includes recognizing when to maintain the original register and when to change it to fit the linguistic and cultural standards of the target audience. The challenge then lies in finding the adequate equivalent expressions and constructions in the target language that capture the essence of the author's message and intention.

As far as *Über Menschen* is concerned, in crafting her characters and their world, Juli Zeh utilizes a variety of registers, ranging from a colloquial to a technical one, yet never too formal or stilted. For instance, in sentences such as "*So eine Kruste ist der zweite Hauptsatz der Thermodynamik, der besagt, dass Unordnung immer ihrem maximalen Wert zustrebt, wenn man nicht enorme Energie aufbringt, um wieder Ordnung zu schaffen.*" (*Über Menschen*, 10) she weaves scientific terminology into her narrative, adding depth to the protagonist's reflections on her life's circumstances. In writing "*Die Robinie ist ein invasiver Neophyt, ein Baum-Migrant.*" (*Über Menschen*, 12), Zeh showcases her ability to use specialized language pertaining to nature to discuss ecological concepts. Likewise, she includes terminology that is typical of rural environments and agriculture, for example her references to "*Umgraben*" (digging over or tilling) the land and organizing the garden with "*gespannten Schnüre*" (stretched strings) to mark boundaries. These details mirror the author's practical understanding of gardening techniques and contribute to the realism of Dora's attempts to cultivate her new plot of land. By incorporating terms and concepts from botany, agriculture, meteorology and land management, Zeh renders the

rural setting authentic without overwhelming the reader with convoluted language. On the other hand, her use of colloquialisms also provides authenticity to the setting and dialogues. While colloquial register is typical of speech, it also suits the diatopic dimension of the small town where the protagonist decides to relocate. Dora's internal monologue, marked by repetitions such as "*Weitermachen. Nicht nachdenken.*" is ordinary, day to day self-talk. A striking example of informal language is Gote's use of "*Scheißköter*" to refer to her dog, which signals the speaker's raw and unfiltered way of speaking. Furthermore, through a more informal language Zeh portrays the clash between the urban and the rural environment. Phrases like "*Euch Städtern muss echt langweilig sein*" (*Über Menschen*, 35) mirror the perceived lifestyle differences and with their casual tone both criticize and humorously play on stereotypes. Gote's blatant comment on the dog's appearance "*Total hässlich ist der*" and his seemingly aggressive warning "*Wenn dein Köter noch einmal meine Saatkartoffeln ausgräbt, trete ich ihn platt*" (*Über Menschen*, 37) are examples of how colloquial language is used to express personal opinions unapologetically and in a straightforward manner. Finally, through colloquial expressions Zeh vividly portrays her characters' worlds, thoughts, and interactions. Not only does this register make the narrative more relatable and engaging, but it also serves as a tool for character development and exploration, as it highlights the role of language when it comes to shaping our perception of the people around us and their environment.

Furthermore, what makes Juli Zeh's narrative particular is her dry humor and vivid metaphors that enrich the story and offer readers an insight into her characters' minds and create closeness to them. Indeed, the humorous elements oftentimes are to be found in the protagonist's internal monologue and her remarks about the new, rural life she finds herself in. For example, the decision to name Dora's dog "*Jochen-der-Rochen*" showcases her quirky sense of humor. This name, which could roughly be translated with "Jochen-the-Ray" in English, not only gives the female dog a male human name, but it also compares it to a flat-bodied sea creature, suggesting an odd but endearing mismatch between the dog's appearance and a graceful ray. In another instance the protagonist refers to her partner Robert as "Robert-Koch"⁵⁴ alluding to the German research institute *Robert-Koch Institut* responsible for disease control and prevention. Metaphors are another literary device that Zeh uses to enrich and add color to her storytelling. When contemplating her unkempt garden, she sees her struggle with the overgrown and neglected land

⁵⁴ Zeh, J. (2021). *Über Menschen*: 26.

as a fight against entropy⁵⁵. The concept of entropy, which is a measure of disorder and randomness, is used to compare the physical state of the land and the human condition, suggesting that both require constant effort to maintain order and purpose. Additionally, the metaphor of Dora standing on a *Floß* (raft) armed with "*rostigen Werkzeugen*" (rusty tools) combating the entropy captures her feelings of being overwhelmed and unprepared before so much disorder. This vivid representation humorously exaggerates her predicament, making her efforts against the sprawling and unkempt garden seem both heroic and somewhat absurd.

3.5 Translation strategies and challenges

In the following section I shall proceed to comment on the most important strategies in the translation of chapters one and three of the novel at hand:

- Weitermachen. Nicht nachdenken: The German infinitive form used by the protagonist as the imperative to motivate herself was translated with the Italian imperative mood.

Weitermachen. Nicht nachdenken.	Vai avanti. Non pensarci.
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- Flurstück: The technical term that refers to the protagonist's property was translated with Italian specialized equivalent found in the land registry, namely "particella catastale".

Was sie jetzt umgibt, ist kein Garten. Es ist auch kein Park oder Feld. Am ehesten ist es ein »Flurstück«.	Quello che ora la circonda non è un giardino. Ma non è neanche un parco o un campo. Si avvicina maggiormente a una "particella catastale".
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- Speckgürtel: For this particular German term used for referring to affluent German suburbs, it was necessary to paraphrase, as there is no direct one-to-one equivalent in Italian. Hence "sobborghi benestanti".

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

Dass der plötzliche Kauf eines alten Gutsverwalterhauses, sanierungsbedürftig und fernab aller Speckgürtel, keine neurotische Kurzschlussreaktion war, sondern der nächste logische Schritt auf dem Wanderweg ihrer Biographie.	Che l'acquisto impulsivo di una vecchia dimora di campagna da ristrutturare e lontana da sobborghi benestanti non è stato frutto di una reazione nevrotica, bensì il successivo passo logico sul sentiero della sua biografia.
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->Mann, hast du es schön hier.: In this case it was necessary to think in terms of how a native Italian speaker would express such a feeling of admiration or make a compliment to the interlocutor. "Però! Hai proprio un bel posticino qui." is therefore what I eventually came up with.

Mann, hast du es schön hier	Però! Hai proprio un bel posticino qui.
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-Bedenkenträgerei, Schicksalsbewältigung, Großstadtflüchtling, Landpomeranzen, Unkrautnarbe: Perhaps the most challenging part when translating the novel were German compounds which happen to have no direct equivalent in Italian. In order to deal with them, especially when it comes to author's neologisms, it is essential to understand the meaning, which is usually given by the sum of the terms that make up the compound and then to describe or paraphrase it in the target language.

Wie Robert mit seiner Bedenkenträgerei und seinem Perfektionismus. Robert, der ihre Beziehung einfach weggeworfen und sich in die Apokalypse verliebt hat.	Come Robert con il suo perfezionismo e il suo dubitare. Robert che ha semplicemente buttato via la loro relazione e si è innamorato dell'apocalisse.
Die Apokalypse verlangt Gefolgschaft, hinauf zu den Höhen kollektiver Schicksalsbewältigung.	L'apocalisse richiede lealtà fino ad arrivare ai livelli di una lotta collettiva contro il destino.
Dora ist kein typischer Großstadtflüchtling.	Dora non è la tipica persona che fugge da una grande città.
Aber jetzt muss sie aufstehen, mit der Würde eines Großstadttiers, das den gefiederten Landpomeranzen die Meinung sagt.	Ma adesso è giunto il momento di alzarsi e, con la dignità di un animale di città, dire la sua ai campagnoli piumati.

Wobei von Gras eigentlich keine Rede sein kann; »Unkrautnarbe« müsste es heißen.	Anche se di erba non si può veramente parlare. Piuttosto di erbaccia.
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-Jochen-der-Rochen: Another aspect in the day-to-day life of a translator is dealing with rhymes and word plays. Dora's dog's name undoubtedly proved to be a challenge that requires a great deal of thinking, research and attempts. Usually such translations necessarily entailed a detachment from the source language and sacrificing either the rhyme or the word play. However, in this particular instance, it was possible for me to have my cake and eat it too. As a result, I personally opted for Leone il Trigone, as it both rhymes and refers to a sea creature.

Einer der schwarzen Vögel setzt sich auf den Spatenstiel, eine Impertinenz, die Doras kleine Hündin namens Jochen-der-Rochen den Kopf heben lässt. Eigentlich erholt sich Jochen-der-Rochen gerade in der Frühlingssonne von einer weiteren Nacht im kalten Landhaus.	Uno degli uccelli neri si posa sul manico della pala nera, un'impertinenza che fa alzare la testa a Leone il Trigone, la cagnolina di Dora che, a dire il vero, si sta riprendendo sotto il sole di primavera da un'altra notte passata nella fredda casa di campagna.
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- Morgen wird gebracht: In this particular instance, the author makes a verb out of the name of the fictional small town. In Italian, the first conjugation is the one that allows to form neologisms. Hence: *braccare*.

Morgen wird gebracht.	Domani si <i>braccherà</i> .
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- Er verwandelt auch die Ent-Projektierung des Daseins in ein neues Projekt: Another instance of German ad-hoc neologisms where paraphrasing is inevitable since the target language, namely Italian, tends not to accumulate meaning in single terms, but rather to convey it in a more extensive way.

Sie weiß, dass der Projekte-Kreislauf eine Falle ist, der man nicht leicht entkommt. Er verwandelt auch die Ent-Projektierung des Daseins in ein neues Projekt.	Lei sa che il ciclo dei progetti è una trappola alla quale non si sfugge facilmente e che trasforma in un nuovo progetto persino il desiderio di liberare la propria esistenza dai progetti.
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- Wahrscheinlich wäre es leichter, einem Schwaben die Kehrwoche zu verbieten: Sentences like these require the use of the so-called localization translation strategy. This sentence plays on the stereotype about Swabians being too attached to their weekly cleaning shift. However, since the Italian audience is unlikely to be familiar with this stereotype, I opted for another analogy which involves Bavarians and the world-renown festival Oktoberfest, as it is far easier for the target audience to grasp the author's intention.

<p>Anscheinend nimmt man es mit dem Händeschüttelverbot in Brandenburg nicht so genau. Wahrscheinlich wäre es leichter, einem Schwaben die Kehrwoche zu verbieten.</p>	<p>A quanto pare, il divieto di stringere le mani non viene preso sul serio a Brandeburgo. Probabilmente sarebbe più facile vietare l'Oktoberfest a un bavarese.</p>
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- Dora ist nicht gut im Folgen: The source text presents quite some instances where transposition was the appropriate solution to insure that the translation is idiomatic.

<p>Dora ist nicht gut im Folgen</p>	<p>Dora non è una brava seguace.</p>
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-Tiergarten: Culture-specific elements like this one need to be localized, as there is no direct equivalent for an Italian audience. As a result, some nuances in meaning can be lost in translation.

<p>Robert hat Biologie studiert und ihr bei jedem Spaziergang im Tiergarten ausführlich von den Bäumen erzählt.</p>	<p>Robert ha studiato biologia e a ogni passeggiata nel parco gliene parlava in dettaglio.</p>
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-Als wäre alles, sogar Doras große Hände, zu zerbrechlichem Glas geworden.: This is another instance where, in order to make the translation sounds idiomatic and therefore natural to the target audience, a slight semantic adjustment was necessary.

<p>Als wäre alles, sogar Doras große Hände, zu zerbrechlichem Glas geworden.</p>	<p>Come se tutto, persino le grandi mani di Dora, fosse diventato fragile come il cristallo.</p>
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To conclude, as for the writing style mostly characterized by coordinate sentences that give the narration a fast pace and a sense of immediacy, I chose to convey the same effect by staying faithful to Zeh's signature literary style. As literature is a domain for artistic creativity, even unconventional sentences without verb or with an unusual word order deserve, I would argue, to be kept the way they are with the least intervention as possible from the translator. Domestication and localization are mostly applied to make the author's work accessible and relatable to the target audience without compromising the signature stylistic choices of the author. This approach respects the integrity of the source text while at the same time conveying the cultural and linguistic nuances to the target audience. By carefully selecting Italian equivalents that match the German text's intensity and subtlety, the translation maintains the original's lively pace and emotional depth. This balance between fidelity to the source text and the adaptations for the target Italian culture reflects the translator's role not just as a linguistic mediator, but as a "cultural interpreter", whose task consists in bridging the gap between two worlds. In doing so, the translation opens up a space for cross-cultural dialogue, allowing the Italian audience to engage with the novel in a way that is both meaningful and not too unfamiliar, thereby making the author's work go beyond its linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

The aim of this translation proposal was to make Juli Zeh's message accessible to the Italian readership. Since the COVID-19 pandemic was, as implied in the term itself, a global phenomenon that has had a long-lasting and far-reaching impact on society, it is safe to assume that *Über Menschen* can give voice to what many have experienced and therefore easily find resonance with a wide audience. I would go as far as to argue that oftentimes the greatness of a writer lies within his/her unique ability to articulate what many of us only feel or are vaguely aware of. It can lead to a feeling of being understood and heard and help people go through difficult times.

