QUEER KINSHIPS AND CURIOUS CREATURES:

ANIMAL POETICS IN LITERARY MODERNISM

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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My dissertation brings together prose texts and poetry by four writers and poets, who published in German language at the beginning of the twentieth century: Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), and Georg Trakl (1887-1914). All four of these writers are concerned with the inadequacy of language and cognition, the so called *Sprachkrise* at the turn-of-the-century. In their texts, they challenge the ability of language to function as a means of communication, and as a way to express emotions or relate more deeply to the world. While it is widely recognized that this "crisis of identity" in modernist literature has been a crisis of language all along, I argue in my dissertation that the question of language is ultimately also a question of "the animal." Other scholars have argued for animals' poetic agency (e.g. Aaron M. Moe; Susan McHugh), or for the conceptual link between the "crisis of language" and the threat to human exceptionalism in the intellectual milieu of the early twentieth century (Kári Driscoll). My dissertation is the first study that explores the interconnection between *Sprachkrise*, animality, and the phenomenological philosophy of embodiment. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of phenomenology,

I illustrate how Hofmannsthal, Kafka, Rilke and Trakl invoke the body as intertwined with animals in complex ways, and employ these animal figures to reconceptualize notions of language and specifically the metaphor. The authors, I argue, engage in a zoopoetic writing, as other forms of life participate as both symbolic and material bodies in the signifying processes. Moreover, I illustrate how their zoopoetic approach involve forms of intimacy and envision figures that fall outside heteronormative sexualities and ontologies, making the case for a queer zoopoetics in Modernist German literature.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* Kari Weil argues for the significance of posing "the animal question" within literary and critical theory: "The idea of 'the animal'—the instinctive being with presumably no access to language, texts, or abstract thinking—has functioned as an unexamined foundation on which the idea of the human and hence the humanities have been built," she points out (23). As our understanding of animal language, culture, and morality improves, Weil continues, so must our view of the nature of human and humanities (Ibid.). This reconceptualization of 'What it means to be human' yielded to the larger framework of posthumanism and critical animal studies; disciplines that operate under the assumption of, as Cary Wolfe puts it, "embodiments and embeddedness" of human beings in connection to other forms of life (*What is Posthumanism?* 6). However, as post-colonial thinkers such as Sylvia Wynter point out, both posthumanism and critical animal studies all too often perpetuate the epistemological framework of 'the human' as white, male, and heterosexual—Wynter's "Man" with a capital 'M' (317). Hence, although many theorists within animal studies and posthumanism have approached their analyses from a standpoint that investigates the interlocking categories of race, gender, sexuality, and animality (see, for example, Carol J. Adams, Donna Haraway, Nicole Shukin, and Mel Y. Chen), critical race scholars claim that the pursuit of an animal-centric posthumanism still "effectively sidestep[s] the analytical challenges posed by the categories of race, colonialism, and slavery" (Jackson 671), illustrating the need to continue the work of a self-reflexive

analysis that takes intersectional approaches seriously within animal studies and posthumanism. As animality fundamentally is at work in, and in exchange with, the discursive production of human identity categories, 'the animal' needs to be the focus of our investigation of how our idea of 'the human' is shaped by hegemonic forms of thought and discourse.

This assumption of a universal human experience that is represented by 'the animal' is mirrored in the determination to read animals exclusively as metaphors and symbols—in short, as "animal imagery"—, which presupposes, as Margot Norris argues, "the use of the concrete to express the abstract" (3). Despite the recent "animal turn" (Weil) in the humanities, animals are still widely treated as metaphors and remain captive to the tropes of allegory to represent a presumably universal experience of 'the human.' Such reading practices view 'the animal' as "just another tool in our set of literary devices" (Driscoll 228) that can easily be replaced with a different metaphor and still create the same effect and meaning in the reader. Traditional modes of reading and interpreting poetic texts are hence all too often guilty of a certain ignorance toward the specific role of animals in literature, of their relationship to language, and their complex embeddedness with other living beings, including us humans. Such reductionist reading practices not only subsume the diversity of literary animals—"animals created by words," as Roland Borgards defines the term ("Introduction" 155)—under the singularity of 'the animal'—a critique that Jacques Derrida poignantly articulates in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*—but also ignores the specific cultural and historical background from which this particular literary animal emerges, as well as the fact that textual animals influence the lives of actual animals and vice versa. This specific role of animals to be

taken “both literally and figuratively, as a material and symbolic resource,” as Nicole Shukin argues (6), places literary animals in a peculiar and often precarious position within literary discourse. Practices of reading ‘the animal’ tend to vacillate between a “sheer culturalism” that treats animal figures purely as “empty signifiers” (Ibid.), or, on the contrary, as natural signs that enter the text presumably without linguistic mediation. Both attempts obscure the complexities of animal figures in literary texts. They run the risk of perpetuating hegemonic ways of understanding humanity and animality, and of reducing the natural to the cultural, and vice versa. Literary animals and other life forms in texts are in the unique position to draw our attention precisely to this risk of “semiological reduction of discourse analysis” and make the need for what Shukin calls a “cultural-materialist analysis” (25) visible. Such an analysis takes both the cultural determination of animals into account and pays attention to the materiality of the actual animal behind animal figures.

In this dissertation, I argue that the literary animals in poetic texts expose a purely metaphoric understanding as being reductionist, and instead require reading practices that pay attention to the specific (animal) body and its encounters with other bodies in the text. My dissertation offers new perspectives on canonical texts by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Georg Trakl by focusing on the specific role and function of the literary animals in their work. What are the implications of treating literary animals not as metaphoric animals, but as more complex figures of Wolfe’s understanding of “embodiments and embeddedness” ? How can we become receptive to the specific role that animals have in the production of a poetic text, and, more generally, in our understanding of language? And to what extent do our encounters with other

animals co-shape the poetic texts and reconceptualize kinship formations across species boundaries that challenge heteronormative frameworks of identity and affiliation? The poetic texts I bring together in this dissertation foreground the fundamental connection between animality and language, and point to the specific role of literary animals in the context of *Sprachkrise*—the 'crisis of language' (and identity) that peaks at the turn of the century in Europe. Authors that concern themselves with the phenomenon of *Sprachkrise* as a philosophical approach to language that challenges the notion of a stable relationship between signifier and signified and that questions the reliability of language to refer to and represent the "thing itself," I argue, are especially prone to 'turn to the body' as the site where authenticity and truth could be resurrected. I argue that the literary animals deployed in the texts I investigate here emerge in the tension between a semiological reduction that renders all language metaphorical and the embodiment of the specific animal and its encounter with other animals that is foregrounded in the text. These embodiments and encounters evoke the materiality of animal matter and life in the texts that either resist a purely metaphorical reading or challenge us to reconsider our understanding of metaphoricity. In that regard, these poetic texts not only question our understanding and assumptions of language by employing 'the animal' in corporeal ways, but also engage in a fundamental critique of logocentrism, or more precisely of what Derrida has described as carno-phallogocentrism—the exclusion of animals as subjects from the Symbolic Order ("Eating Well").

My reading of the poetic texts by Hofmannsthal, Kafka, Rilke, and Trakl focuses on how the authors examine questions of language and negotiate ideas of humanity and animality through the encounters between humans and other animals. Poetry is the

privileged site for this reexamination, as Derrida suggests, because it can facilitate an encounter between non-human and human animals: "For thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry," he suggests (*The Animal That Therefore I Am* 7). "There you have a thesis," Derrida continues, "it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of. It is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking [*une pensée poetique*]" (Ibid.). Derrida suggests that there is an affinity between poetic thinking and thinking of the animal. Poetic texts are in the unique position to facilitate encounters between humans and other animals in which the latter reverses the gaze and addresses the human: "[T]he animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins here" (Ibid. 29). The poetic texts I investigate in my dissertation connect in fundamental, yet different, ways reflections on their respective approaches to language to questions of 'the animal.' I argue that they foreground the corporeality of encounters between human and other animals, and make them the point of departure for an approach to language that disrupts logocentric discourses and its underlying binary logic. Arguing that there is indeed a conceptual link between poetry and animality, my dissertation practices a "zoopoetic" reading—a reading that focuses on the link between language and animality in the text—*and* treats the poetic texts as zoopoetic approaches to literature, suggesting that the authors employ their literary animals in ways that exceed their metaphorical usage.

The term "zoopoetics" was first coined by Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, an address by Derrida in 2009 in which he spoke of "Kafka's vast zoopoetics" (6). As, in Driscoll's words, "a poetics of animality" (228), it combines the notion of *zōon*—which designates the living being, the animate—with the notion of *poíēsis* understood as

creation, of making and doing (Schaffner 219). Zoopoetics forestalls a purely metaphorical reading of the animal, and pays attention to the complex forms of interconnection between human and non-human animals in the poetic text. In his book *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* from 2013, Moe writes:

> The etymology also suggests that when a poet undergoes the making process of *poiesis* in harmony with the gestures and vocalizations of nonhuman animals, a multispecies event occurs. It is a co-making. A joint venture. The two-fold foci of zoopoetics—that nonhuman animals are makers and that this making has shaped the form of human poems—illustrates how animals *animate* ... and therefore bring the sensuous world to the surface of the written page (2).

Emphasizing the aspect of agency as "the first focus of zoopoetics" ("Toward Zoopoetics" 4), Moe argues for the empowerment of non-human animals and their "bodily poiesis" (Ibid.) in the poetic process. Yet, this focus on agency can obscure how animals function both as a symbolic and as a material resource, as Shukin suggests (15). Moreover, focusing on the mimetic aspect of a zoopoetic reading runs the risk of reiterating a categorization of species and tends to ignore the fluidity of "becoming" with which many zoopoetic texts imagine alternative forms of life. Mimetic approaches to animals in literature also tend to falsely essentialize animals as what Shukin calls "natural signs," and ignore the cultural and discursive site of literary animals.

Drawing on Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory, Borgards's zoopoetic approach accounts for the need of a material analysis of literary animals. He argues for the inclusion of other animals and plants in the collective production of meaning, and

suggests to read animals and their textual traces as "material metaphors" ("Stubb Kills a Whale" 180). Extending Max Black's notion of the "interaction metaphor," Borgards suggests the inclusion of the agents who are involved in the production of meaning into the concept of metaphor, rather than restricting it purely to the interplay of meaning (Ibid.). He argues that the encounters between humans and other animals leave a trace in the text, which accounts for a relational network that exceeds human communities and makes human dependence on animals in the production of literature and art visible ("Tiere in der Literatur" 108). Borgards argues that animals are a fundamental precondition and inspiration for images, narratives, films, and dance (Ibid.)—a thought that Kári Driscoll takes further by claiming that the question of language has "always been the question of the animal" (228). Driscoll suggests that

> [T]he figure of the animal ... presents a specific problem *to* and *for* language and representation. Why, after all, have animals always served as such exemplary metaphors and symbols? Why, in the mythical accounts of the origin of painting, music, poetry, (and more recently film), of the origin of language itself, does the animal always play such a prominent role, when it is precisely these things which are held up as proof of the inherent difference between man and animal? Is it not, to quote John Berger, because "the first metaphor was animal" (7)? And is this idea not in and of itself a fundamentally *zoopoetic* idea? (228)

Focusing on the discursive analysis of literary animals, Driscoll argues that they require us to reconceptualize our idea of metaphors—and move away from "an overly narrow, Aristotelian conception of metaphor as a mode of signification where one thing ... stands

for something else ... , which is the actual or intended meaning, to which the figure is subordinate and ultimately interchangeable" (227). He emphasizes that a zoopoetic approach to literature must be attentive to the "*specific* way animals operate in literary texts as [in Susan McHugh's words] 'functions of their literariness' (McHugh 490)" (Ibid.).