Consequently, this work also delves into the core of the novel, analyzing the writer's main ideas and worldviews with a view to fully grasping their gist. The story is centered around the social dynamics between the protagonist and the characters she meets in the fictional small town of Bracken. By running into people with completely different political opinions and lifestyles, the 36-year-old Dora is forced to overcome her own prejudices and acclimatized to a completely foreign reality. In this regard, chapter two describes the barriers that are partly responsible for the current divide in our society, outlining some of the differences between stereotypical representations of big city dwellers and people coming from a more rural environment. Moreover, this work pays particular attention to sarcasm and the writer's subtle irony, which is employed in order to convey ideas or express potentially controversial critiques of society. Challenging the status quo is indeed one of the hallmarks of Zeh's literary work, making her a committed writer through and through. As a result, it was extremely important to first understand the novel's tone and subtleties before even attempting to translate it. Lastly, the third and final chapter provides a brief overview of the translated parts and explores some of the translation approaches that are still relevant and have proved useful in writing this work. I believe that translation can give rise to a shared sense of community, because it can enrich our own culture by importing foreign ideas and therefore help us understand not only ourselves, but also what is foreign to us. Literature has the power to connect, to challenge our worldviews and foster mutual understanding in tumultuous times. Thus, the act of translating *Über Menschen* serves not only as an exercise in linguistic and cultural exchange, but also as an attempt to bridge the gap that divides us.

Appendix:

<p>1 Bracken</p> <p>Weitermachen. Nicht nachdenken.</p> <p>Dora rammt den Spaten in den Boden, zieht ihn wieder heraus, durchtrennt mit einem Hieb eine hartnäckige Wurzel und wendet das nächste Stück sandiger Erde. Dann wirft sie ihr Werkzeug beiseite und presst die Hände ins Kreuz. Rückenschmerzen. Mit – sie muss kurz rechnen – 36 Jahren.</p> <p>Seit dem fünfundzwanzigsten Geburtstag muss sie immer nachrechnen, wenn es um ihr Alter geht.</p> <p>Nicht nachdenken. Weitermachen. Der schmale Streifen umgegrabener Erde taugt noch lange nicht zum Erfolgserlebnis. Wenn sie sich umsieht, wird das Gefühl existenzieller Chancenlosigkeit übermächtig. Das Grundstück ist viel zu groß. Es sieht nicht aus wie etwas, das »Garten« heißen könnte. Ein Garten ist ein Stück Rasen, auf dem ein Würfelhaus steht. Wie in dem Münsteraner Vorort, in dem Dora aufgewachsen ist. Oder vielleicht auch eine Miniaturblumenwiese auf einer Baumscheibe in Berlin- Kreuzberg, wo Dora zuletzt gewohnt hat.</p> <p>Was sie jetzt umgibt, ist kein Garten. Es ist auch kein Park oder Feld. Am ehesten ist es ein »Flurstück«. So heißt es im Grundbuch. Aus dem Grundbuch weiß</p>	<p><u>1 BRACKEN</u></p> <p>Vai avanti. Non pensarci.</p> <p>Dora conficca la vanga nel terreno, la ritira fuori, trancia con un colpo un’ostinata radice e rivolta una zolla di terra sabbiosa. Poi getta da parte l’attrezzo e preme entrambe le mani sul suo basso dorso. Un dolore alla. A soltanto – ci deve pensare un attimo – 36 anni.</p> <p>È da quando ne ha 25 che deve sempre fare due calcoli quando si tratta della sua età Non pensarci. Vai avanti. La piccola striscia di terreno appena dissodata è ben lungi dall’infonderle la sensazione di aver concluso il lavoro. Quando si guarda intorno, il senso di disperazione esistenziale si fa troppo forte. Il terreno è eccessivamente grande, non ha l’aspetto di un qualcosa che si possa chiamare “giardino”. Un giardino è un pezzo di prato sul quale si trova una casetta a forma di cubo. Come nella periferia di Münster in cui Dora è cresciuta. Oppure una mini-aiuola in miniatura intorno a un albero nel quartiere di Kreuzberg a Berlino dove Dora ha vissuto in precedenza.</p> <p>Quello che ora la circonda non è un giardino. Ma non è neanche un parco o un campo. Si avvicina maggiormente a una “particella catastale”. Così la</p>
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<p>Dora, dass eine Fläche von 4.000 Quadratmetern zum Haus gehört. Ihr war nur nicht klar, was 4.000 Quadratmeter sind. Ein halbes Fußballfeld, darauf ein altes Haus.</p>	<p>chiamo il catasto, dal quale Dora sa che la sua casa comprende anche un terreno di 4.000 metri quadrati. Solo che non aveva alcuna idea di quanto fossero 4.000 metri quadrati. Mezzo campo da calcio con una vecchia casa nel mezzo.</p>
<p>Eine verwilderte Brachfläche, plattgedrückt und ausgebleichen von einem Winter, der gar nicht stattgefunden hat. Eine botanische Katastrophe, die sich durch Doras Anstrengung in einen romantischen Landhausgarten verwandeln soll. Mit Gemüsebeet. Das ist der Plan. Wenn Dora im Umkreis von 70 Kilometern schon niemanden kennt und keine Möbel besitzt, will sie wenigstens eigenes Gemüse. Weil Tomaten, Möhren und Kartoffeln täglich davon erzählen würden, dass sie alles richtig gemacht hat.</p>	<p>Un terreno incolto, sbiadito e appiattito da un inverno che non è mai arrivato. Una catastrofe botanica che l'impegno e gli sforzi di Dora dovrebbero trasformare nel romantico giardino di una casa di campagna. Completo anche di un orto. Il suo progetto è questo. E dato che Dora non conosce proprio nessuno nel raggio di 70 chilometri ed è senza mobili, vuole per lo meno avere della verdura propria. Anche perché i pomodori, le carote e le patate le ricorderebbero ogni giorno che ha fatto tutto come si deve.</p>
<p>Dass der plötzliche Kauf eines alten Gutsverwalterhauses, sanierungsbedürftig und fernab aller Speckgürtel, keine neurotische Kurzschlussreaktion war, sondern der nächste logische Schritt auf dem Wanderweg ihrer Biographie. Wenn sie einen Landhausgarten besitzt, werden Freunde aus Berlin am Wochenende zu Besuch kommen, auf alten Stühlen im hohen Gras sitzen und seufzen: »Mann, hast du es schön hier.«</p>	<p>Che l'acquisto impulsivo di una vecchia dimora di campagna da ristrutturare e lontana da sobborghi benestanti non è stato frutto di una reazione nevrotica, bensì il successivo passo logico sul sentiero della sua biografia. Quando avrà un giardino nella sua casa di campagna, verranno a trovarla gli amici di Berlino nel fine settimana, i quali, seduti su vecchie sedie in mezzo all'erba alta, diranno con un sospiro: "Però!, hai proprio un bel posticino qui." Ammesso che in quel momento si ricordi chi sono i suoi amici. E se mai tornerà a essere possibile frequentarsi come prima.</p>

Falls ihr bis dahin einfällt, wer ihre Freunde sind. Und falls man sich jemals wieder gegenseitig besuchen darf.

Dass Dora nicht die geringste Ahnung hat, ist kein Hindernis. Wozu gibt es YouTube. Glücklicherweise gehört sie nicht zu den Menschen, die glauben, man müsse Maschinenbau studieren, bevor man den Heizungszähler ablesen kann.

Wie Robert mit seiner Bedenkenträgerei und seinem Perfektionismus. Robert, der ihre Beziehung einfach weggeworfen und sich in die Apokalypse verliebt hat. Die Apokalypse ist eine Nebenbuhlerin, mit der es Dora nicht aufnehmen kann. Die Apokalypse verlangt Gefolgschaft, hinauf zu den Höhen kollektiver Schicksalsbewältigung. Dora ist nicht gut im Folgen. Warum sie fliehen musste und dass es nicht um den Lockdown ging, hat Robert nicht verstanden. Als sie ihre Sachen die Treppe hinuntertrug, sah er sie an, als hätte sie den Verstand verloren.

Nicht nachdenken. Weitermachen. Aus dem Internet weiß sie, dass die Pflanzzeit im April beginnt, dieses Jahr aufgrund des milden Winters sogar noch früher. Jetzt ist Mitte April, also muss sie sich mit dem Umgraben beeilen. Vor zwei Wochen, kurz nach

Il fatto che Dora non abbia la più pallida idea non rappresenta affatto un ostacolo. A cosa serve YouTube. Lei per fortuna non è una di quelle persone che credono che ci voglia una laurea in ingegneria meccanica per leggere il contatore del riscaldamento.

Come Robert con il suo perfezionismo e il suo dubitare. Robert che ha semplicemente buttato via la loro relazione e si è innamorato dell'apocalisse. L'apocalisse è una concorrente alla quale Dora non riesce a stare dietro.

L'apocalisse richiede lealtà fino ad arrivare ai livelli di una lotta collettiva contro il destino.

Dora non è una brava seguace. Robert non ha capito perché lei dovesse andarsene via e che ciò non aveva niente a che fare con il lockdown. Mentre scendeva le scale portandosi via le sue cose lui la guardava come se avesse perso la ragione.

Non pensarci. Vai avanti. Grazie a internet è venuta a sapere che la stagione della semina inizia ad aprile, quest'anno ancora prima del solito per via dell'inverno mite. Ora siamo a metà aprile e perciò Dora si deve sbrigare a dissodare il terreno. Due settimane fa, poco

ihrem Umzug, hat es plötzlich geschneit. Das erste und einzige Mal in diesem Jahr. Große Flocken schwebten vom Himmel und sahen aus wie etwas Künstliches, ein Special Effect der Natur. Das Flurstück verschwand unter einer dünnen weißen Decke. Endlich sauber, endlich still.

Dora erlebte einen Moment tiefer Ruhe. Ohne Schnee erzählt das Flurstück unablässig von Verwüstung und Vernachlässigung. Ein ständiger Imperativ, alles in Ordnung zu bringen, und zwar schnell. Dora ist kein typischer Großstadtflüchtling. Sie ist nicht hergekommen, um sich mithilfe von Biotomaten zu entschleunigen. Natürlich ist das Leben in der Stadt oft stressig. Überfüllte S-Bahnen und die ganzen Spinner auf den Straßen. Dazu Deadlines, Meetings, der hohe Zeit- und Konkurrenzdruck in der Agentur.

Aber das kann man auch mögen, und der Stress in der Stadt ist wenigstens einigermaßen gut organisiert. Hier draußen auf dem Land herrscht eine Anarchie der Dinge. Dora ist umgeben von Sachen, die tun, was sie wollen. Gegenstände, die reparaturbedürftig, halb funktionstüchtig, verdreckt, verwahrlost, völlig zerstört oder gar nicht vorhanden sind, obwohl man sie dringend benötigt.

dopo il trasloco, ha nevicato all'improvviso. La prima e l'unica volta quest'anno. Grandi fiocchi di neve fluttuavano dal cielo e sembravano qualcosa di artificiale, un effetto speciale della natura. La particella catastale era sparita sotto una sottile coltre bianca. Finalmente pulita, finalmente quieta.

Dora aveva vissuto un momento di profonda pace. Senza la neve, il terreno racconta ogni giorno una storia di desolazione e trascuratezza. Una continua sollecitazione a sistemare tutto e anche in fretta. Dora non è la tipica persona che fugge da una grande città. Non si è trasferita in campagna per rilassarsi grazie all'ortofrutta biologica. Indubbiamente, la vita in città porta spesso allo stress. I tram sovraffollati e tutti quei pazzi scatenati sulle strade. A questo si aggiungono anche le scadenze, le riunioni, la grande fretta e la pressione per battere la concorrenza in agenzia.

Ma questo può anche piacere, e poi lo stress di città è per lo meno, in un modo o nell'altro, ben organizzato. Qui fuori in campagna regnano i principi dell'anarchia. Dora è circondata da cose che fanno quello che vogliono. Oggetti che hanno bisogno di riparazione, che funzionano a metà, oggetti sporchi, ridotti male, completamente distrutti oppure completamente inesistenti, anche di loro si ha un urgente bisogno.

In der Stadt sind die Dinge halbwegs unter Kontrolle. Städte sind Kontrollzentren für die dingliche Welt. Für jeden Gegenstand gibt es dort mindestens eine Person, die zuständig ist. Es gibt Orte, an denen man Sachen bekommt und an die man sie bringen kann, wenn man sie nicht mehr will. Auf dem Flurstück hingegen gibt es nur Dora als Zuständige sowie eine herrschsüchtige Natur, die alles überwuchert, was sie in die rankigen Finger kriegt.