While Borgards and Driscoll both navigate what Shukin calls "the fine line" between reductively material and reductively cultural approaches to literary animals, they tend to ignore the complexities of animal figures both in their ontologies and in their encounters with other (human and non-human) animals. I argue that we ultimately need to move toward a "queer zoopoetics" that accounts for the non-normative ontologies that inhabit the literary texts and for the moments of intimacy, friendship, and kinship that spans across species borders and defy heteronormative sexualities that privilege procreation over desire and affection. By evoking the specific body of the animal and make it intelligible through its encounter with other bodies, these texts also are in close proximity with queer theory.[1] As I will show, these encounters between human and other animals include sexual encounters, and evoke scenes of bodily intimacy that undermine heteronormative assumptions of intimacy and affection. Moreover, queer theory offers a framework to understand and grasp the forms of life that inhabit these texts as transgressive figures without a stable and underlying identity. A reading that focuses on the queer aspects of how animality and humanity is portrayed and conceptualized in these texts—both in terms of their non-normative ontologies and the forms of intimacy that unfold across species lines—accounts for the complexities with which humans and other animals are embedded and embodied in the text and with each other. These queer

[1] See Elizabeth Freeman's understanding of queer theory in *Time Binds*, pg. 11.

ontologies and encounters, I argue, need to be taken into account to come to a better understanding on how the animals function in a particular text. More importantly, queer theory gives us the language and framework to understand the extent to which literary animals unsettle binary forms of logic inherent in logocentrism. I argue that animal texts display a myriad of intimate encounters, forms of affections and affiliation across species-borders that defies heteronormative orders and require a queer reading. As cultural critic and anthropologist Roger Lancaster points out, desire is always already on the side of poetry and inherent in the notion of *poiesis* (266). However, both traditional literary criticism and queer theory tend to simplify the complex dynamics between human and non-human animals and the ways in which these connections and embodiments yield to production of the poetic text and challenge our heteronormative framework of 'what it means to be human.' The strange ontologies, which many literary animals as hybrids and forms of life that vacillate between species imply, challenge the categorization of life into fixed taxonomies and queer our notion of identity and species belonging. In this context, Mel Y. Chen argues for the use for the term "animacy" as a central construct to capture the fluidity inherent in life and suggests that animacy troubles binary thinking and "has the capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy" (3). Being "conceptually slippery" (Ibid. 4), animacy is inherently queer, as queerness presupposes non-normative logics of identity, community, and embodiments (Halberstam 6). This dissertation teems with curious creatures—hybrids between human and architectural structure, as in Franz Kafka's "Die Brücke" ("The Bridge") or between kitten and lamb, as in "Eine Kreuzung" ("A Crossbreed") and scenes of intimacy between human and non-human animals that vindicates a queer reading of these moments and brings the necessity to 'queer'

zoopoetics and to 'zoo' queer theory to the forefront. Within animal studies, queer theory can help us move away from overly narrow conceptions of what 'the animal'—and by extension also 'the human'—means, and show the similarities in the structures and discourses between forms of human and animal oppression, which many feminist theorists point out (see, for example, Greta Gaard, Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams, and Maneesha Decker). For that reason, I rely on Chen's concept of animacy to capture the 'curious creatures' in Kafka's oeuvre, making queerness immanent to his transgressive figures in Chapter 3. Both the bridge and the kitten-lamb follow this logic of transgression, that—according to Chen—is inherent in the concept of animacy.

Throughout the dissertation, my understanding of queer therefore includes both the rejection of conventional, heterosexual, and reproductive forms of intimacy, and what Chen calls the "veering away from dominant ontologies and the normativities they promulgate" (11). Moreover, taking Sara Ahmed's argument of a "queer phenomenology" as a point of departure, I argue for queer moments as a specific "bodily dwelling" that is marked by what conventionally is understood as a disorientation, and by a "tending toward" 'improper' objects of desire (553). As I will show, this bodily disorientation and practices of 'tending toward' cross species boundaries in Chapter 1, and opens new ways of understanding the enigmatic ending of Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte" ("A Tale of the Cavalry"). Both traditional literary criticism and cultural and literary animal studies/zoopoetics ignore these queer moments in texts all too often—while queer theory tends to ignore what non-human animals can offer as a category of analysis for discourses of gender and sexuality. If we understand zoopoetics as an intersectional approach, it becomes not only an indispensable methodology for literary theory, but also an essential

analytical category for gender and sexuality studies, queer theory, and critical race theory. The necessity to approach zoopoetics intersectionally with queer theory is especially pressing for texts of the early twentieth century, which—as Chen argues—are often portrayed in ways that are "overlaid with sexual implications" (115). Based on Borgards's argument that literary animal studies need to work within a highly contextualized and historicized framework that pays attention to the specific cultural role and understanding of animals at a certain time and place ("Tiere in der Literatur"), my dissertation is grounded in the cultural and philosophical background of Europe around 1900. Although animals in poetic texts have a long history that goes back to the very beginning of storytelling and inhabit almost every geographical place, there are certain historical, philosophical, and cultural phenomena at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century in Europe that contribute to a shift in how animals are perceived and represented. What exactly are the undercurrents that create these "new literary animals" (Driscoll 230)?

At the end of the 19th century, in the wake of Darwin's evolutionary theories, the human position at the alleged top of the "Great Chain of Being" is being questioned. At the same time, Friedrich Nietzsche's thinking unsettles the belief in human exceptionalism as he rejects human superiority over the animal world as deeply erroneous. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*), he writes:

> Der Mensch ist durch seine Irrtümer erzogen worden: er sah sich erstens immer nur unvollständig, zweitens legte er sich erdichtete Eigenschaften bei, drittens fühlte er sich in einer falschen Rangordnung zu Tier und Natur, viertens erfand er immer neue Gütertafeln und nahm sie eine Zeit

> als ewig und unbedingt, so dass bald dieser bald jener menschliche Trieb an der ersten Stelle stand und infolge dieser Schätzung veredelt wurde. Rechnet man die Wirkung dieser vier Irrtümer weg, so hat man auch Humanität, Menchlichkeit und "Menschenwürde" weggerechnet. (174)
>
> (Man has been cultivated through his errors: to begin with, he always saw himself only incompletely; secondly, he endowed himself with fictitious attributes; thirdly, he felt himself in a false hierarchical relationship to animal and nature; fourthly, he invented ever new tables of virtue that, for a time, he deemed eternal and unconditional, so that eventually this or that particular human drive or condition took first place and became ennobled as a result of this valuation. But if one discounts the effects of these four errors, one has also done away with humanness, humanity, and "human dignity.)

As Darwin's and Nietzsche's thinking reach public awareness, the relationship between man as "Master" or steward over Nature and Animal begins to topple. At the same time, this shift also influenced our notion of language. Rather than conceiving of Nature as a "book" with God as the author, who controls the prescribed plot for which the human is the *telos,* Darwin's theories abolished God "along with the fiction of the subject as the origin of the text" (*Beasts of Modern Imagination* 26), foreshadowing the "Death of the Author" of postmodernism. This inversion between author and reader affects the conception of language as a prerogative of the human that determines the "final, introvertible difference between man and animal" (*Beasts of Modern Imagination* 27).

This shift brought along major implications for our understanding of language. While, as Gerald Bartl points out, the skepticism toward language as a reliable tool for communication and as an instrument for conveying truth is by no means an invention of modernity, the turn-of-the-century presented a rupture that exceeded the "healthy skepticism" and yielded to a larger crisis of representation and identity (16). For Margot Norris, this crisis opens the way for "biocentric thinkers," such as Kafka, to embrace a "valuation of the body and the body's effusion of power," and a deeply rooted critique of anthropocentrism that is aimed at "the human being as a cultural creature, as implicated in the Symbolic Order" (*The Beasts of Modern Imagination* 3).

In their quest for aesthetic truth and new, viable means of representation, I argue that the authors discussed in this dissertation turn to the body as the site for authenticity and a place to recuperate meaning. As part of a circle of young avant-garde authors—*Young Vienna* (*Junges Wien*)—writers such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Karl Kraus, and Stefan George seek new literary means and forms of representation to gain access to and express poetic truth. With his "Brief" ("Letter to Lord Chandos") Hofmannsthal arguably created the most famous literary testimony of the *Sprachkrise* in modernity. Yet, as I will show in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation, Hofmannsthal also implicitly and explicitly negotiates questions of representation and language in his other work, such as "Reitergeschichte" and "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" ("The Conversation About Poetry"), and links this discourse to questions of animality and animals. I argue that a strange—and violent—merging with the animal is at the heart of Hofmannsthal's quest for a "new language" that restores meaning and poetic expression. This hopeful and problematic impetus is missing in Kafka's work, which is

the focus in Chapter 3. Here, the animal's body is the site of reflection for the infinite play of signifiers with no underlying 'truth' or stable relation between signifier and signified. By evoking consciousness as embodied, worldly, and situated within a larger material context of space and time and by emphasizing the lived experience of inhabiting a body through their narratives and poetry, Hofmannsthal, Kafka, Rilke, and Trakl explore what I call a "poetics of phenomenology." Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, including *The Phenomenology of Perception*, *The Visible and the Invisible*, but also his *Nature* lectures and essays on aesthetical theory, I argue that Merleau-Ponty's notions of a "subject body" and the "flesh" present a helpful framework to understand the embodiment of language that exceeds a human-centered approach. While some scholars have pointed out the relevance of Merleau-Ponty within a modernist project that challenges the metaphysical mindset (see, for example, Gerald Bartl, Ted Toadvine, Leonard Lawlor and others), Merleau-Ponty's significance for animal studies has only recently been acknowledged (see Louise Westling and Luke Fischer).

This dissertation also reveals the discursive link between death and animality that becomes visible through my reading of the texts. The symbolical and real death of animals follows a "sacrificial structure," as Derrida points out (Ibid., 112), making the case for the real violence against animals as structurally linked to linguistic forms of violence and the place of animals within the Symbolic Order. If, as Derrida argues, the sacrifice "recalls the concept of the subject as phallogocentric structure" since it denies animals the right of subject-status, then we need to submit the subject to deconstruction to challenge the pervasive logic of "carno-phallogocentrism" and to arrive at a more ethical standpoint towards animals (Ibid., 113). This development can already be

discerned in the trajectory covered by the texts analyzed in this dissertation; whereas Hofmannsthal reaffirms the sacrificial structure to confirm language and reestablish subjectivity as illustrated in Chapter 2, Kafka replaces subjectivity with a logic that resembles Derrida's concept of trace or différance, and refuses to sacrifice the animal (Chapter 3). This conceptual link between animality and death provides a counter reading to Margot Norris's emphasis on the vitality and *Lebenskraft* of the biocentric thinkers that she opposes to the anthropocentric tradition. It situates animal studies and zoopoetics in a theoretical proximity with a new ethics of queer studies, which—as Lee Edelman argues in *No Future*—defy the notion of "reproductive futurism," and embrace irony, *jouissance*, and ultimately the death drive. This connection can be seen most clearly in Chapter 4, where Trakl's animal poems seem to affirm the death drive in their dark and apocalyptic vision for the future that challenges differences between humanity and animality by reducing living matter to what Shukin calls a "species body." Chapter 4 focuses specifically on Rilke's and Trakl's poetry and offers a counter-reading to Martin Heidegger's anthropocentric interpretation of Trakl's poetry. I argue that the latter approaches animals in poetry as a "negative zoopoetics," emphasizing the absence of animals precisely in order to evoke the all-encompassing silence that, contrary to Heidegger's understanding, does not yield to the "arrival of language." Moreover, Trakl's animal poems question the very relation of human subjectivity to *Dasein* that allows for the distinction between man and animal in their relation to death. For, as Derrida argues, "it is from the standpoint of *Dasein* that Heidegger defines the humanity of man" ("Eating Well" 105). In Trakl's poetry, both man and animal "perish" as they are reduced to their very "flesh." Trakl therefore envisions the *Sprachkrise* in its most devastating

consequences, which coincide with the apocalyptical threat to all living beings at the cusp of World War I.