Ein paar Amseln fliegen heran, um in der umgegrabenen Erde nach Regenwürmern zu suchen. Einer der schwarzen Vögel setzt sich auf den Spatenstiel, eine Impertinenz, die Doras kleine Hündin namens Jochen-der-Rochen den Kopf heben lässt. Eigentlich erholt sich Jochen-der-Rochen gerade in der Frühlingssonne von einer weiteren Nacht im kalten Landhaus. Aber jetzt muss sie aufstehen, mit der Würde eines Großstadttiers, das den gefiederten Landpomeranzen die Meinung sagt. Danach kehrt sie auf ihr sonnenwarmes Plätzchen zurück, lässt sich auf den Bauch sinken und spreizt die Hinterbeine, was ihrem Körper die dreieckige Rochenform verleiht, der Jochen ihren Namen verdankt.

Manchmal bleibt Doras Verstand an Sätzen hängen, die sie irgendwo gelesen hat, oder, besser gesagt, die Sätze bleiben an ihr haften, und ihr Geist betastet sie

In città tutte le cose sono invece più o meno sotto controllo. Le città sono i centri di controllo dell'universo degli oggetti. Lì per ogni cosa vi è almeno una persona incaricata di prendersene cura. Ci sono luoghi in cui ci si procura gli oggetti e luoghi in cui si portano quando non servono più. Della particella catastale, invece, l'unica a prendersene cura è Dora, e insieme a lei una natura tirannica che si riprende tutto quello che finisce nelle sue grinfie.

Un paio di merli si avvicinano per cercare lombrichi nel terreno vangato. Uno degli uccelli neri si posa sul manico della pala, un'impertinenzia che fa alzare la testa a Leone il Trigone, la cagnolina di Dora che, a dire il vero, si sta riprendendo sotto il sole di primavera da un'altra notte passata nella fredda casa di campagna.

Ma adesso è giunto il momento di alzarsi e, con la dignità di un animale di città, dire la sua ai campagnoli piumati. In seguito, ritorna al suo posticino riscaldato dal sole, si stende sulla pancia e allarga le zampe posteriori, prendendo così una forma triangolare che la fa assomigliare al pesce trigone, al quale Leone deve il suo nome.

A volte la mente di Dora si fissa su frasi che ha letto da qualche parte o, per meglio dire, le frasi si attaccano a lei e la sua mente continua a tastarle come una crosta

wie eine Kruste, die sich nicht entfernen lässt. So eine Kruste ist der zweite Hauptsatz der Thermodynamik, der besagt, dass Unordnung immer ihrem maximalen Wert zustrebt, wenn man nicht enorme Energie aufbringt, um wieder Ordnung zu schaffen. Entropie. Daran muss Dora denken, wenn sie sich umsieht, nicht nur auf ihrem Flurstück, sondern im ganzen Dorf, im ganzen Landkreis. Bröckelnde Straßen, halb eingestürzte Scheunen und Ställe, von Efeu überwucherte ehemalige Kneipen. Schrottberge auf den Brachflächen, aufgeplatzte Mülltüten im Wald. Die Gärten mit ihren neuen Zäunen und frisch gestrichenen Häusern sind Inseln, auf denen die Menschen gegen die Entropie kämpfen.

Als reiche die Kraft jedes Einzelnen nur für ein paar Quadratmeter Welt. Dora hat noch keine Insel. Sie steht gewissermaßen auf einem Floß, bewaffnet mit rostigen Werkzeugen, die sie im Schuppen gefunden hat, und stemmt sich der Entropie entgegen.

Sie hat das Dorf gegoogelt, damals vor sechs Monaten, in einer anderen Epoche, in einer anderen Welt, als sie die Anzeige auf eBay Kleinanzeigen entdeckte. Laut Wikipedia ist »Bracken ein Wohnplatz der Gemeinde Geiwitz nahe der Stadt Plausitz im Landkreis Prignitz des Landes Brandenburg. Zugehörig ist der Siedlungsplatz Schütte, unbewohnt. Das Dorf wird erstmals in einer Urkunde des Bischofs Siegfried vom Jahre 1184

irremovibile. Una simile crosta segue la seconda legge della termodinamica per cui il disordine nel mondo tende sempre verso il suo massimo valore se non si investe una grande quantità di energia per ripristinare l'ordine. Entropia. È a questo che Dora non può fare a meno di pensare quando si guarda intorno, non solo alla sua particella catastale, bensì a tutto il paese e alla regione intera. Strade in rovina, stalle e fienili diroccati, bar e locali di un tempo ora ricoperti di edera. Mucchi di rottami su aree incolte, sacchi di immondizia rotti nel bosco. I giardini con recinzioni nuove e le case fresche di vernice sono isole su cui le persone lottano contro l'entropia.

Come se il potere di ogni individuo bastasse solo per pochi metri quadrati di mondo. Un'isola Dora ancora non ce l'ha. In un certo senso si trova su una zattera, armata di attrezzi arrugginiti trovati in un capanno, impegnata a opporsi con ogni mezzo all'entropia.

Dora ha cercato il paesino su google quando, sei mesi prima, in un'altra epoca, in un altro mondo, aveva scovato un annuncio su eBay. Secondo Wikipedia, "Bracken è un centro abitato del comune di Geiwitz, vicino alla città di Plausitz, nel distretto di Prignitz, nello Stato Federale di Brandeburgo. Ne fa parte anche l'insediamento di Schütte, ormai disabitato. Il paese viene menzionato per la prima volta in un documento dell'arcivescovo Siegfried nel 1184. Alla luce dei

erwähnt. Aufgrund slawischer Funde in der Ortslage lässt sich davon ausgehen, dass Bracken aus einer slawischen Siedlung hervorgegangen ist«.

Ein typisches ostdeutsches Straßendorf. In der Mitte eine Kirche mit Dorfplatz. Bushaltestelle, Feuerwehr, Briefkasten. 284 Einwohner. Mit Dora 285, wobei sie noch nicht beim Meldeamt gewesen ist. Das hat wegen Corona geschlossen. Derzeit kein Publikumsverkehr. So steht es auf der Homepage vom Amt Geiwitz. Dora wusste gar nicht, dass sie zu einem Publikum gehört. Wer sind die Schauspieler? Nicht darüber nachdenken. Nicht hängen bleiben. Es gibt jetzt so viele seltsame neue Begriffe. Social Distancing. Exponentielles Wachstum. Übersterblichkeit und Spuckschutzscheibe. Dora kommt schon seit Wochen nicht mehr mit. Vielleicht auch schon seit Monaten oder Jahren, aber durch Corona ist das Nicht-mehr-Mitkommen manifest geworden.

Die neuen Begriffe umschwirren ihren Kopf wie Fliegen, die sich nicht vertreiben lassen, egal, wie heftig man mit den Armen wedelt. Deshalb hat Dora beschlossen, dass alle diese Wörter sie nichts mehr angehen. Sie stammen aus einer fremden Sprache in einem fremden Land. Zum Ausgleich hat sie das Wort »Bracken« bekommen. Auch dieses Wort fühlt sich noch fremd an. Es klingt nach einer Mischung aus Brachen und Baracken. Oder nach einer

ritrovamenti di origine slava sul territorio si presume che Bracken sia nata da un insediamento slavo”.

Un tipico villaggio strada della Germania dell'est. Al centro una chiesa che si affaccia sulla la piazza del paese. La fermata dell'autobus, la caserma dei pompieri, la cassetta delle lettere. 284 abitanti. Con Dora 285, anche se non è ancora stata all'anagrafe, al momento chiusa al pubblico a causa del coronavirus. Così è scritto sulla pagina web del comune di Geiwitz. Dora non sapeva affatto di appartenere a un pubblico. Chi sono gli attori? Meglio non pensarci. Meglio lasciar perdere. Ci sono così tanti nuovi termini strani ora. Distanziamento sociale. Crescita esponenziale. Eccesso di mortalità e pannelli di protezione in plexiglass. Ormai sono settimane che Dora non riesce a starci dietro. O forse anche mesi o anni, ma il coronavirus ha ormai reso evidente questa impossibilità a tenere il passo.

I nuovi concetti le ronzano nella testa come delle mosche che non si riesce a scacciar via, non importa con quanta frenesia uno agiti le braccia. E quindi. Dora ha deciso che tutte quelle parole non la riguardano più. Esse provengono da una lingua straniera in un paese straniero. In cambio ha ottenuto la parola “Bracken”. Anche questa le sembra comunque estranea. Suona come un miscuglio tra Brachen (terre desolate) e Baracken (baracche). Oppure ricorda un'attività

Tätigkeit, die auf Baustellen ausgeübt wird, unter starker Lärmentwicklung, mit schwerem Gerät. Morgen wird gebrackt. Wir brauchen noch ein paar Leiharbeiter zum Bracken. Bevor die Fundamente gegossen werden können, müssen wir das hier noch einmal gründlich bracken.

En-tro-pie, En-tro-pie, skandieren die Gedanken. Weitermachen, setzt Dora bewusst dagegen. Sie kann das: weitermachen, auch wenn es sich unmöglich anfühlt. In der Werbeagentur gehört das Weitermachen zum Alltag. Neue Deadline, neuer Pitch. Zu wenig Leute, zu wenig Zeit.

Präsentation lief super, Präsentation lief scheiße. Etat gewonnen, Etat verloren. Wir müssen digitaler denken, wir müssen 360 Grad denken, von der Karussell Ad über den Funkspot bis zum Social Video, sagt Susanne, die Gründerin von Sus-Y, bei jedem Monday Breakfast, einem als Frühstück getarnten Zwei-Stunden-Meeting. Wir verdienen an kreativer Exzellenz und unserer einzigartigen Positionierung. Und daran, dass wir unsere Kunden wirklich verstehen. Dass wir ihnen helfen, ihre Probleme nachhaltig zu lösen. – Das Monday Breakfast vermisst Dora nicht. Was das Monday Breakfast betrifft, könnte Corona noch ewig dauern. Wenn man

rumorosa che viene svolta nei cantieri con pesanti macchinari. Domani si *braccherà*. Abbiamo bisogno di ancora un paio di lavoratori interinali per *braccare*. Prima di gettare le fondamenta, dobbiamo *braccarlo* ancora una volta per bene.

En-tro-pi-a, en-tro-pi-a, scandiscono i suoi pensieri. Su, vai avanti, replica Dora si opponendosi consapevolmente. Può farcela: bisogna andare avanti, anche quando sembra impossibile. Nell'agenzia pubblicitaria, l'andare avanti fa parte della quotidianità. Nuove scadenze, nuovi pitch. Troppo poco personale, troppo poco tempo.

Una presentazione è andata da Dio, un'altra da cani. Si fattura, si va in perdita. “Dobbiamo orientarci di più verso il digitale, dobbiamo pensare a tutto tondo, dalla pubblicità per giostre, gli spot radiofonici ai video sui social”, è solita ripetere Susanna, la fondatrice di Sus-Y, ogni santo Monday Breakfast, ovvero una riunione di lavoro di due ore sotto l'apparenza di una colazione. “Sono la nostra eccellenza creativa e il nostro peculiare posizionamento a portarci il guadagno. Ma anche il fatto che noi capiamo veramente i nostri clienti. Il fatto che li aiutiamo a risolvere i loro problemi in modo sostenibile”. Dora non sente affatto la mancanza del Monday Breakfast. Per quanto la riguarda, il Covid potrebbe durare per sempre. Se si continua ad andare avanti, anche quando sembra

<p>weitermacht, obwohl es sich unmöglich anfühlt, kommt manchmal das Würgen. Als hätte man etwas Verdorbenes auf dem Teller, dass es trotzdem zu schlucken gilt.</p>	<p>impossibile, si viene spesso pervasi da un senso di soffocamento. E' come ritrovarsi davanti a un piatto con del cibo avariato che bisogna mandare giù comunque.</p>
<p>Dagegen hilft nur Augen schließen, Nase zuhalten und durch. Den Spaten in die Erde stechen. Entropie. En, zustechen. Tro, nachtreten. Pie, die nächste Ladung heraushebeln. Sie hat eine schöne Stelle zwischen den Obstbäumen ausgesucht – Äpfel, Birnen und eine Kirsche, die gerade zaghaft zu blühen beginnt. Ein Stück entfernt vom Haus, aber nah genug, um das Beet vom Küchenfenster aus zu sehen. Die Fläche ist einigermaßen eben und nicht so dicht mit Jungbäumen bewachsen wie der vordere Teil des Flurstücks, der stellenweise vergittert wirkt von daumendicken Stämmchen.</p>	<p>L'unico rimedio consiste nel chiudere gli occhi, tapparsi il naso e stringere i denti. Piantare la vanga nel suolo. Entropia. En, infilzare. Tro, premere. Pia, estrarre la zolla successiva. Si è trovata un bel posto tra gli alberi da frutta: mele, pere e ciliegie che stanno appena iniziando timidamente a fiorire. A pochi passi dalla casa, ma abbastanza vicini da vedere l'aiuola dalla finestra della cucina. Il terreno è piuttosto pianeggiante e non così densamente ricoperto da alberi giovani, a differenza della parte anteriore dell'appezzamento, che in alcuni punti sembra essere ricoperta da fusti spessi un paio di centimetri.</p>
<p>Ahorn und Robinie. Mit Bäumen kennt Dora sich aus. Robert hat Biologie studiert und ihr bei jedem Spaziergang im Tiergarten ausführlich von den Bäumen erzählt. Wie sie wachsen, wie sie sich vermehren. Was sie denken und fühlen. Dora mochte diese Gespräche, und sie hat einiges gelernt. Die Robinie ist ein invasiver Neophyt, ein Baum-Migrant. Sie vermehrt sich schnell und verdrängt andere Arten. Von den Bienen wird die Robinie allerdings heiß geliebt.</p>	<p>Acero e robinia. Lei gli alberi li conosce bene Robert ha studiato biologia e a ogni passeggiata nel parco gliene parlava in dettaglio. Come crescono, come si moltiplicano. Cosa pensano e cosa provano. A Dora piacevano queste conversazioni e in questo modo ha anche imparato tanto. La robinia è un neofita, una specie di albero migrante. Si moltiplica velocemente, scacciando altre specie. Tuttavia, la robinia non è particolarmente amata dalle api.</p>

<p>Die unzähligen Bäumchen mit Gartenschere und Handsäge zu entfernen wird Wochen in Anspruch nehmen. Zwischen den Obstbäumen wächst kein Robiniendickicht, dafür aber Brombeeren, besser gesagt ein trockenes Rankengewirr vom Vorjahr, das den Boden bei Doras Ankunft fast vollständig bedeckte.</p> <p>Die alte Sense kann sie zwar führen, trotz YouTube-Tutorial aber nicht richtig schärfen, weshalb sie mit der stumpfen Klinge auf die Brombeeren eingedroschen hat, als wollte sie mit einer Machete den Dschungel durchqueren.</p>	<p>Rimuovere tutti quegli innumerevoli alberelli con delle cesoie e una sega a mano richiederà settimane di lavoro.</p> <p>Tra gli alberi da frutta non crescono cespugli di robinie, ma ci sono more o, meglio, un secco groviglio di rampicanti dell'anno precedente che ricopriva quasi completamente il suolo al momento dell'arrivo di Dora.</p> <p>La falce la sa usare, eppure, nonostante tutti quei tutorial su YouTube, non sa ancora affilarla per bene, ed è per questo motivo che si era avventata sui rovi di more con la lama smussata, quasi come se stesse cercando di attraversare la giungla con un machete.</p>
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<p>Am ersten Tag ist sie nach einer durchfröstelten Nacht noch in Winterkleidung rausgegangen: langes Baumwollhemd, dickes Sweatshirt, gefütterte Jacke. Eine Viertelstunde später fing sie an, sich wie eine Zwiebel zu häuten, und stand bald im Unterhemd neben einem Berg Klamotten. Seitdem geht sie nur noch im T-Shirt vor die Tür, egal, wie frostig der Morgen wirkt.</p> <p>Morgens ist die Luft wie frisch gewaschen; die Gänsehaut fühlt sich angenehm an. Während es im Haus kühl bleibt, klettert die Temperatur draußen im Lauf des Tages fast auf zwanzig Grad. Sehr zur Freude von Jochen, die seit dem Umzug ins neue Domizil darauf besteht, die Nächte unter Doras Bettdecke zu verbringen.</p>	<p>Il primo giorno, dopo aver trascorso una notte gelida uscì di casa ancora vestita da inverno: lunga camicia di lana, felpa pesante, giaccone imbottito. Dopo un quarto d'ora iniziò a togliersi uno strato dopo l'altro, quasi sbucciandosi come una cipolla, ritrovandosi così in maglietta con accanto a sé un cumulo di vestiti. Da quel momento esce di casa indossando soltanto una T-Shirt, non importa quanto freddo faccia. Al mattino l'aria è fresca come dei panni appena lavati; la sensazione da pelle d'oca è anche gradevole. Mentre dentro casa permane il freddo, fuori la temperatura arriva quasi a venti gradi durante la giornata, per la gioia di Leone il Trigone che, sin dal trasloco nella nuova casa, si ostina a passare le notti sotto il piumino di Dora.</p>
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Tagsüber zieht die Hündin auf der Suche nach den kräftigsten Sonnenstrahlen durch den Garten wie eine wandelnde kleine Solarzelle. Ostern ist geräuschlos vorübergegangen. Der Lockdown, heißt es, vergrößere viele Unterschiede; den zwischen Werktagen und Feiertagen ebnet er ein. Nach der Rodung hat Dora zwischen den Obstbäumen ein Rechteck von zehn mal fünfzehn Metern freigelegt und die Grenzen mit einer gespannten Schnur markiert. Die Kanten sind herrlich gerade geworden und die Winkel extrem rechts.

Die roten Schnüre ließen die neu eröffnete Baustelle professionell und den Rest der Aufgabe wie reine Formsache wirken. Was sich als Irrtum herausstellt. Seit Tagen stößt Dora den Spaten entlang der Schnüre in die Erde, um die Grasnarbe in großen Brocken zu entfernen. Wobei von Gras eigentlich keine Rede sein kann; »Unkrautnarbe« müsste es heißen. Die Wurzeln halten den Boden so fest zusammen, dass sich Dora mit beiden Füßen aufs Spatenblatt stellen und mehrmals auf und nieder springen muss, um es in die Erde zu treiben. Ein Knochenjob und erst der Anfang der Probleme, denn die eigentliche Herausforderung beginnt ein Stück tiefer.

Sie besteht in den Hinterlassenschaften eines Systems, in dem anscheinend niemand glaubte, für den Kampf gegen die Entropie zuständig zu sein. Wer auch immer zu DDR - Zeiten im alten Gutsverwalterhaus gelebt hat, fand es angemessen, Schutt, Schrott und Müll in den Garten zu werfen. Doras Spaten trifft auf zerbrochene Ziegelsteine, rostige Metallteile, alte Plastikeimer, kaputte Flaschen, einzelne Schuhe und rostige Kochtöpfe. Auch

Durante il giorno, come una piccola cella fotovoltaica vagante, la cagnolina si avvia alla ricerca degli angoli più assolati di tutto il giardino. La Pasqua trascorse quieta e silenziosa. Il lockdown, come spesso si dice, ha amplificato molte discrepanze, riuscendo però ad annullare quella esistente tra i giorni lavorativi e le festività. Dopo aver dissodato il terreno, Dora tracciò un rettangolo di dieci metri per quindici tra gli alberi da frutta, marcando il perimetro con un filo ben teso, i bordi perfettamente dritti e gli angoli.

Il nastro rosso dava un aspetto professionale a questa sorta di cantiere appena aperto, facendo sembrare il resto dell'opera una pura formalità. Cosa questa che si è rivelata essere un errore. Sono giorni che Dora continua a piantare la vanga nel terreno lungo queste strisce per rimuovere a grandi pezzi lo strato erboso. Anche se di erba non si può veramente parlare. Piuttosto di erbaccia. Le radici rendono il terreno così solido da costringere Dora a saltare sulla vanga con entrambi i piedi per conficcarla nel suolo. Una gran sfacchinata, ed è solo l'inizio. La vera sfida inizia difatti un po' più in profondità, e riguarda le vestigia di un sistema in cui evidentemente nessuno credeva che fosse anche compito suo opporsi all'entropia. Chiunque abbia vissuto nella tenuta ai tempi della Repubblica democratica tedesca riteneva opportuno gettare macerie, rottame e spazzatura nel giardino. La vanga di Dora si imbatte in mattoni frantumati, parti metalliche arrugginite, vecchi secchi di plastica, bottiglie rotte, scarpe spaiate e pentole arrugginite. Ci sono anche

Kinderspielzeug ist dabei: bunte Sandförmchen, Räder von kleinen Autos, einmal sogar ein Puppenkopf, der unheimlich aus der Erde heraufschaute.

Die Fundstücke sammelt Dora am Rand, sie säumen den Streifen umgegrabener Erde. Sie hebt den Spaten auf und stützt sich auf den Griff. Langsamkehrt die Kraft in Arme und Beine zurück. Schon nach zwei Wochen Landleben wirken ihre Hände rot und schwielig. Dora wendet sie hin und her und betrachtet sie wie Gegenstände, die nicht zu ihrem Körper gehören. Die Hände waren schon immer zu groß. Manchmal bekommt Dora Angst, sie könnten sich ohne ihr Zutun bewegen.

Als stünde ein größerer Mensch hinter ihr und hätte seine Arme durch ihre Ärmel gesteckt. Früher hat sie ihr Bruder Axel deswegen gehänselt. »Doraflossen!«, rief er, worüber sie stets in heftige Wut geriet. Bis zum Tod der Mutter. Danach ärgerten sie einander nicht mehr, sondern waren unentwegt nett zueinander. Als wäre alles, sogar Doras große Hände, zu zerbrechlichem Glas geworden. Robert hat immer behauptet, ihre Hände zu mögen, jedenfalls solange er überhaupt noch etwas an ihr gemocht hat.

giocattoli per bambini: formine per la sabbia colorate, volanti di automobili, persino l'inquietante testa di una bambola che sbucava dalla terra.

Dora riunisce i ritrovamenti lungo il bordo, accanto ai solchi di terra vangata. Solleva la vanga e si appoggia sul manico. Lentamente, le ritornano le forze nelle braccia e nelle gambe. Già dopo due settimane di vita di campagna, le sue mani iniziano a essere rosse e callose, e lei le gira e rigira, scrutandole come degli elementi estranei che non fanno parte di lei. Ha sempre avuto delle mani molto grandi. A volte le faceva paura il pensiero che si potessero muovere senza il suo intervento.

Come se dietro di lei ci fosse una persona più grande con le braccia infilate nelle sue maniche. Un tempo, suo fratello Axel la prendeva in giro per questo motivo. La chiamava "Doramanidamura", cosa che la faceva imbestialire di continuo. Fino alla morte della madre. Da allora, non si facevano più dispetti, ma si trattavano sempre con gentilezza. Come se tutto, persino le grandi mani di Dora, fosse diventato fragile come il cristallo. Robert ha sempre detto che le sue mani gli piacevano, o perlomeno fino a quando gli piaceva ancora qualcosa di lei.

Bevor sie sich erst in ein CO₂-Problem, dann in eine potenzielle Corona-Keimschleuder verwandelt hat.

Aus Erfahrung weiß Dora, dass sie sich nicht zu lange ausruhen

darf. Wenn die Pause zu lang dauert, beginnt sie zu rechnen, und auf Berechnungen folgt die Sinnfrage. Vor knapp zwei Wochen hat sie mit dem Roden begonnen; seit drei Tagen verausgabt sie sich beim Umgraben.

Der fertige Streifen ist etwa anderthalb Meter breit.

Folglich hat Dora nicht einmal ein Sechstel der Gesamtfläche geschafft. Wenn sie in diesem Tempo weitermacht, geht noch der halbe Mai vorbei, bis sie aussäen kann. Das Schlimme ist, dass das nicht schlimm ist. Gemüse kann man im Supermarkt kaufen. Wahrscheinlich ist es dort sogar günstiger als im eigenen Garten, wenn man die Kosten der Bewässerung einberechnet. Der Lockdown ist unheimlich, aber nicht bedrohlich genug, um den Anbau eigener Kartoffeln zwingend zu machen.

Es gibt keinen Grund für einen Gemüsegarten. Außer Landhausromantik und Freunde, die zu Besuch kommen sollen. Nur dass Dora mit Landhausromantik nichts anfangen kann und keine Freunde hat. In Berlin fiel das nicht auf. Die Arbeit ließ wenig Zeit, und Robert hatte genug Freunde für sie beide. Hier auf dem Land wird die Nicht-Existenz von Freunden zu einem dumpfen Grollen

Prima che si trasformasse in un problema ambientale e poi in una potenziale contaminatrice del covid.

Per esperienza, Dora sa che deve evitare di riposarsi troppo. Se la pausa è troppo lunga, allora inizia a rimuginare, degenerando in seguito nell'interrogarsi sul senso della vita. Ha iniziato a dissodare il giardino circa due settimane fa, e negli ultimi tre giorni ha dato fondo a tutte le sue energie vangando.