CHAPTER II

QUEER ZOOPOETICS IN HOFMANNTHAL'S REITERGESCHICHTE ("A TALE OF THE CAVALRY")

The notion of the irretrievably lost subject—the "unrettbares Ich," a concept first mentioned by Ernst Mach in *Analyse der Empfindungen* (*Analysis of Sensation*) and later reiterated and made public by Hermann Bahr—became a literary topos in late nineteenth century Vienna. The trope is not only reflected upon in many of the poetic and theoretical texts by the writers and critics of *Junges Wien* (*Young Vienna*), the avant-garde literary association in turn-of-the-century Vienna, but also foreshadows the postmodernist debate on subjectivity in the next century (Bergengruen 7). As Jacques Le Rider argues in *Modernity and Crisis of Identity*, "modernization … cast[s] doubt on collective and cultural identities, and also on individual subjective identity," and he further suggests that we understand "the living heritage of Viennese modernity as a prefiguration of our own postmodernity" (27-28). Furthermore, along with rejecting the notion of the individual subject as a self-conscious, rational, and consistent identity, many of the writers of *Junges Wien* questioned the ability of language to express feelings and thoughts, and to interact with others in meaningful ways. The "crisis of identity" therefore also implies a *Sprachkrise* ("crisis of language"), and new means of poetic expression and aesthetic representation appeared to be both necessary and possible for the writers of *Junges Wien*.

In his private writings and theoretical texts, Hugo von Hofmannsthal explicitly reflects on these debates on the subjective and collective crisis of identity and language in his times. This culminates most famously in his fictional letter to Lord Chandos, where

the linguistic implications of the rejection of subjectivity are drawn out in most radical terms. However, Hofmannsthal already engages with this discourse in "Reitergeschichte" ("A Tale of the Cavalry"), a short prose text dating from 1899. While the narrative deconstructs human subjectivity, it also places this very human subject into the context of the Italian War of Independence, where the cultural and societal implications of the "unrettbares Ich" coincide with the violent military practices. The text hence evokes the figure of a dissolved subject, deprived of communication and interaction with other human beings, while the violence of war only exaggerates the phenomena that are already inherent in the cultural and institutional practices of turn-of-the-century Vienna that give birth to the subject in crisis.[2] Paradoxically, however, the "unrettbares Ich" as a prevalent figure of thought in the cultural and philosophical discourse of Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century is at the same time enthusiastically received by Bahr and the disciples of *Junges Wien* to inspire an aesthetics that opposes Naturalism.

In this chapter I argue that the figure of the "unrettbares Ich" appears in "Reitergeschichte" both as a conduit for new forms of poetic respresentation, and as a point of departure for an ethical critique of the cultural and societal environment of Hofmannsthal's time. At the same time as human subjectivity is disavowed, and language—in Kári Driscoll's words—"suddenly seemed more like a liability than a privilege" (219), a fundamental turn to the animal can be observed in the poetic texts at the turn of the century. Rider and horse of "Reitergeschichte" constitute a closely intertwined unity, in which sensations and perceptions travel from man to animal and vice versa. . A fly unleashes a chain of unconscious memories, fantasies, and desires in

[2] For a detailed account on the historical and cultural developments in Vienna at the turn of the century, see Carl E. Schorske.

the main protagonist that ultimately leads to his downfall. The story's animals are therefore engaged on a deeper and more fundamental level of the narrative than the traditional, reductive reading of symbolism (as in the works by Richard Alewyn, Helen Frink, Mary E. Gilbert, Konrad Neumann, and Peter Mollenhauer, and others) can account for. What emerges is a "multispecies event" that—in Aaron M. Moe's understanding—is characteristic of a "zoopoetic text" and that raises questions of language and representation. In a similar vein, Driscoll defines zoopoetics as "a way of looking at, and thinking about, how animality functions *within* language, especially within poetic or metaphorical language," concluding that "the question of language *is*, at a very basic level, synonymous with the question of the animal" (220, 228).

Yet, Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics not only emerge at the crossroads of *Sprachkrise* and the crisis of human subjectivity and identity that yields to a larger and more fundamental crisis of anthropocentrism and gives way to zoopoetics as new forms of aesthetic representation. The critical examination of language undertaken in his texts also gestures towards an embodied encounter between human and animal that foregrounds the physical sensations and privileges the body over the mind. Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics not only entails a turn to the animal, but also foregrounds the body as site where meaning can be established and "read." In "Reitergeschichte" the body becomes the means through which the world appears intelligible and legible; a point of orientation that vindicates a phenomenological reading of the text. As Herman Lübbe argues, Mach's empirio-criticism and twentieth-century phenomenology "share the same self-interest in the face of the false appeal of materialism and naturalism" (100). As a phenomenological poetic text, "Reitergeschichte" foregrounds perception and evokes consciousness as embodied,

worldly, and situated. The body heavily relies on its encounters with others, and, as I will show, is directed specifically towards individuals of other species that become objects of desire and affect. These embodied encounters presuppose concepts of kinship and desire across species and allow for "queer moments" to occur—moments of disorientation, of bodily contact, and of "slipping away" that in Sara Ahmed's understanding "slant" the body's orientation and queer the field of phenomenology ("Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology"). Placing the "Reitergeschichte" into the context of queer phenomenology allows not only for a re-reading of the enigmatic ending of the tale, which continues to puzzle the reader and to which traditional readings of Hofmannsthal's texts have been blind. It also points to the larger historical determination of animal figurations at the turn of the century, which—as Mel Y. Chen argues convincingly—"were often overlaid with sexual implications" (115).

"Das Ich ist Unrettbar:" The Cultural and Philosophical Context of Junges Wien

In *Aufbruch in die Moderne,* Jens Rieckmann points out that Hofmannsthal's unique art of storytelling has often been received as "revolutionary" (99). Part of the group of young writers and literary critics of Viennese culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Junges Wien,* Hofmannsthal is on a quest for an innovative form of poetic representation that would surmount naturalism as the prevalent aestheticism in European literature at the time (Ibid.). As Hermann Bahr, the self-proclaimed "organizer" of *Junges Wien,* claims: "Every palpable truth is seen differently from every perspective and its reflection changes with every mirror"[3] ("Jede handgreifliche Wirklichkeit wird

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all the translations are my own.

anders von jedem Blick geschaut und ihre Erscheinung wechselt mit jedem neuen Spiegel") ("Die Überwindung des Naturalismus" 52). Even though both Hofmannsthal and Arthur Schnitzler are "poking covert fun" at Bahr, the "self-styled mouthpiece of Viennese modernity," as Jacques Le Rider puts it, the influence of literary critic Bahr over his Viennese 'protégés' is nonetheless substantial (25). He conceives of the writers of *Junges Wien*—above all of the young Hofmannsthal as the seventeen-year-old poet publishing under the penname 'Lori'—as the 'modern geniuses' per excellence, who "trusted no particular school, rule or tradition, and knew only one law, that of [their] own nerves, senses, instinct and subjectivity" (Ibid.). With this assessment, Bahr has found the dictum that he formulates in 1890 in his essay "Die Moderne" as "the only law of modern art:" the depiction of truth as everyone *perceives* it ("Die Darstellung der Wahrheit wie sie jeder empfindet") (38). The 'modern condition,' according to Bahr, is shaped by the formula "to be nervous up to your fingertips" ("bis in die Fingerspitzen nervös zu sein") ("Kritik der Moderne" 17). Referring to Bahr's poetology, the so-called "Nervenkunst," Rieckmann writes: "Modern man consists only of nerves; his nerves, his senses are the organs that perceive the constant change and get rid of perspectives and sensations that are outdated" ("Der moderne Mensch besteht nur aus Nerven; seine Nerven, seine Sinne sind das Organ, den unablässigen Wandel aufzunehmen, zu verarbeiten und überlebte Anschauungen und Gefühle abzustreifen") (19). The individual's sensual perception is therefore at the core of *Junges Wien*, and its aesthetic representation instigates the "revolutionary changes in philosophy, plastic and visual arts, literature, and music," which are characteristic for this avant-garde movement (Gillman 17). For the writers, these considerations present both challenges and possibilities, from which new forms of

poetic expression and innovative ways of storytelling emerge, and which results in a significant turn to both the animal and the human body that presents a paradigmatic shift in literature at the turn of the century in Europe.

As Driscoll points out, neither the skepticism toward language as a reliable system of communication nor the prevalence of animals in literary texts are new to the poetics of European modernist texts (218). However, both the conspicuous prevalence of literary animals and their pervasive resistance to being read as a metaphor or symbol for human experiences is unique to these poetic texts and can be traced back to the historical and philosophical situation of Europe around 1900. Driscoll names the establishment of modern zoological gardens that facilitates new forms of human-animal encounters, as well as developments in the natural sciences (above all Darwin's evolutionary theories), and Freud's psychoanalytical insights as indicators for "radically new parameters for human-animal interaction" coinciding at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe (Ibid. 219). Moreover, influenced by the Austrian physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach, Bahr radicalizes the critique of the subject as a coherent unit, which synthesizes empirical experiences, and as a demarcated entity impermeable by its environment. Mach rejects both the notion of the autonomous objective world and of the subject as a coherent and conscious entity, disavowing them as metaphysical fallacies. Rudolf Haller describes Mach's methodology of empirio-criticism as follows:

> Mach brilliantly suggests identical elements, which are perceived as either physical particles, such as our flesh or our bodies in their spatial and temporal relations, or as psychological particles, such as sensations and memories which are based upon them … Only through the coherence of

> memory does the individual self constitute an entity … but it is an illusion. For such an entity would be a metaphysical essence and essences are metaphysical ideas. (335)
>
> Machs genialer Vorschlag bestand darin, identische Elemente anzunehmen, die bald als physikalische Komplexe, wie unser Leib oder andere Körper und ihre räumlichen und zeitlichen Beziehungen, bald als psychische Komplexe, wie bloße Empfindungen und den auf sie aufbauenden Erinnerungen und Assoziationen, aufgefaßt werden … das individuelle Ich ergibt nur durch die Beständigkeit der Erinnerung eine beständige Einheit … aber keine wirkliche. Denn eine solche wäre eine Substanz, und Substanzen sind metaphysische Begriffe. (335)

Haller illustrates that Mach envisions the world as a complex of sensations and impressions without fixed borders: "Partly fluent, fleeting, blurring in a stream of experiences, partly consolidating into forms, shapes, bodies of this world, which is the only one we know anything about and can know anything about" ("Zum Teil fließend, flüchtig, verschwimmend im Erlebnisstrom, zum Teil sich festigend in Formen, Gestalten, Körpern jener Welt, die die einzige ist, von der wir etwas wissen und wissen können") (336). In Mach's empirio-criticism the individual self is not treated as a conscious, autonomous entity, and can only establish some form of continuity through memory. Rather than reflecting on scientific knowledge, Mach turns to perception to account for the "elementary reality of human experience:" "It is rather a question of first 'keeping an eye' on ordinary life, and on perception, just on its own, without self-consciousness" (Lübbe 106).

These historical and philosophical currents shape the poetological-philosophical reflections and practices of the writers and critics of *Junges Wien.* When Bahr rejects the notion of the subject as autonomous and disavows it as an illusion—"It is only a name, an illusion that we need to organize our imagination" ("Es ist nur ein Name, nur eine Illusion, die wir brauchen, um unsere Vorstellung zu ordnen")—he also hopes to implement Mach's philosophy of perception into the poetics of the avant-garde writers surounding him. In his essay "Das unrettbare Ich" Bahr reflects on Mach's empirio-criticism as a re-conceptualization of both the 'subject' and the 'objective world' for a conglomeration of perceptions and sensations with no underlying substance. "The I is irretrievably lost" ("Das Ich ist unrettbar"), he concludes, reiterating Mach's judgment (100):

> Contents of the subject's consciousness … exceed its boundaries and continue autonomously from the person who brought them to the fore to live a more general, impersonal, super-personal life … It is one of the biggest fortunes of the artist to contribute to this … (Ibid.).
>
> Bewußtseinsinhalte … durchbrechen aber diese Schranken des Individuums und führen unabhängig von der Person, durch die sie sich entwickelt haben, ein allgemeineres, unpersönlicheres, überpersönliches Leben fort … Zu diesem beizutragen gehört aber zum größten Glück des Künstlers … (Ibid.)