La striscia di terreno vangata è larga circa un metro e mezzo. Ne deriva che Dora non ha raggiunto nemmeno un sesto della superficie totale. Se continua di questo passo, si andrà oltre la metà di maggio prima di poter procedere con la semina. Il problema è che non si tratta di un problema. Le verdure si trovano anche al supermercato. Probabilmente costano di meno di quelle del proprio giardino se si mettono in conto i costi di irrigazione. Il lockdown fa paura, ma non costituisce una minaccia tale da rendere indispensabile una propria coltivazione di patate.

Non c'è nessun motivo per cui si debba avere un orticello. Tranne che per la carica di romanticismo che una casa di campagna possiede, per gli amici che verranno a trovarla. Ma il punto è che, uno, Dora non se ne fa niente di questo romanticismo e, due, non ha amici. Cosa, questa, che a Berlino non era poi così evidente. Il lavoro non le lasciava molto tempo libero e Robert aveva abbastanza amici per entrambi. Qui, in

am Horizont. Es war idiotisch, gleich ein so großes Terrain abzustecken.

Typischer Anfängerfehler. Fünfzehn Quadratmeter statt hundertfünfzig hätten für den Einstieg vollkommen gereicht. Aber Dora hat keine Lust, ihre sauber gespannten Fäden wieder abzubauen. Immerhin lebt sie seit Jahren von der Fähigkeit, angefangene Projekte zu Ende zu bringen, ganz egal, wie absurd es sich anfühlt. Der Umgang mit Kunden, die ihre Meinung täglich ändern, die immer wieder neue Varianten verlangen, sich gegenseitig widersprechen und aus Angst vor ihren Vorgesetzten keine Entscheidungen treffen, ist mit Sicherheit schwieriger als Gartenarbeit.

Weitermachen. Wenn sie den Garten nicht schafft, muss sie sich fragen, warum sie das Haus gekauft hat.

Die Antwort wäre einfach, wenn sie behaupten könnte, schon im letzten Herbst gehnt zu haben, dass Corona im Anmarsch war. Dann wäre das Haus auf dem Land ein Refugium, in dem sie sich verstecken kann, bis die Pandemie vorbei ist. Aber sie hat nichts gehnt.

Als Dora anfing, Immobilienanzeigen im Internet zu lesen, schienen Klimawandel und Rechtspopulismus die wichtigsten Probleme zu sein. Als sie im Dezember heimlich zum Notar in Berlin-Charlottenburg ging, war

campagna, la mancanza di amici si fa sentire come un cupo rimbombo all'orizzonte. Era quindi da idioti predisporre un terreno così esteso.

Un tipico errore da principianti: quindici metri quadrati al posto dei centocinquanta sarebbero stati più che sufficienti. Ma Dora non aveva voglia di smontare il suo nastro rosso teso alla perfezione. In fondo, sono anni che prospera grazie alla sua capacità di portare a termine i progetti iniziati, a prescindere da quanto possano sembrarle assurdi. Aver a che fare con clienti che cambiano idea ogni giorno, che esigono di continuo nuove varianti, che si contraddicono a vicenda e che per timore dei loro capi non prendono nessuna decisione è senz'altro più impegnativo che lavorare in giardino.

E allora avanti. Se non ce la fa con il giardino, dovrà interrogarsi sul perché abbia comprato quella casa.

La risposta sarebbe facile, se potesse sostenere che già lo scorso autunno aveva intuito che il coronavirus stesse avanzando. In quel caso, la casa in campagna le sarebbe servita da rifugio dove nascondersi fino alla fine della pandemia. Ma in realtà non aveva previsto niente.

Quando si mise a leggere gli annunci immobiliari su internet, il cambiamento climatico e il populismo di destra le sembravano le problematiche più salienti. E quando a dicembre si recò di nascosto dal notaio nel

Corona eine Schlagzeile, für die man weit nach unten scrollen musste, irgendetwas, das in Asien stattfand. Als sie das kleine Erbe ihrer Mutter sowie sämtliche Ersparnisse zusammenkratzte, um den Eigenkapitalanteil des Kaufpreises zu überweisen, wusste Dora immer noch nicht, ob sie überhaupt aufs Land ziehen wollte.

Sie wusste nur, dass sie das Haus brauchte. Dringend. Als Idee. Als mentale Überlebenstechnik. Als hypothetischen Notausgang aus dem eigenen Leben. In den vergangenen Jahren hat Dora immer wieder gehört, dass Menschen ein Haus auf dem Land erwerben. Meist als Zweitwohnsitz. Sie tun das in der Hoffnung, dem Kreislauf der Projekte zu entkommen. Alle Leute, die Dora kennt, sind mit diesem Kreislauf vertraut. Man beendet ein Projekt, um gleich darauf das nächste anzufangen.

Für eine Weile glaubt man, das aktuelle Projekt sei das Wichtigste auf der Welt, man tut alles dafür, um es rechtzeitig und so gut wie möglich zu beenden. Nur um dann zu erleben, wie alle Bedeutung im Moment der Fertigstellung kollabiert.

Gleichzeitig beginnt das nächste, noch wichtigere Projekt. Es gibt kein Ankommen. Streng genommen gibt es nicht mal ein Weiterkommen. Es gibt nur Kreisbahnen, auf

quartiere di Charlottenburg a Berlino, il Covid era uno dei titoli che si ritrovavano solo in fondo al giornale. Era una questione che riguardava l'Asia. Dopo aver messo insieme la piccola eredità di sua madre e tutti i suoi risparmi per versare la sua quota del prezzo d'acquisto, Dora continuava a non essere sicura del fatto di volersi realmente-trasferire in campagna.

Sapeva soltanto di avere bisogno di una casa. Urgentemente. Come idea. Come strategia di sopravvivenza mentale. Come ipotetica uscita di emergenza dalla propria vita. Negli ultimi anni, Dora ha sentito più volte di gente che si compra una casa in campagna. Perlopiù come una seconda residenza. Lo fanno con la speranza di sfuggire al ciclo vizioso dei progetti. Tutte le persone che Dora conosce hanno ben presente questo ciclo. Si porta a termine un progetto per iniziarne poi subito uno nuovo.

Per un po' si crede che il progetto a cui ci si sta dedicando sia la cosa più importante a questo mondo e si fa di tutto per portarlo a termine nei tempi prefissati e al meglio possibile. Per poi vedere crollare quell'importanza al momento del completamento.

Allo stesso tempo inizia il progetto successivo, quello che si ritiene ancora più importante. Ma non vi è nessun punto d'arrivo. In realtà non vi è neanche un procedere

denen sich alle bewegen, weil sie Angst vor dem Stillstand haben. Inzwischen hat fast jeder heimlich verstanden, dass das sinnlos ist. Auch wenn man ungern darüber spricht. Dora sieht es in den Augen ihrer Kollegen, im tief verunsicherten Blick.

Nur Neueinsteiger glauben noch, man könne »es« schaffen. Dabei ist »es« unschaffbar, weil »es« die Gesamtheit aller denkbaren Projekte darstellt und weil in Wahrheit nicht das Eintreffen, sondern das Ausbleiben des nächsten Projekts die größte anzunehmende Katastrophe wäre. Die Schaffbarkeit von »es« ist die Grundlüge der modernen Lebens- und Arbeitswelt.

Ein kollektiver Selbstbetrug, inzwischen lautlos zerplatzt. Seit diese Erkenntnis in die U-Bahn-Schächte der Metropolen eingesickert ist und an jedem Kaffeeautomaten, in jedem Fahrstuhl, auf jeder Etage der Bürotürme heimlich umgewälzt wird, bekommen die Menschen Burn-out. Gleichzeitig dreht sich das Rad immer schneller. Als könnte man der Unsinnigkeit des Rennens durch Schneller-Rennen entkommen.

Das kann man auch. Jedenfalls hat Dora es immer gekonnt. Sie hat sich nie gegen den Kreislauf der Projekte gewehrt, sondern ihn als zeitgemäßes Lebensmodell akzeptiert. Aber dann hat sich etwas verändert. Nicht in Dora, sondern außen herum. Dora kam nicht mehr mit, und die Idee vom

in avanti. Esistono soltanto orbite lungo le quali sono tutti in movimento, perché hanno paura di fermarsi. E intanto hanno capito quasi tutti in segreto che tutto questo non ha alcun senso. Anche se a nessuno piace parlarne. Dora lo vede negli occhi dei suoi colleghi, nei loro sguardi perplessi e disorientati.

Soltanto i nuovi arrivati credono ancora di “potercela fare”. Ma il “farcela” è irraggiungibile, perché quel “la” rappresenta l’insieme di tutti i progetti immaginabili e perché, in realtà, la più grande catastrofe da digerire non è la loro realizzazione, ma l’assenza di un progetto successivo. La promessa di “potercela fare” è la menzogna alla base della narrazione del quadro di vita e lavorativo moderno.

Si tratta di un autoinganno collettivo che è ormai andato in frantumi in silenzio. Da quando questa consapevolezza si è insinuata nei tunnel delle metropolitane nelle grandi città e da quando è penetrata di nascosto in ogni distributore automatico di caffè, in ogni ascensore e su ogni complesso di edifici, stanno tutti andando in esaurimento. Allo stesso tempo la corsa al successo si sta facendo sempre più frenetica. Come se, correndo ancor più velocemente, fosse possibile sottrarsi all’assurdità di questa corsa sfrenata. Questo è naturalmente possibile. Perlomeno è quello che Dora ha sempre fatto: non ha mai opposto resistenza al ciclo dei progetti, ma l’ha sempre accettato come stile di vita

Landhaus hat dem Nicht-mehr-Mitkommen ein Gehäuse gegeben.

Das war letzten Herbst, und jetzt steht sie hier, inmitten ihrer Brackener Brache, und bekommt es mit der Angst zu tun. Der Kreislauf der Projekte könnte außer Kontrolle geraten. Der Anblick des Flurstücks macht das klar. Das Flurstück ist ihr nächstes verdammtes Projekt, und vielleicht ist es dieses Mal eine Nummer zu groß. Verärgert beschließt sie, mit dem Weitermachen aufzuhören. Sie wird sich zwingen, eine halbe Stunde Nichtstun zu ertragen. Sie lässt den Spaten los und stapft durch die Brennesseln vom Vorjahr Richtung Haus, wo im Schatten der Linde eine kleine Sitzgruppe steht. Die wackligen Gartenmöbel hat Dora im Schuppen gefunden, genau wie die anderen Requisiten ihrer Landhauszukunft.

Wie sagte der Makler? »Idylle ist, wenn man sich's gemütlich macht.« Wahrscheinlich einer der Sprüche, die man dringend braucht, um in dieser Gegend kaputte Häuser zu verkaufen. Dora setzt sich auf einen der Stühle, streckt die Beine und fragt sich, ob sie inzwischen genauso bescheuert ist wie die Leute in Prenzlauer Berg, die zur Entschleunigung Yoga-Stunden und Meditation in ihre übervollen Zeitpläne packen.

contemporaneo. Però ad un certo punto qualcosa è cambiato. Non in Dora, ma intorno a lei. Dora non riusciva più a tenere il passo e l'idea della casa in campagna ha dato forma a questa sua incapacità.

Tutto questo avvenne lo scorso autunno, e ora è qui che si ritrova, in mezzo al suo terreno incolto di Bracken, sopraffatta dalla paura. Il ciclo dei progetti potrebbe andare fuori controllo e la visione della particella catastale lo rende chiaro: si tratta del suo prossimo progetto del cavolo e può darsi che stavolta abbia fatto il passo più lungo della sua gamba. Seccata, Dora decide allora di smettere di andare avanti. Costringerà sé stessa a subire una mezz'oretta di ozio. Molla la vanga e arranca attraverso i cespugli di ortiche dell'anno scorso verso la casa, dove all'ombra di un tiglio si trova un piccolo divano. Proprio come gli altri accessori per il suo futuro nella dimora di campagna, Dora ha trovato i traballanti mobili da giardino in un capanno.

Come è che ha detto l'agente immobiliare? "Dove c'è comfort, c'è anche idillio". Probabilmente una di quelle frasi a effetto che servono sul momento per poter vendere case malridotte in questa regione.

Dora si siede su una delle sedie, allunga le gambe e si chiede se anche lei è ormai diventata così scema quelle persone del quartiere di Prenzlauer Berg che, per staccare la spina, fanno corsi di Yoga e meditazione nonostante le loro agende strapiene.