Mach's philosophy, Bahr argues, resembles an impressionistic painting, in which colors and shades appear differently from each perspective, and boundaries seem to be fluid and blurry:

> All the boundaries are lifted, the physical and the psychological blur, the self is dissolved, and everything is a never-ending stream, which seems to stagnate in one place and speed up in the other; everything is just a movement of colors, tones, heat, pressure, spacialities, and temporalities, which appear as attunements, sensations, and will on the other side, here, with us. ("Impressionismus" 197)

> Alle Trennungen sind hier aufgehoben, das Physikalische und das Psychologische rinnt zusammen, das Ich löst sich auf und alles ist nur eine ewige Flut, die hier zu stocken scheint, dort eiliger fließt, alles ist nur Bewegung von Farben, Tönen, Wärmen, Drücken, Räumen und Zeiten, die auf der anderen Seite, bei uns herüben, als Stimmungen, Gefühle und Willen erscheinen. ("Impressionismus" 197)

With the skepticism toward the self as a self-aware entity—in favor of a stream of associations, memories, and sensual perceptions—not only the notion of authorship is challenged in a way that justifies the understanding of *Junges Wien* as a prefiguration of postmodernity and its identity crisis (Le Rider). But Mach's Empirio-criticism also paves the way for a deeper epistemological skepticism, which expands the notion of the "unrettbares Ich" and includes the *episteme* of non-human animals.

A "central figure in the genesis of twentieth-century philosophy,"[4] as Hilde Spiel

[4]As Spiel illustrates, Mach's influence exceeds both the "Vienna Circle" and *Junges Wien*: "No account of the influence exercised by thinkers or creators in *fin de siècle* Vienna can fail to begin with Mach" (133). In a similar vein, Jaakko Hintikka emphasizes Mach's role as a "highly influential exponent of ways of thinking that influenced not only the intellectual climate in turn-of-the-century Vienna, but more widely, twentieth-century philosophy in general" (32). In his article "Ernst Mach at the Crossroads of Twentieth-Century Philosophy," Hintikka also highlights Mach's influence on Husserl and the phenomenological

and others point out, Mach also has a profound impact on Hofmannsthal, and his approach of empirio-criticism is reflected in many of the author's poetic texts (133).[5] Hofmannsthal is specifically interested in Mach's criticism of a presupposed notion of subjectivity, the Cartesian *Cogito* of Western tradition, as well as the literary phenomenology of perception as "mass elements." Reflecting both Mach's and Bahr's notion of the "Unrettbarkeit des Ichs," the narrative style in "Reitergeschichte" evokes the perspective of a fragmented subject whose processes of perception remain autonomous from consciousness. At the same time, Hofmannsthal's texts foreground the body as a refuge for truth and meaning. This body, however, is intertwined with the one of non-human animals in intricate and complicated ways.

Slant Perception: "Die Reitergeschichte" and Queer Phenomenology

The story from 1898, which is set in the revolutionary year of 1848 within the context of the Italian War of Independence in then Austrian Lombardy—follows a fictitious episode in the Austrian squadron under Baron Rofrano in the environs of Milan. After a range of successfully won battles, Rofrano's victorious squadron decides to parade through the defenseless city of Milan. In Milan, the sergent Anton Lerch believes to recognize a familiar woman and decides to return to the city in eight days to be accommodated by her. After this encounter, Lerch's fantasies are fueled by his desire for a "civilian sphere" without the relationship of (military) service, through which the

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tradition, for which also Denis Fisette and, most prominently, Hermann Lübbe argue.

[5] Thomas Kovach argues: "Mach's systematic dissolution of the boundary between the inside and the outside, the self and the world, in favor of a mass of elements of perception, his refusal to view the self as anything other than an "ideelle denkökonomische, keine reelle Einheit," is reflected in … texts by Hofmannsthal." ("Hofmannsthal's 'Ein Brief'" 89)

mechanisms of war nevertheless "shimmer through" ("das Verlangen nach einer Zivilatmosphäre … ohne Dienstverhältnis … durch welche doch das Kriegsmäßige durchschimmert;" 42). Instigated by the hunger for further and "unexpected" acquisitions, which thrusts like a splinter in his flesh ("Aber in ihm war ein Durst nach unerwartetem Erwerb … war der Splitter im Fleisch, um den herum alles von Wünschen und Begierden schwärmte;" 42), Lerch strays from his squadron and rides into a remote village. Here, he encounters not only various animals—rats, a cow, and dogs—, but also his own *Doppelgänger* before he prevails in battle over another group of rebellious Italian forces and returns to his squadron with nine captured horses. His superior Rofrano, however, orders his subordinates to let the additional horses run free and—as Lerch refuses—executes him with a single shot. The story ends as Rofrano's troops reconvene with their legion later in the day.

The figure of a fragmented and "dissolved" self, as imagined in Mach's philosophy and Bahr's poetology, is conjured up in "Reitergeschichte" in many ways. The phenomenological description of its epistemological processes defines the narrative and contributes substantially to its unique style. In his article on perception and awareness of reality in "Reitergeschichte," Peter Mollenhauer observes the striking density of vocabulary in the story, referring to and describing acts of perception, especially in the visual sphere (283). Indeed, the entry of the soldiers into Milan is described from the perspective of the squadron's view ("vom trabenden Pferde herab funkelnden Auges … das auf alles dies hervorblickt;" 40-41), under Lerch's alleged sharp gaze the room of his acquaintance in all of its details is revealed ("scharfem Blick verriet sich in einem Pfeilerspiegel die Gegenwand des Zimmers;" 41), and in the final

scene Lerch fastens his gaze on Rofrano, who stares back motionlessly ("richtete seinen verschleierten Blick auf den Wachtmeister, der ihm starr ins Gesicht sah;" 47). However, the overabundance of descriptive visuality is deceiving. Despite the plethora of references to visual—and other sensual—perception, these do not provide a clearer picture of the narrative's reality—neither to the reader nor to the characters. This effect is especially salient in Lerch. Mollenhauer rightfully argues: "Empiricism does not necessarily result in consciousness of the perceived situation" ("Empirische Anschauung bringt nicht ohne weiteres Bewusstsein der erfassten Situation mit sich") (284). Rather than the description of the story's events, narrated and reflected upon by the voice of a narrator, the narrative emphasizes the processes of sensual perceptions and impressions in their phenomenological appearance to a subject that is no longer a coherent entity.

The following passage of „Reitergeschichte" reiterates almost literally Bahr's postulate—"Every palpable truth is seen differently from every perspective and its reflection changes with every mirror" ("Jede handgreifliche Wirklichkeit wird anders von jedem Spiegel geschaut und ihre Erscheinung wechselt mit jedem neuen Spiegel") ("Überwindung des Naturalismus" 52). It illustrates how the narrative foregrounds the phenomenology of sensual perception, and in doing so evokes the figure of a "unrettbares Ich:"

> As soon as he has lifted the horse's second, white-socked front leg to check on his Brown's hoof, a door, which led from the interior of the house to the hallway in the front, opened indeed, and a voluptuous woman appeared (one could almost still call her young), clad in a slightly disheveled robe; behind her, however, a bright room with windows to the

> yard revealed itself to the Sergeant, as well as a few small pots with basil and red geraniums, a mahagony wardrobe and a group of mythological porcelain sculptures, while Lerch's sharp eye caught the brief reflection of the room's opposite wall in a standing mirror at the same time, filled with a big white bed and a concealed door through which a stout, clean-shaven elderly man retreated at that very moment. (41)

> Kaum hatte er hier den zweiten weißgestiefelten Vorderfuß seines Braunen in die Höhe gehoben, um den Huf zu prüfen, als wirklich eine aus dem Inneren des Hauses ganz vorne in den Flur mündende Zimmertür aufging und in einem etwas zerstörten Morgenanzug eine üppige, beinahe noch junge Frau sichtbar wurde, hinter ihr aber ein helles Zimmer mit Gartenfenstern, worauf ein paar Töpfchen Basilika und rote Pelargonien, ferner mit einem Mahagonieschrank und einer mythologischen Gruppe aus Biskuit dem Wachtmeister sich zeigte, während seinem scharfen Blick noch gleichzeitig in einem Pfeilerspiegel die Gegenwand des Zimmers sich verriet, ausgefüllt von einem großen weißen Bette und einer Tapetentür, durch welche sich ein beleibter, vollständig rasierter älterer Mann im Augenblicke zurückzog. (41)

The convoluted syntactic structure is in an antithetical relationship to the prevalence of vocabulary that refers to processes of sensation and perception, especially within the visual field. Perception is mediated through the effect of multiple reflecting mirrors—and thus never constitutes a single act of "grasping the truth," but rather conveyed through a

myriad of different perspectives and angles. In the oscillating interplay of concealment and disclosure, objects and persons reveal themselves in the blink of an eye almost by accident before they retreat into the privacy of the bedroom. Although Lerch's recollection of both Vuic and her companion later motivates the events of the story, the detailed description of the series of Lerch's sense impressions does not bolster the teleology of the plot. Through the metonymic chain of visual perception, meaning of the situation is deferred, and perception never seems to be fully appropriated by human awareness, since it constantly slips away and eludes conscious reflection. The complexity of this passage consists of a web of multiple and skillfully interwoven subordinate clauses that inscribes the poetics of the "unrettbares Ich" syntactically and grammatically into the narrative form (Goltschnigg 65).

The view of the room mediated through the mirror, however, not only gives a phenomenological account of perception, but also accounts for what Sara Ahmed calls a "queer moment" (561). It marks the disorientation of the subject's relation to a space that appears oblique and creates a "queer effect" in the reader.[6] In *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty points out:

> If a situation is constructed in which a subject only sees the room he is in through the intermediary of a mirror reflecting the room at a 45 angle from the vertical, then the subject at first sees the room as "oblique." A man moving through the room seems to lean to the side as he walks. A piece of cardboard falling along the doorframe appears to fall diagonally. The

[6]As Ahmed points out, "the root for the word *queer* is from the Greek for cross, oblique, adverse" (565).

whole thing is “strange.” (297)[7]

The “strange” or queer effect of this passage is on the one hand created through the slant perspective that evokes a sensation of disorientation. On the other hand, however, the text also suggests Lerch's desire for the bold, elderly man that deviates from heteronormative expectations and alludes to the queerness of not only his bodily orientation in space, but also his sexual orientation. Vuic’s stout companion plays a significant role in Lerch’s fantasies:

> The clean-shaven man soon took on the role of a trusted, slightly submissive friend whom you treat with familiarity; someone who shared gossip, and brought you tobacco and capons; soon, however, he was pressed against the wall, had to pay bribes ... and grew into the vague shape of a giant, into whom you could drill holes at twenty different spots of his body and draw gold instead of blood ... The clean-shaven, stout man ... played a significant role in his daydreams, almost more so than the nice, wide bed, and Vuic’s fine, white skin. (42)

> Der Rasierte nahm bald die Stelle eines vertraulich behandelten, etwas unterwürfigen Freundes ein, der Hoftratsch erzählte, Tabak und Kapaunen brachte, bald wurde er an die Wand gedrückt, musste Schweigegelder zahlen, … und wuchs zu einer schwammigen Riesengestalt, der man an

[7] The French original “étrange” also has the connotation “queer.” See Colin Smith’s translation of this passage: “If we so contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is, only through a mirror which reflects it at an angle at 45º to the vertical, the subject at first sees the room “slantwise.” A man walking about in it seems to lean to one side as he goes. A piece of cardboard falling down the door-frame looks to be falling obliquely. The general effect is “queer”” (297).

> zwanzig Stellen Spundlöcher in den Leib schlagen und statt Blut Gold abzapfen konnte ... Der rasierte, beleibte Mann ... spielte darin eine bedeutende Rolle, fast mehr noch als das schöne breite Bett und die feine weiße Haut der Vuic.