<p>Sie weiß, dass der Projekte-Kreislauf eine Falle ist, der man nicht leicht entkommt. Er verwandelt auch die Ent- Projektierung des Daseins in ein neues Projekt. Andernfalls würde er nicht Millionen von Opfern fordern. Dora atmet tief in den Bauch und sagt sich, dass ihr Problem völlig andersgelagert ist. Sie hat kein Problem mit Projekten, sondern mit Robert.</p> <p>Etwas ist passiert, und sie kommt einfach nicht mit.</p>	<p>Lei sa che il ciclo dei progetti è una trappola alla quale non si sfugge facilmente e che trasforma in un nuovo progetto persino il desiderio di liberare la propria esistenza dai progetti. In caso contrario, non farebbe milioni di vittime. Dora tira un respiro profondo con il ventre e dice a sé stessa che il suo problema è di natura diversa. Lei non ha nessun problema con i progetti, ma con Robert.</p> <p>È successo qualcosa e lei non riesce proprio a capirlo.</p>
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<p>Kapitel 3 Gote</p> <p>Hinten hat das Gutsverwalterhaus keinen Stuck. Von hinten sieht es einfach nur aus wie ein alter Kasten. Die graue Wand; vor allem die obere Hälfte ist von runden Flechten bedeckt.</p> <p>Dora sitzt hinter dem Haus und überblickt das Flurstück. Eine Frau und ihr Land. Jede Menge Beinfreiheit. Wenn man das Nachdenken unterbricht, sind unzählige Vogelstimmen zu hören.</p> <p>Rotschwänzchen fliegen zur Schuppentür hinein und heraus und sind so vom Nestbau in Anspruch genommen, dass sie Dora auf ihrem Gartenstuhl gar nicht bemerken. Im hohen Wipfel einer Robinie hockt ein Star, singt laut</p>	<p>Capitolo 3 Gote</p> <p>Sulla facciata posteriore della casa manca lo stucco. Vista da dietro assomiglia proprio a un vecchio casermone. Il muro grigio ha l'aspetto butterato; in particolare la parte superiore è coperta da chiazze rotonde di muschio.</p> <p>Dora è seduta dietro la casa e abbraccia con lo sguardo sulla particella catastale. Una donna e la sua proprietà. Un sacco di libertà di movimento. Se si interrompe il proprio flusso di pensieri, si possono udire cinguettii provenienti da infinite direzioni.</p> <p>Codirossi volano dentro e fuori la porta del capanno e sono talmente indaffarati con la costruzione del loro nido che non si accorgono nemmeno di Dora, seduta sulla sua sedia da giardino. Sulla cima di una robinia, uno storno rannicchiato emette un canto forte e molto più soave di</p>
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und viel schöner, als sein proletarisches Federkleid vermuten ließe.

Kein Mensch ist zu sehen, nur gelegentlich ein Auto zu hören. Kein Fernseher, der CNN -Nachrichten in die Gegend plärrt. Kein Smartphone, auf dem sich Podcaster und YouTuber gegenseitig erzählen, wie sie ihre Tage im Home-Office verbringen. Doras Handy liegt im Haus; im Garten gibt es sowieso kaum Empfang. In Bracken scheint Corona gar nicht stattzufinden. Die Luft schmeckt sauber, jeder Tag hat ein anderes Aroma.

Dora erlaubt sich den Gedanken, dass alles in Ordnung sein könnte. Gut gelaufen. Glück gehabt. Wenn sie ohnehin nicht in die Agentur darf, kann sie ebenso gut in Bracken arbeiten wie in Berlin. Zumal sie wenig zu tun hat.

Unter normalen Umständen absolviert sie zehnstündige Arbeitstage in der Agentur, führt noch auf dem Heimweg Telefonate und beantwortet ihre letzten E-Mails vor dem Schlafengehen. Wenn ein Berater die neuen Headline-Varianten an den Kunden geschickt hat, steht der nächste schon mit dem Briefing für einen Mutttertag-Spot auf der Matte, während im Hintergrund eifrige Junior-Beraterinnen mit weiteren Aufgaben lauern. Aber jetzt hat Corona alles verändert, sogar die Werbung. Kunden

quello che si potrebbe pensare a giudicare dal suo piumaggio proletario.

Non c'è anima viva in giro, solo ogni tanto si sente passare qualche auto. Nessun televisore che diffonda le ultime notizie della CNN. E nessun cellulare su cui i podcaster e gli youtuber si raccontano a vicenda come passano le loro giornate in smart working. Il telefonino di Dora è dentro casa, tanto in giardino non c'è campo. Sembra che a Bracken non ci sia il COVID. L'aria sa di pulito, ogni giorno ha un profumo diverso.

Dora permette a sé stessa di pensare che tutto potrebbe essere a posto. Che tutto stia andato bene. Che abbia avuto fortuna. Se già non può andare in ufficio, può lavorare bene da casa a Bracken come a Berlino. Soprattutto perché ha poco da fare.

In circostanze normali lavora dieci ore al giorno in agenzia, fa ancora telefonate tornando a casa e risponde alle ultime mail prima di coricarsi. Non appena un consulente ha mandato ai clienti le nuove varianti dei titoli di prima pagina, un altro è già pronto con il briefing sullo slogan pubblicitario per la Festa della Mamma, mentre zelanti consulenti giovani attendono in agguato con nuovi incarichi. Ma ora il COVID ha cambiato tutto, persino il mondo della pubblicità. I clienti congelano i loro fondi e i

frieren Etats ein. Lang geplante Kampagnen-Flights werden gestrichen.

Sus-Y hat Kurzarbeit angemeldet. Deshalb hat Dora nur noch zwei Jobs auf dem Tisch und kommt sich beinahe vor wie eine Arbeitslose. Eine dünne Broschüre für den Bio-Bier-Hersteller, die sie nebenher schreiben kann. Und eine Launch-Kampagne für einen nachhaltigen Textilhersteller mit Namen » FAIR kleidung«. Alles kein Grund zur Panik. Dora bekommt noch einen großen Teil ihres Gehalts. Das WLAN läuft, und zwar auf Glasfaser – in Bracken vielleicht das einzige Stück funktionierender Infrastruktur.

Möglicherweise schafft sie es, sich zeitnah einen Schreibtisch zu organisieren. Wenn nicht, kann sie mit dem Notebook in der Küche sitzen oder auf ihrer Matratze mit dem Rücken zur Wand oder hier draußen im Gartenstuhl. Kein Problem. Irgendwann wird es auch Jochen gefallen. Irgendwann wird das Flurstück erträglicher aussehen. Sie wird sich im Haus noch ein wenig einrichten, viel braucht sie ja nicht. Außer Kaminöfen gibt es keine Heizung, aber der Winter ist noch weit weg, und wer weiß, ob Dora dann überhaupt noch hier sein wird.

Vielleicht ist bis dahin alles wieder normal.

voli da tempo programmati e legati alle campagne pubblicitarie vengono tutti annullati.

Sus-Y ha ridotto il numero di ore lavorative. Per questo motivo Dora ha solo altri due lavoretti da fare e si sente quasi come una disoccupata. Ha un sottile opuscolo per il birrificio biologico che può anche scrivere tra un lavoro e l'altro. E ha anche un lancio pubblicitario per un produttore di indumenti sostenibili di nome "Abbigliamento EQUO". Nessun motivo per andare in panico. Dora prende ancora una grande fetta del suo stipendio. Il WIFI funziona e pure su fibra ottica, ed è forse l'unica parte funzionante dell'infrastruttura di Bracken.

Probabilmente ce la farà a procurarsi una scrivania a breve. Altrimenti può anche starsene seduta con il portatile in cucina, oppure sul suo materasso appoggiandosi di schiena al muro, ma anche qui fuori sulla sedia da giardino. Nessun problema. Prima o poi anche a Leone il Trigone inizierà a piacere. Prima o poi la particella catastale avrà un aspetto decoroso. Ha ancora bisogno di un po' di tempo per sistemarsi in casa. Oltre alla stufa a legna non ci sono termosifoni, ma l'inverno è ancora lontano e chissà se Dora sarà ancora qui.

Forse tornerà tutto alla normalità fino ad allora.

Corona verschwunden und Robert zurückverwandelt, so dass man wieder mit ihm reden und lachen und nachdenken kann. Die Flucht nach Bracken könnte im Rückblick wie eine Großstadtpause aussehen, ein Dorf-Sabbatical, ermöglicht durch die Verwerfungen einer Pandemie. Dora könnte wieder in die Agentur gehen, hart an ihrer Karriere arbeiten, in den nächsten Jahren ein paar internationale Awards erkämpfen, sich endlich zur Kreativdirektorin befördern lassen und in den Nachtschichten auf Agenturkosten nachhaltiges Sushi oder vegane Pizza mit den Kollegen bestellen.

Sie würde in Berlin-Kreuzberg leben und die Wochenenden gemeinsam mit Robert in Bracken verbringen, wo sie gemeinsam am Haus basteln und das Landleben genießen könnten, wie es den Landlust-Träumen vieler Großstädter entspricht. Glückliche Menschen in einer normalen Welt. Erst zehn Minuten um. Eine halbe Stunde Nichtstun hat sich Dora verordnet. Noch zwanzig, bis sie weitergraben darf.

»Ist das dein Hund?« Erschrocken schaut sie sich um. Die Stimme ist männlich, tief und kräftig, und sie kommt aus dem Nichts. Auch als Dora aufsteht, kann sie niemanden entdecken. Jochen-der-Rochen ist ebenfalls nicht zu sehen. Eben lag die Hündin noch zwischen den Ahornsprösslingen auf einem Sonnenfleck. Oder nicht? Wann hat Dora sie zuletzt bewusst wahrgenommen? Als Jochen die Amseln verbellt hat.

Senza il Covid e con Robert, come un tempo, per poter tornare a parlare, ridere e riflette insieme. La fuga a Bracken potrebbe, col senno di poi, sembrare una pausa dalla grande città, un anno sabbatico in campagna reso possibile dagli sconquassi causati dalla pandemia. Dora potrebbe ritornare in ufficio, lavorare sodo pensando alla sua carriera, aggiudicarsi nei prossimi anni qualche premio internazionale per poi infine farsi promuovere come direttrice creativa e ordinare del sushi sostenibile durante i turni di notte, oppure una pizza vegana insieme ai colleghi. E tutto ciò a carico dell'agenzia.

Vivrebbe a Berlino-Kreuzberg e passerebbe i weekend a Bracken con Robert, dove insieme potrebbero fare dei lavori in casa e godersi la vita di campagna, proprio come nelle fantasie romantiche di coloro che abitano nelle grandi città. Persone felici in un mondo normale. Sono passati solo dieci minuti. Dora aveva programmato una mezz'ora di relax. Le rimangono ancora venti minuti prima di continuare a scavare.

“E’ il tuo cane?” Spaventata, Dora si guarda attorno. La voce è quella di un uomo, profonda e forte, e non si sa da dove proviene. Anche dopo essersi alzata in piedi, Dora non riesce a scorgere nessuno. Non riesce a vedere neanche Leone il Trigone. Poco fa la cagnolina si trovava se ne stava ancora al sole tra i germogli dell'acero. Oppure no? Quando è stata l'ultima volta che l'ha vista? Quando abbaiò contro i merli. Ma poi?

Und danach? »Hey! Ob das dein Scheißköter ist!«
Endlich kann sie den Mann orten. Er steht hinter der hohen Mauer aus Hohlbausteinen, die die Flurstücke trennt. Ein runder, kahl geschorener Kopf guckt über den Mauerrand. Wie eine Kugel scheint er auf der Kante zu balancieren. Der Mann muss mindestens 2,50 Meter groß sein. In Doras Augen ist Nachbarschaft eine Form von Zwangsehe. Man kann glücklich miteinander werden, aber die Wahrscheinlichkeit ist nicht sehr hoch. In den letzten zwei Wochen hat sie nebenan niemanden bemerkt. Sie ist davon ausgegangen, dass das Nachbargrundstück unbewohnt sei. Vom Wohnhaus sieht man nur die obere Hälfte.

Es liegt viel dichter an der Straße als das Gutsverwalterhaus und wird auch nach vorne von einer hohen Mauer abgeschirmt, mit einem breiten, stets verschlossenen Holztor. Ein Fenster im ersten Stock ist mit Sperrholzplatten abgedeckt, was aussieht, als wäre das Haus auf einem Auge blind. Einmal ist Dora auf einen Stuhl gestiegen, um über die Mauer zu sehen. Wider Erwarten ist das Grundstück nebenan nicht verwildert, sondern relativ gepflegt. Kein Flurstück, sondern ein Garten. Das Gras gemäht. Kein herumliegender Schrott. Ein aufgebockter Bauwagen, hübsch gestrichen in Dunkelgrün und Weiß, der Eingang mit Geranientöpfen geschmückt. Ein alter Pick-up in Weiß, ordentlich geparkt neben dem Haus.

«Ehi! Ti ho chiesto se è tua questa bestiaccia
Finalmente riesce a localizzare l'uomo che se ne sta in piedi dietro un alto muro di blocchi forati che divide le particelle catastali. Una testa rotonda rasata a zero si affaccia dal bordo del muro. Come un pallone, sembra stare in equilibrio sul bordo. L'uomo deve essere alto almeno due metri e mezzo. Secondo Dora, essere vicini di casa è una forma di matrimonio forzato. Si può avere una convivenza felice, ma la probabilità non è molto alta. Nelle ultime due settimane, Dora non aveva notato nessun altro nel vicinato. Pensava che la proprietà confinante fosse disabitata. Soltanto la parte superiore della casa è visibile.