In Lerch's phantasies, the elderly man is fetishized to the point of turning into a vast figure that can satisfy any possible need and desire. While Frink points out his material exploitation as "the purveyor of tabacco, capons, gossip, and other amenities" (70), the connotation of sexual desire and the imagery of a close and intimate contact between the men's bodies, also allow for a queer reading that runs counter to the heterosexual narrative with Vuic at its center. Such a reading situates Lerch within the larger context of a queer orientation that includes both his spatial-temporal and his sexual orientation. While Lerch's 'deviate desire' seems to be corrected immediately by his hand gesture and announcement to return to Vuic in eight days, which follows this episode, the passage makes these efforts to straigthen any queer efforts visible.

Moreover, Lerch's desire not only runs counter to heteronormative frameworks, but also queers the separation of species that separates human from non-human animals. Throughout the narrative, horse and rider are closely intertwined. Lerch's horse serves as the starting point for Lerch's chain of perception and frames his visual impression of the scene, as the narrative situates the protagonists between the front legs of his horse. Lerch's perspective—and by extension also the reader's—is mediated through the animal. Moreover, the horse instigates the encounter between Lerch and Vuic. As he believes to sense a pebble in his horse's hoof, Lerch decides to dismount and check the leg: "[F]or at the same time his horse's stiff stride let him to the assumption that it had stepped into a

sharp stone, …" ("[D]a er gleichzeitig aus einigen steifen Tritten seines Pferdes vermutete, es hätte in eines der vorderen Eisen einen Straßenstein eingetreten, ...") (41). The narrative provides the reader with a bodily horizon that is cohabited by human and nonhuman animals. The phenomenology of the text is oriented towards an intertwinement of bodies across species. Ahmed argues for an embodied and worldly consciousness shaped through intimate encounters and bodily contact with others:

> [B]odies take shape through tending toward objects that are reachable, which are available within the bodily horizon ... Bodies as well as objects take shape through being oriented toward each other, as an orientation that may be experienced as the cohabitation or sharing of space. Bodies are hence shaped by contact with objects and others... (552)

The bodily horizon of "Reitergeschichte" is co-shaped by human and non-human animals, and this intertwinement is made productive for the narrative technique of the text. Within the cultural and philosophical background of *Junges Wien*, and its crisis of identity expressed in the topos of the "unrettbares Ich," Hofmannsthal employs the animals to draw attention to the epistemological skepticism inherent in this figure, and to find new means of poetic expression appropriate for the deconstruction of human subjectivity.

The so-called "Nervenkunst" as "sensitivity … to titillating stimuli" of the modern genius strives for the representation of perception and sensual impressions without the mediation of consciousness (Seeba 33). Rieckmann illustrates the inherent problem for the narrative voice to represent something that eludes the very grasp of reflection and consciousness:

> "Objective" narration —as demanded and practiced by the naturalists—

> cannot achieve 'objectivation of the soul's inner conditions,' for it can only report, but never reflect it in its becoming and decaying. Neither can the seemingly appropriate first-person narration do justice to this task, for it … can only express what has already been processed by the self's consciousness, but not that what eludes precisely the grasp of self-awareness, 'the perceptions of nerves and senses even before they arrive into our consciousness.' (33)
>
> Die von den Naturalisten geforderte und verwirklichte "sachliche" Erzählmethode reicht jedoch zur 'Objektivierung der inneren Seelenzustände' nicht aus, da sie von ihnen nur berichten, sie aber nicht in ihrem Werden und Vergehen zeigen kann. Auch die Ich-Form, die scheinbar am nächsten liegt, kann dieser Aufgabe nicht gerecht werden, da sie … immer nur zeigen kann, was bereits durch das Bewußtsein des Ich gefiltert ist, gerade aber nicht das, was sich der Selbsterkenntnis entzieht, 'die Erscheinungen auf den Nerven und Sinnen, noch bevor sie in das Bewusstsein gelangt sind.' (33)

While Rieckmann's study claims that Bahr—and with him many writers of *Junges Wien*—favors a third-person narrator to represent "what eludes the grasp of self-awareness," traditional readings of Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte" have been blind to the epistemological function of the animals to evoke this very sensation. However, the non-human animals are constitutive for apprehending human subjectivity in the text, and subsequently for the reflection of the epistemology of the "unrettbares Ich." Its aesthetic

representation not only reflects the philosophical and cultural debates in *Junges Wien*, but also presents new and "revolutionary" ways of storytelling by envisioning a joint bodily horizon shared by human and non-human animals and a poetic phenomenology that queers both spatial and sexual orientation beyond heteronormative and species boundaries.

"A Joint Venture:" Embodied Zoopoetics in "Reitergeschichte"

Mach's empirio-criticism paves the way for a critical examination not only of human perception and epistemology, but also of the intricate ways with which we are connected to other forms of life. His thinking was closely aligned with the development of phenomenology in the early twentieth century. As Lübbe points out, the limits of scientific knowledge forge a methodological demand "for the elementary reality of human experience to be taken as the object of theory ... and the critical empiricist themselves, particularly Mach, made good progress along phenomenological lines" (104). The cultural and intellectual climate that deconstructed subjectivity and focused on the body as situated in and perceiving the world yield to the specific zoopoetic approach in Hofmannsthal's texts.

Influenced by Mach's / Bahr's figure of the "Unrettbarkeit des Ichs," Hofmannsthal turns to the body as the site where some form of continuity and hence identity can possibly be established. This body, however, appears to be a sensual and perceiving body. In *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* Mach determines perception to be the foundation for human epistemology and locates it in our "animal origin" as he observes the disconnection between the perceiving and the reflecting, self-conscious self.

According to Mach, the epistemology of the "unrettbares Ich" is not only intricately linked to our "animal self," but also both exceeds and undermines the notion of a personal self altogether. As Haller emphasizes: "Cognition is for Mach an attitude that emerges from our animal origin; that exceeds individuality precisely because others participate in it" ("Erkennen ist für Mach eine aus der tierischen Herkunft stammende Einstellung, die dem individuellen Besitz schon dadurch entzogen ist, als andere daran teilhaben") (340-341). Responding to Bahr's concept of the "modern genius," Hofmannsthal addresses the question of the body in the following section of his journal:

> We have no consciousness that exceeds the present moment, for each of our souls lives just for one moment. Our memory belongs only to our body, which seemingly reproduces the past. That means that it produces something new and similar in our disposition: my self from yesterday does not concern me any more than Napoleon's or Goethe's. (*Reden und Aufsätze III* 333)
>
> Wir haben kein Bewusstsein über den Augenblick hinaus, weil jede unsere Seelen nur einen Augenblick lebt. Das Gedächtnis gehört nur dem Körper: er reproduziert scheinbar das Vergangene, d.h. er erzeugt ein ähnliches Neues in der Stimmung: mein Ich von gestern geht mich so wenig an wie das Ichs Napoleons oder Goethes. *Reden und Aufsätze III* 333)

This passage appears at first to be part of the manifesto for the so-called "Nervenkunst"—favoring the tentative sketches of the momentary—by envisioning human life as stripped of continuity and deprived of what in the metaphysical concept of

identity is an essential quality for subjectivity—the "soul." However, a closer reading of this text reveals a more complex relationship between past and present, mind and body, than it first suggests. For Hofmannsthal, memory is located in the body—"Das Gedächtnis gehört nur dem Körper." We cannot be consciously aware of this past or reflect upon it; awareness can only be guaranteed by what is momentary, while the past remains ever elusive—"We have no consciousness that exceeds the present." While the past always eludes the grasp of reflection, it nevertheless remains constantly 'present,' as the body apparently reproduces it—" it seemingly reproduces the past." The body hence perpetually carries on its own past as it allegedly generates the present as a similacrum—a "something new and similar"—of its own history.

In "Reitergeschichte" these thoughts are reflected, and perception is depicted as part of a bodily consciousness that exceeds the subjective experience, while it is intricately linked to the human-animal body. As illustrated in the passage cited above, the verbs in the passive mode—"sichtbar wurde," sich zeigte," "sich verriet"—allude to perception as a process that exceeds the notion of a personal, conscious self. Here the so-called "Nervenkunst" is expressed through the chain of multiple associations, which only appear briefly in the "spotlight" of the narrative, and seem to take place within a sphere of impersonality. This effect is also evoked in the narrative of the troop's entry into Milan:

> With the sound of the church bells at noon … a road to the right, a road to the left, like a hill of ants, stirred up, filling up with astonished faces; cursing and fading bodies, disappearing in doorways, sleepy windows opened by the exposed arms of beautiful and strange women, … glancing

> down from their horses through masks of blood-stained dust; entering through the Porta Venezia, leaving through the Porta Ticinese: in such a manner did the beautiful squadron ride through Milan. (40-41)
>
> Unter dem Geläute der Mittagsglocken … Straße rechts, Straße links, wie ein aufgewühlter Ameishaufen sich füllend mit staunenden Gesichtern; fluchende und erbleichende Gestalten hinter Haustoren verschwindend, verschlafende Fenster aufgerissen von den entblößten Armen schöner Unbekannter; … vom trabenden Pferde herab funkelnden Auges auf all dies hervorblickend aus einer Larve von blutgesprengtem Staub; zur Porta Venezia hinein, zur Porta Ticinese wieder hinaus: so ritt die schöne Schwadron durch Mailand. (40-41)

Through the descriptive overabundance of sensual impressions, this scene captures the hustle of Milan in the impression of an 'anthill.' Despite the plethora of visual stimuli, heightened through the erotic allure of the women's half-naked arms, there is no individual subject through which the stimuli are focalized. In fact, the participle construction—"glancing down" ("auf all dies hervorblickend")—makes it impossible for the reader to determine *who* the perceiving subject in this passage is. Through the image of the streets of Milan swarming with anonymous strangers, both the subjects and the objects of perception remain ambiguously located within an anonymous herd. Syntax and semantics evoke the phenomenology of perception as an impersonal and anonymous process, which does not fully coincide with the perceiving subject.

Moreover, the narrative deconstructs the recollection of Lerch's personal history,

reverberating Hofmannsthal's reflection of a "body memory:"

> As the sergeant recalled the woman's name, and in doing so also remembered various other facts—that she was the widow or divorcee of a commissioned officer from Croatia, that he spent a few evenings and parts of the nights with her and her actual lover back then—he tried to reveal under her voluptuousness the exuberant and skinny body of her past. (41)

> Indem aber dem Wachtmeister der Name der Frau einfiel und gleichzeitig eine Menge anderes: daß es die Witwe oder geschiedene Frau eines kroatischen Rechnungsoffiziers war, daß er mit ihr vor neun oder zehn Jahren in Wien in Gesellschaft eines anderen, ihres damaligen eigentlichen Liebhabers, einige Abende und halbe Nächte verbracht hatte, suchte er nun mit den Augen unter ihrer jetzigen Fülle die damalige üppig-magere Gestalt wieder hervorzuziehen. (41)

While this paragraph narrates Lerch's biographical reminiscences, it also subverts their alleged factuality. As it turns out, none of these events, which Lerch seems to recollect, are certain. Hence, he can neither remember for sure whether his acquaintance had been a divorcee or a widow, nor when their first encounter occurred. The whole premise of this passage and the reliability of the claims it makes are based on the fact that Lerch recollects Vuic's name. The causality invoked by the adverb "indem," however, is deceiving. As it turns out shortly afterwards, Lerch does not remember the woman's real name, but only the nickname he had given her many years ago—Vuic. Her Christian name, however, has slipped his memory, which inversely calls the previous information

into question.

In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty addresses some of the questions for which Mach's Empirio-criticism paved the way in greater detail and links them specifically to questions of language, reconceptualizing expression as a bodily activity that exceeds the human being. In his chapter on "Sensing," Merleau-Ponty locates perception specifically within "an atmosphere of generality:"

> Every perception takes place within an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us as anonymous … I would have to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive … I have no more awareness of being the true subject of my sensation than I do of my birth or my death. (223)

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes human experiences pivotal to one's sense of oneself, and hence seemingly highly 'personal,' which nevertheless elude our self-awareness to emphasize, "we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception" (*Phenomenology* 369). He argues that experience always already exceeds our sense of ourselves: "I must imagine myself as preexisting or as surviving myself in order to be able to experience them, and thus I could not genuinely conceive of my birth or my death," he continues (*Phenomenology* 223). This insight leads to the conclusion of an impersonal preexistence of the senses in general: "Sensation necessarily appears to itself in a milieu of generality" (Ibid.). Ted Toadvine also links Merleau-Ponty's notion of an anonymous perception specifically to "our animal nature:" "This anonymous someone is precisely my animal life, the live of my body as a natural self" ("Animal Voices" 112). Not only does Merleau-Ponty thus reevaluate the significance of the human body in his philosophical approach. But he also illustrates how our body remains connected to our own "animal

life." The grounds in which Merleau-Ponty anchors this pre-personal perception is the "orignal past" or "a past which has never been present:"

> Hence reflection does not itself grasp its full significance unless it refers to the unreflective fund which it presupposes, upon which it draws, and which constitutes for it a kind of original past, a past that has never been present. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 252)

Merleau-Ponty's reference to the "original past" or "past that has never been present" is reminiscent of Mach's approach to epistemology as situated within our "animal origin," while emphasizing the fact that it eludes our conscious grasp of reflection. In a similar vein, Merleau-Ponty argues for an unconscious expression of the human body that includes other non-human animals as well:

> It is the body which points out, and which speaks ... This disclosure [of the body's immanent expressiveness] … extends, as we shall see, to the whole sensible world, and our gaze, prompted by the experience of our own body, will discover in all other "objects" the miracle of expression. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 360).

This understanding of an embodied expression as a trait inherent not only in the human, but in "all other 'objects'" provides a zoopoetic approach to language that Hofmannsthal implements in his tale. Aaron M. Moe coins the term "zoopoetics" as a text, in which "nonhuman animals (*zoon*) are makers (*poiesis*), and they have agency in that making" (2):

> The etymology also suggests that when a poet undergoes the making process of *poiesis* in harmony with the gestures and vocalizations of

> nonhuman animals, a multispecies event occurs. It is a co-making. A joint venture. The two-fold foci of zoopoetics —that nonhuman animals are makers and that his making has shaped the form of human poems— illustrates how animals *animate* … and therefore bring the sensuous world to the surface of the written page. (2)

Although Moe's concept of "poetic animality" deserves credit for minding the animal and granting agency through their "bodily energy" to "navigate rhetorical situations" (4), his concept of a distinct animalistic bodily energy forestalls the "intercorporeal relations" from coming into view, in which—according to Susan McHugh—"we cannot help but find ourselves alongside others" (14). These bodily intimacies across species borders shape and consequently alter the bodies involved as they orient towards each other (Ahmed 564). They mark the possibility for queer moments to occur as they disturb the order of things (Ibid. 565), and are an integral part of zoopoetics. As Roger Lancaster argues, desire is always already at work in the process of *poiesis*: "This desire is on the side of poetry, in the original and literal sense of the word: *poiesis,* 'production,' as in the making of things and the world. Not an object at all, desire is what makes objects possible" (2003, 266). In Hofmannsthal' "Reitergeschichte," Lerch's intimate alignment with and orientation toward his horse and other animals in the story not only makes way for zoopoetic forms of bodily expressions, but also eventually contributes to his downfall to reestablish the (militaristic) order of things.

Meeting the Gaze of 'the Animal:' Queer Kinship in "Reitergeschichte"

In *Animal Symbolism in Hofmannsthal's Works,* Helen Frink observes: "The lack

of spoken communication in the story heightens the reader's awareness of Lerch's total isolation from society" (67). Similarly, Ellen Ritter argues: "Communication never occurs … with any other human being" (67). The absence of verbal communication in "Reitergeschichte" is indeed striking. Direct speech is limited to three brief utterances—Lerch announcing his return to Vuic, Rofrano's command to let go of the horses, followed by Lerch's execution. All three of them resemble military orders or threatening premonitions more than a mutual interaction or dialogue. Both Frink and Ritter connect the absence of verbal communication and Lerch's alienation and isolation from his fellow men to his status within the military ranks: "His whole existence is defined by being a soldier," Ritter argues (Ibid.). This argument resembles Mollenhauer's thesis that links Lerch's demeanor to his position within the squadron. These approaches ignore, however, the pervasiveness with which human interaction—both verbal and non-verbal—is foreclosed, as well as meaningful exchanges that arise with other non-human animals.

Set in the historical context of the Italian War of Independence in 1848, "Reitergeschichte" illustrates the crisis of collective and personal identity in turn-of-the-century Vienna as it depicts a world void of human interaction and responsibility, and defined by violence. The narrative displays the loss of ethical relationships between humans as the flipside of the dismissal of subjectivity as self-consciousness. If the subject is irretrievably lost, it cannot be held accountable for its deeds—"Mein Ich von gestern geht mich so wenig an wie das Ich Napoleons oder Goethes," Hofmannsthal writes (*Reden und Aufsätze III* 333). Spiel argues:

> Mach maintains that the ego is not a substantial entity but a complex of sensory perceptions. Since its thoughts, sentiments, moods and memories

> are structured differently every day, the self has merely relative continuity … Also, for that reason it cannot be held responsible for is actions. (134)

Spiel's argument not only points to the inherent problem of Mach's phenomenological thinking and its implications for the "unrettbares Ich" to function within a social and ethical context, but also can be applied to Hofmannsthal's concerns as a writer. As Seeba points out: "What is striking in Hofmannsthal's and Schnitzler's dramatic accounts of the new sense of time is the individualist, potentially psychological, and implicitly moralistic interpretation of a primarily cultural crisis" (33).

The "moralistic interpretation" of "Reitergeschichte" is implicitly conveyed through the human-animal relationship. As the narrative depicts the absence of verbal communication between the protagonists, it further dramatizes the lack of human interaction through not only effacing dialogue, but also the human face as the site for an intersubjective encounter. Lerch rides through the deserted village when he meets a "woman whose face he could not see" ("Frauensperson, deren Gesicht er nicht sehen konnte") (34). While parading through the city, the faces of the squadron are concealed by a mask of blood and dust ("Larve aus blutgesprengtem Staub"), indicating that previous acts of violence have distorted their faces (30). Similarly, the battle between the squadron and the Italian troops contorts Rofrano's face to a grimacing mask with "eyes that are wide open and fiercely bared teeth" ("weit aufgerissenen Augen und grimmig entblößten Zähnen") (37). The significance of the face and its absence from the narrative is also emphasized in Lerch's encounter with his own *Doppelgänger*, when

> [He noticed] a rider from his own regiment approaching him—a sergeant, to be precise, on a brown horse with white-socked legs. Since he knew that

> there was no such horse in the entire squadron—other than the one he was sitting on at that very moment—, but still could not see the face of the other person … (45)
>
> [Er bemerkte] einen Reiter des eigenen Regiments auf sich zukommen, und zwar einen *Wachtmeister*, und zwar auf einem Braunen mit weißgestiefelten Vorderbeinen. Da er nun wohl wußte, daß sich in der ganzen Schwadron kein solches Pferd befand, ausgenommen dasjenige, auf welchem er selbst in diesem Augenblicke saß, er das Gesicht des anderen Reiters aber immer noch nicht erkennen konnte… (45)

Lerch fails to recognize himself in his hallucinatory perception of the other person, and slowly realizes the similarity only through his horse. The emphasis on the face is striking as the—presumably—other rider remains obscure until the very last moment when Lerch finally recognizes himself "mit stierem Blick" (Ibid.).

While Lerch's ride through the enigmatic and dreamlike village has received much scholarly attention, these readings have been blind to the queer moments encapsulated in these passages. Lerch's queer orientation further determines his bodily and worldly situadedness, and structures the way in which he approaches objects that "slip away." Ahmed argues for queer orientation as precisely this relationship to fleeting objects:

> [W]e can say that the queer object, the one out of line, on a slant, the odd and strange one, is hence encountered as slipping away, as threatening to become out of reach … If queer is also an orientation toward queer, a way to approach what is retreating, then what is queer might slide between

> sexual orientation and other kinds of orientation. Queer would become a matter of how one approaches the object that slips away, a way to inhabit the world at the point at which things fleet. (566)

Lerch's queer orientation shapes the poetics of phenomenology in "Reitergeschichte" as a disorientation device and disrupts the heteronormative order of the military ranks. Paying attention to the queer moments that unfold in the narrative and that mark Lerch's desire and affection for both nonhuman and human animals as being outside of the heteronormative order within which he is situated, we can read the uncanny encounter with his own *Doppelgänger* as a continuous process of disorientation. The image of his own alter-ego makes it possible to negotiate feelings of loss. Fitting within the straight order means to abandon not only potential objects of desire and love, but also substantial parts of one's own identity—Judith Butler's concept of mourning the 'queer part' of our identity ("Imitation and Gender Insubordination"). Faced with different "straightening devices" that operate within heteronormative orders, the queer object is experience as one that 'slips away.' Lerch's queer orientation that needs to be suppressed to sustain himself within a compulsively heteronormative order can therefore account for the experiences of loss, death and decay that surface during his uncanny and nightmarish ride through the village.

Moreover, if we understand queerness as a way to inhabit the world and to situate ourselves and our bodies within a certain relation to other "objects," Lerch's queer orientation also extends to the diegetic animals of the story. While the faces of the human beings he encounters remain hidden, Lerch's gaze meets the eyes of a dog encapsulating a "humanity" that is absent from the world of human interaction: "The dog's small and

restless eyes expressed terrifying pain and anguish … its eyes were tired and sad beyond words" ("In den kleinen ruhelosen Augen war ein entsetzlicher Ausdruck von Schmerz und Beklemmung ... seine Augen waren unendlich müde und traurig" ("Reitergeschichte" 44). This assumption corresponds with the observation of Lerch's horse, which is disturbed by the violence that surrounds both rider and horse:

> From a doorstep to his left, two fighting and bleeding rats rolled into the middle of the street; the one below cried out so miserably that the sergeant's horse reacted strongly by staring at the ground with his head tilted and his breath panting. (Ibid.)
>
> Unter einer Türschwelle zur Linken rollten zwei ineinander verbissene blutende Ratten in der Mitte der Straße, von denen die unterliegende so jämmerlich aufschrie, daß das Pferd des Wachtmeisters sich verhielt und mit schiefem Kopf und hörbarem Atem gegen den Boden stierte. (Ibid.)