Questa si trova più vicino alla strada rispetto alla tenuta di Dora ed è protetta sul lato anteriore da un alto muro dotato di un ampio cancello di legno sempre chiuso a chiave. Una finestra al primo piano è coperta da pannelli di compensato, cosa che fa sembrare la casa cieca da un occhio. Una volta, Dora si arrampicò su una sedia per guardare dall'altra parte del muro. Contro ogni aspettativa, la proprietà di fianco alla sua non era incolta, ma relativamente ben mantenuta. Non si tratta neanche di una particella catastale, bensì di un giardino. L'erba rasata. Niente spazzatura in giro. Un prefabbricato da cantiere trasportabile rialzato, dipinto di un bel verde scuro e bianco e decorato con vasi di geranio davanti all'ingresso. Un furgone bianco parcheggiato con cura accanto alla casa.

Dora hat vermutet, dass ein Berliner den Bauwagen gelegentlich als Ferienhäuschen nutzt. Den Garten pflegt und mit dem Pick-up herumfährt. Zurzeit kann er nicht kommen, weil die Brandenburger wegen Corona versuchen, die Berliner auszusperrten. Vielleicht ein Kreativer aus Friedrichshain. Vielleicht jemand, mit dem sie sich gut verstehen könnte. Wobei Gut-Verstehen in Bezug auf Nachbarn nur die zweitbeste Alternative darstellt. Gar-nicht-da-Sein ist noch besser. Das aktuelle Exemplar an der Mauer wirkt nicht wie ein Kreativer aus Friedrichshain. Zögernd geht Dora auf den Mann zu.

Als sie die Mauer erreicht, muss sie den Kopf in den Nacken legen. Hoffentlich steht der Mann auf einer Kiste. »Bist du schwerhörig?« Er kratzt sich den geschorenen Schädel. »Ich hab dich was gefragt.« Bevor Dora erwidern kann, dass sie die Frage verstanden habe, ihre Antwort aber davon abhängt, welchen Hund er genau meine, kommt Jochen-der-Rochen durch die Luft geflogen. Die kleine Hündin hat alle viere ausgestreckt, als könnten die aufgespannten Häute an den Hinterbeinen beim Segelflug helfen. Fast gelingt es Dora, ihr Haustier aufzufangen, aber dann rutscht ihr der kompakte Körper durch die Hände und schlägt auf den Boden, wo Jochen einen halben Purzelbaum vollführt wie eine Comicfigur.

Dora sospettava che qualche berlinese vi passasse ogni tanto le ferie lì. Che si prendesse cura del giardino e che andasse in giro con il furgone. Al momento, però, non poteva più venire, perché gli abitanti del Brandeburgo stava cercando di tenere lontani quelli di Berlino a causa del Covid. Forse è un creativo che viene dal quartiere di Friedrichshain. Forse è uno con cui potrebbe andare d'accordo. Anche se andare d'accordo è la seconda migliore alternativa per quando riguarda i vicini di casa. Non averne sarebbe stato ancora meglio.

Il tipo che se ne sta ora dietro il muro non ha però l'aspetto di un creativo di Frierichshain. Con esitazione, Dora si avvicina all'uomo.

Arrivata al muro, è costretta a piegare la testa all'indietro e guardare in alto. Si spera che l'uomo stia in piedi su una scatola.

«Ma sei sorda?» dice grattandosi la testa rasata.

«Ti ho fatto una domanda.» Prima che Dora possa rispondere che ha capito la domanda, ma che la sua risposta dipende dal cane al quale lui si riferisce, Leone il Trigone le passa davanti volando a mezz'aria. La cagnolina aveva tutte e quattro le zampe distese, come se la loro pelle tesa nella parte posteriore potesse aiutarle a planare. Per poco Dora riesce a prenderla al volo, ma poi se la fa scivolare completamente dalle mani, facendola sbattere a terra dove Leone fa una mezza capriola come il personaggio di un cartone animato.

Sogleich beginnt die Hündin, euphorisch an Dora hochzuspringen, als hätten sie einander jahrelang nicht gesehen. »Sind Sie verrückt geworden?«, schreit Dora und tastet Jochens Beine ab, obwohl bereits feststeht, dass der Kleinen nichts passiert ist. Wenn Jochen etwas weh tut, leidet sie mit der Ausdruckskraft einer Diva.

»Dein Köter buddelt in meinen Kartoffeln.« Tatsächlich trägt Jochen dunkle, erdige Strümpfe, ein Anblick, der Dora rührt. Jochen hat noch nie in ihrem Leben gebuddelt. Dort, wo sie bislang gelebt hat, gab es keine Buddelplätze, sondern nur Baumscheiben und Bürgersteige und eingezäunte Spielplätze. Kieswege und Blumenbeete. Leinenzwang und Plastiktüten, in denen am Wegesrand abgesetzte Häufchen einzusammeln sind.

Vielleicht schläft tief in Jochens Herzen sogar eine Art Beutetrieb. Auch wenn gewiss keiner ihrer Vorfahren ein langbeiniger, stromlinienförmiger Jagdhund war.

»Das mit den Kartoffeln tut mir leid.« Dora richtet sich auf und stemmt die Hände in die Seiten. »Aber Jochen hätte sich was brechen können!«

»Du hast nicht richtig gefangen«, sagt der Nachbar.

Jochen scheint die Aufregung zu gefallen. Begeistert hechelnd sitzt sie vor Dora, klopft den dünnen Schwanz auf den Boden und schaut sie aufmunternd an. Nur zu! Kämpfe für mich! Eine Weile schauen sie gemeinsam auf

Immediatamente la cagnolina inizia a saltarle addosso con euforia, come se non si fossero viste per anni.

“Ma è impazzito?” grida Dora controllando le zampe di Leone nonostante fosse già chiaro che la piccola stesse bene. Quando ha un dolore, Leone esprime la sofferenza con l’espressività di una diva. “Il tuo cagnaccio stava scavando tra le mie patate.” In effetti Leone aveva le patte sporche di terra come se indossasse dei calzini neri, una scena che fa quasi commuovere Dora. Leone non aveva mai scavato la terra in vita sua. Là dove hanno vissuto finora non si trovano sabbie in giro, ma solo aiuole con alberi, marciapiedi, parchi giochi recintati e prati fioriti. Cartelli che ricordano l’obbligo di usare il guinzaglio e sacchetti di plastica accanto al marciapiede per raccogliere i bisogni del cane.

Forse nel profondo del cuore di Leone giace dormiente una sorta di istinto predatorio. Anche se sicuramente nessuno dei suoi antenati era un segugio snello dalle zampe lunghe.

“Per le patate mi dispiace.” Dora si rialza e mette le mani sui fianchi. “Però Leone avrebbe potuto rompersi qualcosa!”

“Sei tu che non l’hai preso bene”, dice il vicino.

Sembra che a Leone piaccia l’eccitazione, dato che ansima con entusiasmo seduta davanti a Dora e con la sottile coda per terra le lancia uno sguardo di incoraggiamento. Forza, combatti per me! Per un po’ si fermano entrambi a guardare Leone in basso, Dora da un lato, il vicino dall’altro.

Jochen hinunter, Dora auf der einen Seite der Mauer, der Nachbar auf der anderen.

»Ziemlich hässlicher Köter, oder?«, fragt er schließlich. Das lässt sich nicht von der Hand weisen. Rassemäßig müssen ein Mops, eine französische Bulldogge und vielleicht noch ein Chihuahua zu Jochens Erscheinungsbild beigetragen haben. Ihr Fell ist von gelblichem Weiß und weder lang noch kurz. Der Körper gedrungen, die Beine krumm. Das Gesicht geprägt von Glubschaugen, Klappohren und einem so stark hervortretenden Unterkiefer, dass man sich fragt, ob sie eigentlich in der Lage wäre, jemanden zu beißen, falls sie eines Tages, was ziemlich unwahrscheinlich ist, einen solchen Entschluss fassen sollte.

Erstaunlicherweise geraten die meisten Leute, die Jochen kennen lernen, trotz aller Makel in helles Entzücken. Sie finden Jochen nicht hässlich, sondern drollig. Dora findet, dass Jochen aussieht wie etwas, das sich die japanische Spielzeugindustrie ausgedacht hat. Etwas, das auf Knopfdruck blinkt, zappelt und Musik spielt. Aber das macht nichts.

Dora liebt Jochen für ihren lakonischen Missmut, der von plötzlichen Euphorieschüben unterbrochen wird. Sie muss ihren Hund nicht hübsch finden. »Total hässlich ist der«, wiederholt der Nachbar, als wäre die Aussage beim ersten Mal nicht klar gewesen. »Sie ist eine Hündin«, sagt

“Una gran brutta bestiaccia”, proferisce infine il vicino. Un simile commento non lo si può ignorare. In termini di razza, l’incrocio tra un carlino, un bulldog francese e forse un chihuahua devono aver portato all’aspetto e alla fisionomia di Leone. Il suo pelo né lungo né corto è di colore bianco giallastro. Conformazione tozza e gambe storte. Il viso caratterizzato da occhi strabici, orecchie pieghevoli e una mandibola così sporgente da far sorgere il dubbio che sia effettivamente in grado di mordere qualcuno, semmai un giorno dovesse prendere una tale decisione. Cosa che sembra piuttosto improbabile.

Sorprendentemente, tutti quelli che conoscono Leone rimangono incantati, malgrado tutti i suoi difetti. Lo trovano buffo, non brutto. Dora vede Leone come un’invenzione dell’industria dei giocattoli giapponese. Come un qualcosa che, dopo aver premuto un pulsante, batte entrambe le ciglia, si agita e riproduce musica. Ma questo non importa.

Dora gli vuole bene per il suo laconico malumore che viene interrotto all’improvviso da scatti di euforia. Per lei non è fondamentale che il suo cane sia per forza carino. “E’ di un brutto pauroso,” ripete il vicino, come se la prima volta il suo commento non fosse stato chiaro.

Dora würdevoll. »Ich denk, der heißt Jochen.« Dora zuckt die Achseln. »Ich fand das mal lustig, schätze ich.« »Euch Städtern muss echt langweilig sein.« Spontan will Dora zurückfragen, wieso er glaubt, dass sie aus der Stadt kommt.

Sie hat zwar zuletzt in Berlin und davor in Hamburg gelebt, ist aber in einem Vorort von Münster aufgewachsen, der den Titel »Stadt« nur bedingt verdient. Aber aus Brackener Perspektive zählt vermutlich jede nennenswerte Ansammlung von Häusern zur Kategorie »Stadt«, und dass Dora keine Hiesige ist, liegt wohl auf der Hand. »Sehr langweilig. Besonders in Zeiten wie diesen«, sagt Dora im Bemühen, das Stadt-Land-Thema mit einem kleinen Scherz zu krönen. Aber der Nachbar scheint den Witz nicht zu verstehen. Vielleicht weiß er nichts von Corona oder nichts von Berlin oder ihm ist beides völlig egal.

Schweigend betrachten sie sich gegenseitig, er sie von oben bis unten, sie ihn vom Hals aufwärts, weil der Rest seines Körpers von der Mauer verdeckt wird.

Sein Schädel ist sauber rasiert und glänzt wie eine Bowlingkugel, dafür ist die untere Hälfte des Gesichts mit Bartstoppeln bedeckt. Tränensäcke, verwaschener Blick. Das Kompliment mit dem hässlichen Köter hätte Dora ohne Weiteres zurückgeben können. Das Alter des Mannes ist schwer zu schätzen. Vielleicht Mitte vierzig

“E’ una femmina”, replica Dora con dignità.

“Mi pare si chiami Leone.” Dora fa spallucce. “Per me è divertente chiamarla così” “Voi gente di città vi annoiate proprio.” A Dora verrebbe spontaneo chiedergli perché crede che venga dalla città.

L’ultima volta ha vissuto a Berlino e prima ancora ad Amburgo, però è cresciuta nella periferia di Münster che si merita soltanto in parte il nome di “città”. Ma dal punto di vista di un abitante di Bracken, ogni agglomerato di case degno di nota rientra presumibilmente nella categoria “città” e il fatto che Dora non sia del posto è piuttosto evidente. “Sì, ci annoiamo tanto. Soprattutto in tempi come questi”, ribatte Dora nel tentativo di coronare il tema città-campagna con una piccola battuta.

Ma sembra che il vicino non abbia colto l’ironia. Forse non sa niente del Covid o di Berlino, oppure non gliene frega niente di entrambi.

Si squadrano a vicenda in silenzio, lui la guarda da capo a piedi, lei invece dal collo in su, dato che il resto del suo corpo è nascosto dal muro.