The dog's gaze poses a question of existential and ontological relevance, the potential of which Jacques Derrida emphasizes in *The Animal That Therefore I Am.* The revolutionary capital Derrida discovers in the famous gaze of his cat, who glances at him—naked—in the bathroom, and triggers shame in the observed human, lies in the reversal of the alleged gap between subjectivity and objectivity, observer and observant, and human and animal. Derrida asks: "What does its bottomless gaze offer to my sight? What does it say to me?" (12). Addressing the participants of the anthropocentric philosophical and cultural discourse—the anonymous "they," from which Derrida excludes himself—he points to the arrogance and ignorance behind human

exceptionalism: “They have taken no account of the fact that what they call ‘animal’ could look at them … (and address them)” (12). This look contains a silent question, which challenges the assumption that only humans possess *logos* and the implied violence of this philosophical tradition. Derrida’s cat, who in her singularity and individuality cannot be subsumed under the notion of “the” animal, offers a “philosophical gaze,” as Vera Hofmann calls it:

> The appearance of Derrida’s cat in the bathroom is so significant because she manages to reverse the usual direction of gazes. It is not the gaze on to an animal that is philosophically relevant in this appearance, but the gaze of an animal … The event of the reversed gaze turns the one who is usually the observer not only into the object of observation, but also makes me understand my objectivation at the same time. The sudden realization of being gazed upon by the Other leads to … the gaze onto myself through the Other’s eyes. (370-371)

> Entscheidend am Auftritt von Derridas Katze in seinem Badezimmer beziehungsweise in seinem Text ist, dass es ihr gelingt, die übliche Blickrichtung umzukehren. Das, worum es sich bei diesem Auftritt philosophisch dreht, ist nicht der Blick auf ein Tier, sondern der Blick von einem Tier. … Das Ereignis des Richtungswechsels lässt denjenigen, der sonst zu beobachten pflegt, nicht nur als Objekt der Beobachtung dastehen, sondern sich in dieser Gegenständlichkeit zugleich erfahren. Die plötzliche Realisation, von einem Anderen in den Blick genommen zu sein,

führt … zum Blick auf sich selbst mit anderen Augen. (370-371)

Derrida transfers the notion of intersubjectivity to the discourse of humanity and animality, and binds it to a critique of the violence inherent in the linguistic relationship to the animal (Hofmann 378). Just as Derrida's cat substantiates her role within the inquiry of human exceptionalism, the gaze of Hofmannsthals dog addresses Lerch in a specific way that calls his humanity into question. However, Derrida's account of the interspecies encounter remains firmly within a heteronormative paradigm. Not only is it a female cat, as Derrida reassures us, but the suggested reversal of the gaze follows straight lines. In other words, this encounter establishes a straight, heteronormative order, both in terms of sexual and in terms of spatial-temporal orientation. Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte," by contrast, stages an intimacy between human and animal that is based on the queer proximity of non-human and human animals and their bodies. If a zoopoetic text is co-shaped by agents across species, we need to address the fact that this "co-shaping" also affects these agents and their embodiments, requiring a queer approach to zoopoetics. As Chen points out: "Paying attention to the relationality among the figures allows us to see the complex queer intimacies involved" (115).

Reading Lerch as a queer figure also opens new ways of understanding the events that follow his encounter with Vuic and her companion and offer answers to the question the enigmatic ending of the story poses: Why does Lerch have to die? The kinship bonds and the queer moments from which they unfold threaten the hegemonic (species and sexual) order, which needs to be reinforced by eliminating the "queer object." While many interpretations of "Reitergeschichte" connect Lerch's downfall at the end to the fact that he crosses boundaries, which subsequently need to be reestablished through his

execution, they all remain firmly within a strictly heterosexual and humanistic framework. Yet, Lerch's "beastly rage" ("bestialischer Zorn") against Rofrano, who wants to deprive him of the horses, is also a result of Lerch's affect for and affiliation with the horses. After the image of his *Doppelgänger* has disappeared, Lerch is suddenly surrounded by an Italian squadron that he battles successfully—a victory that brings in nine new horses for Lerch's troops. However, when he is confronted with his superior's order to let go of the horses, Lerch refuses to obey:

> A beastly rage against this man in front of him, who wanted to take away his horse, surfaced from a deep and hidden part inside of him; such a horrifying rage against the face, the voice, the posture, and the entire being of this man that can only develop in mysterious ways through years of sharing close quarters. (45)
>
> [A]us einer ihm selbst völlig unbekannten Tiefe seines Innern stieg ein bestialischer Zorn gegen den Menschen da vor ihm auf, der ihm das Pferd wegnehmen wollte, ein so entsetzlicher Zorn über das Gesicht, die Stimme, die Haltung und das ganze Dasein dieses Menschen, wie es nur durch jahrelanges, enges Zusammenleben auf geheimnisvolle Weise entstehen kann.

The intimate bodily contact between rider and horse creates affective tendencies of care between human and nonhuman animals. Faced with the choice of succumbing to the heteropatriarchal structure of the military or to resist in an act of self-assertion that includes the right to determine his objects of affiliation and affect, the "queer kinship"

between Lerch and the horses prevails. In his attempt to reestablish the heterosexual and anthropocentric order, Rofrano sanctions Lerch and executes him. In what seems like a visual testimony to his affiliation with the animals, Lerch falls to the ground between the horses: “Der Wachtmeister taumelte, in die Stirn getroffen, mit dem Oberleib auf den Hals des Pferdes, dann zwischen den Braunen und den Eisenschimmel zu Boden” (“Reitergeschichte” 48) (“Hit in the forehead, the sergeant staggered and fell with his upper body onto the horse’s neck, then sank to the ground in between the brown and the white horse.”). However, the story does not end with Lerch's execution, but continues to follow the events of the squadron, which reconvenes seemingly “undisturbed” (“unbehelligt”) with the rest of the troops in the evening. The affirmation of the heterosexual and anthropocentric order that eliminated the queer object from the narrative therefore also continues into the frame narrative. Lerch is the queer object that literally has “slipped away;” he is erased from the narrative, and it is up to the reader to recuperate the queer moments and to counter the straightening devices through attentive reading practices.

The zoopoetic co-making yields to moments of bodily intimacy, affection, and kinship that queer the heterosexual and anthropocentric order. These queer moments provide a counter-reading to the masculine violence and the compulsive heterosexuality that focuses on the white woman on the white bed in the tale and is blind to other complex relationships in the text. While traditional literary criticism has tended to ignore these interspecies interactions, zoopoetic approaches also have been unable or unwilling to acknowledge the sexual implications that such a co-making entails. However, queer studies also benefit from the “zoo” perspective, and would do well to include animals and

concepts of animality as a category of critical inquiry that intersects with other identity constructions. If we understand Zoopoetics as an intersectional approach, it becomes not only an indispensable methodology for literary theory, but also a crucial analytical category for gender and sexuality studies, queer theory, and critical race theory. A queer zoopoetic approach to texts can reclaim how we read old and familiar texts. It can offer a different perspective than does the viewing of "the human" as masculine, white, straight, abled bodied and the animal as its metaphor. If we pay attention to the various spatial and affectionate relationships between bodies across species boundaries in a text, stories such as Hofmannsthal's tale can come back to new life, and open new ways of reading that challenge a compulsively heterosexual and anthropocentric framework.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN-ANIMAL ENTANGLEMENTS AND THE ORIGIN OF POETRY: HOFMANNSTHAL'S *EIN BRIEF* (*THE LETTER*) AND *DAS GESPRÄCH ÜBER GEDICHTE* (*THE CONVERSATION ABOUT POETRY)*

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Ein Brief* (*The Letter of Lord Chandos*) is not only one of the most famous texts by the author, but quickly became one of the best-known texts of literary modernity in general. Walter Jens regarded this fictional letter, written by Lord Chandos and addressed to Francis Bacon, published in 1902, as one of the texts that "revolutionized" German prose ("Der Mensch und die Dinge"), while Karl Pestalozzi was the first to explicitly identify the text as the "main testimony for Hofmannsthal's skepticism of language" ("Kronzeugnis für Hofmannsthals Sprachskepsis,")—a reading that has dominated the reception of *Ein Brief* to the present day (116). In a similar vein, Thomas Kovach stresses the significance of the letter for Hofmannsthal's crisis of language, and argues for the text as paradigmatic for many writers among Hofmannsthal's contemporaries ("Chandos and His Crisis" 85).

While critics have focused on the significance of the body for the production and communication of meaning in Hofmannsthal's *Ein Brief* (Bartl; Schäfer), this chapter explores how this corporeality is portrayed as intimately linked to the animal. Evoking the battle and the agony of poisoned rats fighting their inevitable death in the Lord's cellar as the genesis for what Chandos specifies at the end of the letter as "a language none of whose words are known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me"

("eine Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eine bekannt ist, eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen,") (141; 348), he refuses to propose a theory of language predicated on a fixed relation between meaning and symbolization. At the same time as Chandos reconceptualizes language by proposing to transition from a system with prescribed unequivocal meaning to a set of arbitrary attributions, he privileges the human-animal entanglement as the site where meaning, even though limited to the temporality of the present moment, emerges. The human-animal encounter is therefore decisive for what Müller-Richter and Larcati call the "symbolic moment" (322) in *Ein Brief* that rejects its participation in a semiotic system of a larger context of meaning and leaves a trace of this encounter in the text.

Its intertextual references—the letter's "hidden traces," in Jacques Le Rider's words (*Hugo von Hofmannsthal* 110)—not only allow the reader to bring *Ein Brief* into dialogue with texts by Francis Bacon, Johann Gottfried Herder, Novalis, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Baudelaire, and Fritz Mauthner, but also with Hofmannsthal's later text *Das Gespräch über Gedichte* (*The Conversation About Poetry*) (1904), in which the sacrifice of the animal and the momentary exchange of blood between human and ram enables the emergence of the symbol and the reconceptualization of poetic language. Both texts express a critique of the dualism of Western philosophy, rooted in the Platonic rational humanism and a deep suspicion of, and hostility towards the body, and mark the beginning of a development in the twentieth century to what Gerald Bartl calls the 'turn to the body' as a refuge for truth and a resurrection for meaning (*Spuren und Narben*). When Hofmannsthal conceives of the corporeal encounter between human and animal as an intertwinement that is constitutive for language, his vision is also very close to what

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty conceptualizes in his later writings as "the flesh" (*The Visible and the Invisible / Nature*). Responding to the twentieth-century impulse to "overthrow or move beyond the Cartesian separation of subject and object" ("Virginia Wolfe and the Flesh of the World" 856), for which Ernst Mach's figure of the "unrettbares Ich" became paradigmatic, Merleau-Ponty understands subjectivity as corporeality. A fundamental relation that structures both the self and the world, the notion of the flesh presupposes the "strange kinship" between non-human and human animal. Animality is viewed as an integral part of the human being and as an "interrogative fold within the world's flesh" (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 96), granting the animal a form of expression, and marking the human-animal body as intertwined with each other. While the flesh is marked by "a slippage of identification" (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 114), a "unity-in-difference" that organizes and characterizes its materiality, the opening gap allows for the "disclosure of the world," and ultimately for the emergence of poetry (Ibid.).

In this chapter, I will illustrate how both texts by Hofmannsthal sketch out a specific zoopoetic approach to language that resembles Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh and has been ignored by traditional literary criticism.[8] It is precisely the intertwinement of humanity and animality and their corporeal embeddedness that is at work in the genesis of the 'living' language that Hofmannsthal envisions both in *Ein Brief* und *Das Gespräch*, illustrating that, in Driscoll's words, "the question of language *is*, at a very basic level, synonomous with the question of the animal" (228). While

[8] While other critics have explored the connection between *Ein Brief* and *Das Gespräch über Gedichte* (Thomas Kovach; Robert Vilain; Peter Schäfer; Hans-Jürgen Schings), none of them has read the question of language that is raised in these texts as a question of the animal.

Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte" takes this entanglement as a point of departure to shape the narrative form, as discussed in Chapter 1, these texts explicitly reflect the limits and possibilities of language through the figure of the animals. They envision a concept of metaphor that resists the reductive reading of substitution and reconceptualize metaphor under the notion of materiality and performativity that hinges upon the figure of the animal and its entanglement with the human.

Lord Chandos' Crisis: "Mouldy Words" and A Self "Led Into the Void"

Despite "The Letter's" significance for literary modernism in general and the *Sprachkrise* in particular, critics have only recently started to acknowledge Chandos's more far-reaching critique that extends beyond the ability of language to convey meaning to underlying assumptions of memory, (self-) knowledge, and epistemology (Timo Günther; Peter Schäfer). To that end, it was necessary to employ the genre of the historicized epistle and situate the text within the year of 1603 to formulate the personal confession of an author living in the year of 1900. What Leopold von Andrian in a letter to Hofmannsthal finds to be an embarrassing "historical flitter" that seems to disguise the *Brief*'s meaning rather than to elucidate it (*Briefwechsel Lord Andrian* 157), is not merely a matter of form or style, but rather essential to the argument itself. Any direct communication or theoretical account would defeat the very purpose of the letter; evoking intertextual references, the text critiques the notion of rational knowledge, including self-knowledge, as the supposed hallmark of enlightened Western humanism.