La sua testa è ben rasata e luccica come una palla da bowling, ma la metà inferiore del viso è coperta dalla barba di due giorni. Occhiaie e uno sguardo spossato. Dora avrebbe potuto ricambiare facilmente il complimento per il suo brutto cagnaccio. L’età dell’uomo è difficile da

und damit rund zehn Jahre älter als sie. »Gote«, sagt der Nachbar. Irritiert schaut Dora zur Straße, ob sich irgendetwas nähert, dass diese Bezeichnung verdient.

»Gote«, wiederholt der Nachbar nachdrücklich, als wäre Dora schwerhörig oder jedenfalls schwer von Begriff. Anscheinend soll das ein Name sein, auch wenn nicht klar ist, ob es sich um Vor- oder Nachnamen handelt.

»Westgote oder Ostgote?«, fragt Dora. Jetzt ist es wieder am Nachbarn, irritiert zu schauen. Ein Zeigefinger erscheint über der Mauer und deutet auf seine rechte Schläfe.

»Gote«, sagt er noch einmal. »Wie Gottfried.« Ein bisschen fühlt sich das an wie die Kommunikation zwischen Robinson und Freitag, nur ohne zu wissen, wer Robinson und wer Freitag ist. Auch Dora hebt einen Zeigefinger und deutet auf sich selbst.

»Dora«, sagt sie. »Wie Dorf-Randlage.« Das ist ihr spontan eingefallen. Manchmal bringt ihr Werber-Gehirn solche Kurzschlüsse hervor. Der Nachbar ignoriert den Spruch. Er ist in einem komplizierten Bewegungsablauf verstrickt. Er reckt sich, neigt sich zur Seite, verliert fast das Gleichgewicht und fängt sich wieder, bis seine rechte Schulter, dann der ganze Arm

stimulare. Forse sulla quarantina e perciò circa dieci anni più di lei.

“Gote”, dice il vicino. Scocciaata, Dora guarda verso la strada per vedere se un qualcosa che ha meritato questo nome si stia per caso avvicinando. “Gote”, ripete il vicino con fermezza, come se Dora fosse dura d’orecchio o perlomeno dura di comprendonio. A quanto pare, deve essere un nome proprio, anche se non risulta chiaro se si tratti di un nome o di un cognome.

“Visigote o Ostrogote?”, chiede Dora.

Ora è il turno del vicino di assumere un’aria scocciaata. Un indice appare sopra il muro indicando la sua tempia destra.

“Gote”, ripete un’altra volta. “Come Gottfried”. Sembra un po’ come i dialoghi tra Robinson e Venerdì, solo che non si sa chi sia Robinson e chi Venerdì.

“Dora”, dice lei. “Come Dora l’esploratrice.”

Il riferimento le è venuto in mente sul momento. A volte il suo cervello da copywriter genera questo tipo di battute. Il vicino ignora il riferimento al cartone animato. È rimasto impigliato in una complessa sequenza di movimenti. Si erge dritto, si inclina verso il lato, perde quasi l’equilibrio e lo ritrova fino a che la spalla destra e poi tutto il braccio

über der Mauer erscheinen. Vorsichtig streckt er die Hand zu Dora herüber, bemüht, die obere Reihe Hohlbausteine nicht runterzuwerfen. Anscheinend nimmt man es mit dem Händeschüttelverbot in Brandenburg nicht so genau. Wahrscheinlich wäre es leichter, einem Schwaben die Kehrwoche zu verbieten.

Dora beschließt, keine Spielverderberin zu sein, kommt dicht an die Mauer heran, streckt den eigenen Arm nach oben und drückt schnell Gotes Hand, damit er das Manöver beenden kann. Der Gedanke, was Robert bei diesem Anblick sagen würde, lässt sie beinahe auflachen.

»Angenehm«, sagt Gote. »Ich bin hier der Dorf-Nazi.« In der Agentur entwickeln sie ständig solche Szenen. Junge Frau, die aufs Land gezogen ist. Leicht verunsichert von der neuen Umgebung, aber fest gewillt, alles toll zu finden. Trifft ihren neuen Nachbarn.

»Angenehm, ich bin hier der Dorf-Nazi« – und freeze. Die Szene friert ein. Langsamer Zoom auf das völlig entgeisterte Gesicht der Hauptdarstellerin, die vor Entsetzen zur Wachsfigur erstarrt ist. Quer darüber der von Dora entwickelte Claim: »Neue Challenge – neuer Chill«. Für Tee. Oder ein Hustenbonbon.

Leider befindet sich Dora nicht in einem ihrer eigenen Spots.

non compaiano sopra il muro. Prudente, allunga la mano a Dora, sforzandosi di non buttare giù la prima fila di mattoni forati. A quanto pare, il divieto di stringere le mani non viene preso sul serio a Brandeburgo. Probabilmente sarebbe più facile vietare l'Oktoberfest a un bavarese.

Dora giunge alla conclusione che sia meglio non fare la guastafeste, si avvicina al muro, tende il proprio braccio verso l'alto e afferra velocemente la mano di Gote per porre fine la sua manovra. Il pensiero di cosa Robert direbbe vedendo quella scena la fa quasi scoppiare a ridere.

“Piacere”, dice Gote. “Sono il Nazista del paese”. Nell'agenzia si inventano costantemente scenari del genere: una giovane donna che si trasferisce in campagna. Un po' spaesata nel nuovo ambiente, ma fermamente decisa a farsi piacere tutto. Conosce il nuovo vicino di casa. “Piacere, sono il Nazista del paese” – e stop. La scena si blocca. La schermata inizia gradualmente a zoomare sull'espressione completamente sbalordita della protagonista che dallo spavento si blocca come pietrificata. Sull'immagine appare lo slogan di Dora: “Nuova sfida – nuovo relax”. Per una marca di tè. Oppure per una caramella contro la tosse.

Purtroppo, Dora non si trova in uno dei suoi spot pubblicitari.

Sie hat auch keine Teetasse dabei. Nicht einmal eine Zigarette. Dabei wäre es ein wirklich guter Moment, um sich eine anzuzünden. »Du musst den Zaun reparieren.« Gote zeigt zum hinteren Bereich des Flurstücks, wo die Mauer endet und von einem schiefen Maschendrahtzaun abgelöst wird. Mehrere Pfosten sind halb weggesackt. Wegsacken in Bracken, schlägt das Claim-Tool in Doras Gehirn vor.

»Wenn dein Köter noch einmal meine Saatkartoffeln ausgräbt, trete ich ihn platt«, sagt ihr neuer Nachbar.

Eigentlich hält sich Dora für schlagfertig, berufsbedingt. Aber jetzt schaut sie Gote an wie eine Idiotin und sagt nichts. Sie muss an die Worte ihres Vaters denken, als sie ihm am Telefon von ihrem spontanen Umzug aufs Land erzählte: »In die Prignitz? Was willst du denn bei den ganzen Rechtsradikalen?« Dafür zu sorgen, dass Jojo nicht recht behält, gehört zu Doras wichtigsten Antrieben. Sie hat Kommunikationswissenschaft studiert, weil er nur Medizin und Jura für echte Ausbildungen hielt. Sie hat ihr Studium abgebrochen, weil er es wichtig fand, zu Ende zu studieren. Sie ist gern in der Werbung, während Jojo die ganze Branche als überflüssig bezeichnet. Gott sei Dank hat er Robert gemocht, sonst hätte Dora bis in alle Ewigkeit mit ihm zusammenbleiben müssen.

Als Nächstes muss sie beweisen, dass Bracken eine hervorragende Idee darstellt. Ein ideales Exil, am besten zu hundert Prozent nazifrei. Momentan sieht es aus, als könnte das schwierig werden. Langsam wird es Zeit, etwas zu sagen. Wenn sie schon in Zwangsehe mit einem

Non ha neanche la sua tazza da tè. Nemmeno una sigaretta. Infatti sarebbe veramente un buon momento per accenderne una. “Devi aggiustare la recinzione.” Gote indica la parte posteriore della particella catastale, dove finisce il muro che viene sostituito da una rete metallica storta. Alcuni pali sono mezzi a terra. “Ritrovarsi a terra a Bracken” propone la mente da pubblicità di Dora.

“Se becco ancora una volta il tuo cagnaccio scavare tra le mie patate, lo prendo a calci”, dice il suo nuovo vicino di casa. A dire il vero, Dora ha sempre una risposta pronta al lavoro. Ma ora guarda Gote come un’idiota e non dice niente. Non può che pensare alle parole di suo padre quando gli ha raccontato al telefono del suo trasloco spontaneo: “A Prignitz? Ma cosa vai a fare là tra tutti quegli estremisti di destra?” Fare in modo che Jojo non abbia ragione fa parte delle principali forze trainanti di Dora. Ha studiato scienze della comunicazione perché suo padre considerava soltanto medicina e giurisprudenza come dei veri percorsi di studio. A lei piace il campo pubblicitario, mentre lui trova inutile l’intero settore. Grazie a Dio gli piaceva Robert, altrimenti sarebbe dovuta rimanere con lui per tutta l’eternità.

Ora le toccherà dimostrare che Bracken è stata un’idea meravigliosa. Un esilio ideale, preferibilmente meglio se al 100% privo di nazisti. Per ora sembra un’impresa difficile. E’ giunto il momento di dire qualcosa. Se già si ritrova in un matrimonio forzato con un neonazista,

Neonazi leben muss, sollte sie sofort zeigen, dass sie sich nichts gefallen lässt.

»Machen Sie das doch selbst«, sagt sie hoheitsvoll.

»Nee.« Gote fletscht die Zähne, was wohl ein Grinsen darstellensoll. »Ich bin der Nachbar zur Rechten.«

»Darauf wette ich.« Dora verbucht das als Punkt für ihre Schlagfertigkeit, die auf Gote allerdings nicht den geringsten Eindruck macht. Er starrt sie an, als fragte er sich, ob in einem Großstadtkopf überhaupt so etwas wie ein Gehirn vorhanden ist. »Von der Straße geguckt, wohnst du links und ich rechts. Kapiert? Und der Linke baut immer den rechten Zaun.« Er überlegt kurz.

»Du baust also alle Zäune. Weil links von dir keiner ist.« Mit diesen Worten verschwindet Gotes Gesicht vom oberen Mauerrand wie eine Puppe im Kasperletheater.

»Dorfrandlage« hat in der Anzeige gestanden. Dora hat sich vorgestellt, wie herrlich ruhig es am Dorfrand sein müsste. Tatsächlich erstrecken sich hinter dem linken Zaun weitläufige Felder. Aber auf denen sind in den letzten Tagen dröhnende Traktoren mit Pflügen, Eggen und Saatmaschinen hin- und hergefahren. Ansonsten bedeutet Wohnen am Ortsschild, dass der Transitverkehr aus Plausitz mit satten 100 Stundenkilometern am Haus vorbeidonnert. Bremsen kommt offensichtlich nicht in Frage, höchstens ausrollen auf 50 km/h bis zur Ortsmitte.

dovrebbe mostrare da subito che non si fa mettere i piedi in testa.

“Perché non lo fa Lei?” dice Dora con un tono maestoso.

“No.” Gote mostra i denti, il che probabilmente dovrebbe essere un ghigno. “Io sono il vicino di destra.”

“Ci avrei scommesso.” Dora lo conta come un punto a suo favore per la sua prontezza di parola che, però, non ha un minimo effetto su Gote. Lui continua a fissarla come se si chiedesse se nella testa di un abitante di città ci sia qualcosa di simile a un cervello. “Se guardi dalla strada, tu abiti a sinistra e io a destra. Capito? E chi sta a sinistra costruisce sempre la recinzione per quello a destra.” Si ferma un attimo a riflettere.

“Quindi tu devi costruire tutte le recinzioni. Perché sulla tua sinistra non hai nessuno.” Con queste parole scompare il viso di Gote dal bordo superiore del muro come un burattino al teatro delle marionette.

“Ubicato ai margini del paese”, stava scritto sull’annuncio. Dora si era immaginata la periferia di un paese come un posto molto tranquillo. A ridosso della recinzione a sinistra si estendono infatti vasti campi. Ma negli ultimi giorni vi sono passati avanti e indietro trattori rombanti con aratri, erpici e seminatrici. A parte tutto ciò, abitare vicino all’ingresso del paese significa che tutto il traffico proveniente da Plausitz sfreccia davanti a casa a ben 100 chilometri orari. Frenare è chiaramente fuori discussione; al massimo si può rallentare fino a 50 km/h prima di

Dora dreht sich um, pfeift nach Jochen und stapft Richtung Haus. Es ist höchste Zeit für einen Kaffee.	raggiungere il centro del paese. Dora si gira, fischia per chiamare Leone e cammina a fatica verso casa. È giunto il momento del caffè.
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