Afflicted by the inability to participate in conversations about "a loftier or more general subject" ("ein höheres oder allgemeines Thema"), and incapable of using words

"of which everyone, fluently and without hestitation, is wont to avail himself" ("deren sich doch alle Menschen ohne Bedenken geläufig zu bedienen pflegen" (341; 133), Lord Chandos doubts precisely the conventional nature of language that makes it fit to serve as a system of communication. In the fictional letter addressed to Lord Francis Bacon and dated 1603, Chandos laments the state of loneliness ("das Gefühl furchtbarer Einsamkeit," Ibid.) in which he finds himself now that he has lost the ability to comprehend his fellow men. His incapability to converse goes hand in hand with a creative stagnation; Chandos, who used to be a prolific poet at the age of nineteen—not unlike Hofmannsthal himself—has found himself in a creative crisis for the past two years and apologizes to his concerned friend Bacon for his "complete abandonment of literary activity" ("gänzlichen Verzichtes auf literarische Betätigung") (129; 338). The pervasiveness of the Lord's crisis is emphasized again at the end of the letter; Chandos is certain that his literary silence will continue for the rest of his life, unless he finds a new language "none of whose words is known to [him]" ("von deren Worten [ihm] auch nicht eines bekannt ist") that allows him to justify himself before an unknown judge ("in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe mich vor einem unbekannten Richter mich verantworten werde") (140-141; 348).

It is language's capacity to convey unequivocal meaning, especially if words are meant to refer to abstract thoughts or ideas, at which Chandos' skepticism in *Ein Brief* aims. "For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea" ("Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen," (134; 342) he explains. Peter Schäfer speaks of Chandos' "critique of abstraction"

("Abstraktionskritik") (12), noting that it is initially abstract notions and terms that elude him:

> At first I grew by degrees incapable of discussing a loftier or more general subject in terms of which everyone, fluently and without hesitation, is wont to avail himself. I experienced an inexplicable distaste for so much as uttering the words *spirit, soul,* or *body.* (133)

> Zuerst wurde es mir allmählich unmöglich, ein höheres oder allgemeines Thema zu besprechen und dabei jene Worte in den Mund zu nehmen, deren sich doch alle Menschen ohne Bedenken geläufig zu bedienen pflegen. Ich empfand ein unerklärliches Unbehagen, die Worte "Geist," "Seele" oder Körper nur auszusprechen. (341)

The performative contradiction between the letter writer's eloquence and its content discloses a critique of language both as a representational system that allows us access to the things themselves, and as a reliable means of communication. With his inability to categorize, to produce and to perceive of meaning abstractly, Chandos critiques not only the reliability of language, but also draws attention to its epistemological function through which reality is both perceived and constructed: "My case, in short, is this: I have lost completely the ability to think or to speak of anything coherently" ("Mein Fall ist, in Kürze, dieser: Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen" (133; 341). His language crisis exposes the belief that the speaker is in control of language as false, and dismantles what Borgards calls the metaphysical ideology in which truth as a matter of thinking is

detached from language ("Stubb Kills A Whale" 178). *Ein Brief* presents a philosophy of language according to which truth is primarily constructed and deconstructed by language and brings forth rather than decodes truth.

Chandos systematically undermines what separates man as the *zoon logon echon* and the *animal rationale* in a decisive and unbridgeable way from his fellow non-human animals. This lineage of thought culminates most famously in Martin Heidegger's notion of human exceptionalism (*What is Called Thinking?*). Animals, Heidegger claims, have no hand, implying that they are unable to "gather" the way in which humans do.[9] Far more than presenting merely a critique of language, Chandos aims at the very separation between human beings and other non-human animals, and at how our conceptions of language have secured this abysmal gap throughout the history of Western philosophy. He is situated in the same position of 'nonpower' within logocentrism that is usually occupied by non-human animals, who presumably are not only deprived of language, but are also—following Heidegger—"poor in world." "For language," as Giorgio Agamben points out (citing Heymann Steinthal), "is so necessary and natural for the human being, that without it man can neither truly exist nor be thought of as existing. Either man has language, or he simply is not" (35).

What is at stake for Chandos therefore are not only the dissolution of categories that render abstract words and their ability to signify and to produce meaning futile, but also a profound feeling of self-alienation and of identity in crisis. The crisis of language and representation at the beginning of the twentieth century is also marked by an

[9] As Leonard Lawlor points out (quoting Derrida's *Of Spirit*), this inability is not merely a linguistic shortcoming, but concerns the animal's very relation to the "as such:" "In any case … animals do not have access to the 'as such' or to gathering. Animals therefore are deprived of language" ("Auto-Affection and Becoming (Part I)" 49).

underlying anxiety of human exceptionalism, which enters Hofmannsthal's texts in various ways. The dissolution of boundaries the Lord experiences eventually enables the transgression between animal and human. Describing the process of his dissolving identity with metaphors of "aquatic fluidity" (Günther 50), Chandos hardly recognizes himself ("Kaum weiß ich noch ob ich derselbe bin") and gets lost in the same "whirlpools" ("Wirbel") he discovers at the ground of the now meaningless words: "Whirlpools which gave me vertigo and, reeling incessantly, led into the void" ("Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt") (135; 343). The detachment of the signifier from its signified Other instigates Chandos' crisis that expands to a loss of identity and reality— Chandos' 'language skepticism' is only the beginning of a process during which it becomes increasingly difficult to relate to the world in a meaningful way:

> I found it impossible to express an opinion on the affairs at Court, the events in Parliament, or whatever you wish … the abstract terms of which the tongue must avail itself as a matter of course in order to voice a judgement—these terms crumbled in my mouth like mouldy fungi. (133-134)

> Ich fand es innerlich unmöglich, über die Angelegenheiten des Hofes, die Vorkommnisse im Parlament oder was Sie sonst wollen, ein Urteil herauszubringen … die abstrakten Worte, deren sich doch die Zunge naturgemäß bedienen muß, um irgendwelches Urteil an den Tag zu geben, zerfielen mir im Mund wie modrige Pilze. (341-342)

As words dissolve in his mouth like "mouldy fungi" ("modrige Pilze"), emphasizing their inability to bestow and convey meaning, Chandos feels alienated from his own self and the world around him. The text thus presents the crisis of language as a crisis of rational humanism, which implies severe social and cognitive consequences for the protagonist, and increases "the urgency to recuperate the semiotic process" (Müller-Richter and Lacarti 310). At the letter's end, Chandos formulates the hope to find a new language, "in which I might be able not only to write but to think … a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me" ("in welcher nicht nur zu schreiben, sondern auch zu denken mir vielleicht gegeben wäre … eine Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen") (140-141; 348). It is precisely the moment of this new language's genesis in which Hofmannsthal is interested, and which he tries to recuperate both in *Ein Brief* and *Ein Gespräch*. But what would be the nature of a language that presented a viable alternative to the rational *Begriffssprache* that the letter openly rejects? Both texts turn to the body as a guarantee for truth and as the site for a strange—and violent—experience of merging between animal and man.

The Poetics of Transgression in Ein Brief

Along with the deep skepticism of the reductionist dualism of Western philosophy, *Ein Brief* deconstructs the model of language and thinking based upon it, and reconstructs both based on what David Abrams calls a "corporeal embeddedness" in the world, for which the human-animal encounter is decisive. Chandos' narration of a mob of rats and his vision of their death-struggle after he had (presumably) poisoned them unexpectedly

overcomes him one evening during a ride on his estate:

> As I was trotting along over the freshly-ploughed land, nothing more alarming in sight than a scared covey of quail and, in the distance, the great sun sinking over the undulating fields, there suddenly loomed up before me the vision of that cellar, resounding with the death-struggle of a mob of rats. I felt everything within me: the cool, musty air of the cellar filled with the sweet and pungent reek of poison, and the yelling of the death-cries breaking against the mouldering walls; the vain convulsions of those convoluted bodies as they tear about in confusion and despair; their frenzied search for escape, and the grimace of icy rage when a couple collide with one another at a blocked-up crevice. (136)

> Da, wie ich im tiefen, aufgeworfenen Ackerboden Schritt reite, nichts Schlimmeres in meiner Nähe als eine aufgescheuchte Wachtelbrut und in der Ferne über den welligen Feldern die große sinkende Sonne, tut sich mir im Innern plötzlich dieser Keller auf, erfüllt mit dem Todeskampf dieses Volks von Ratten. Alles war in mir: die mit dem süßlich scharfen Geruch des Giftes angefüllte kühldumpfe Kellerluft und das Gellen der Todesschreie, die sich an modrigen Mauern brachen; diese ineinander hinjagenden Verzweiflungen; das wahnwitzige Suchen der Ausgänge; der kalte Blick der Wut, wenn zwei einander an der verstopften Ritze begegnen. (344)

The cellar opens up like a stage and the rats' agony enfolds viscerally inside Chandos'

body. The voices of the animals and the smell of the cellar are embodied within the Lord: "I felt everything within me" ("Alles war in mir"), he emphasizes; suggesting the dissolution of boundaries between subject and world for a moment: "[A]n immense sympathy, a flowing over into these creatures, or a feeling that an aura of life and death, of dream and wakefulness, had flowed for a moment into them—but whence?" ("[E]in ungeheures Anteilnehmen, ein Hinüberfließen in jene Geschöpfe oder ein Fühlen, daß ein Fluidum des Lebens und des Todes, des Traumes und des Wachens für einen Augenblick in sie hinübergeflossen ist—von woher?" (137; 345). This experience of transgression seemingly resembles the unity to which the younger Lord had aspired as prolific poet prior to his crisis: "In those days I, in a state of continuous intoxication, conceived the whole of existence as one great unit" ("Mir erschien damals in einer Art von andauernder Trunkenheit das ganze Dasein als große Einheit"), he writes retrospectively (132;340). However, this mystic and harmonious unity with nature, animals, and the world presupposes an intact relationship. The young Lord thus believes to find access to truth through words that he hopes to decipher like "the hieroglyphs of a secret, inexhaustible wisdom whose breath [he] sometimes seemed to feel as though from behind a veil" ("die Hieroglyphen einer geheimen, unerschöpflichen Weisheit, deren Anhauch [er] manchmal, wie hinter einem Schleier zu spüren meinte") (131; 339). The reference to Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* also alludes to a concept of universal language based on the assumption of truth that exists prior to and outside of language, and on a fixed relation between the two.

The letter evokes the agony of the poisoned rats as a paradigmatic scene for the genesis of a language that allows the speaker to enter "into a new and hopeful

relationship with the whole of existence" ("ein neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein") (138; 346). The brief, transitory moment eludes Chandos' control, and is yet at the heart of the new and meaningful relationship he envisions that calls on us "to think with the heart," and includes other non-human animals and the natural world. The Lord's encounter with the rats and the transgression of boundaries between the human and the animal at its heart becomes the decisive point of departure that enables both inanimate things in nature ("ein verkümmerter Apfelbaum, ein sich über den Hügel schlängelnder Karrenweg, ein moosbewachsener Stein") and animals ("ein Hund, eine Ratte, ein Käfer" 139; 345) to serve as triggers for epiphanies.[10] As Müller-Richter and Lacarti point out, the epiphany functions as a transgression, in which meaning is created in the symbolic moment by the individual and exceeds the object that triggers the epiphany (313-314). Following his experience with the poisoned rats, Chandos now describes brief moments of "revelation" ("Offenbarung"). For the Lord, these epiphanies restore meaning to the world, filling him with the overflowing sensation of joy:

> These mute and, on occasion, inanimate creatures rise toward me with such an abundance, such a presence of love, that my enchanted eye can find nothing in sight void of life. Everything that exists, everything I can remember, everything touched upon by my confused thoughts, has a meaning. (138)
>
> Diese stummen und manchmal unbelebten Kreaturen heben sich mir mit einer solchen Fülle, einer solchen Gegenwart der Liebe entgegen, daß

[10] As both Theodore Ziolkowski and Müller-Richter and Lacarti point out, random objects and animals are able to trigger innovative interpretations of the world during Chandos' epiphanies.

> mein beglücktes Auge auch ringsum auf keinen toten Fleck zu fallen vermag. Es erscheint mir alles, alles, was es gibt, alles … etwas zu sein. (345)

As "symbolic moments" (Müller-Richter and Lacarti) the epiphanies create meaning within the individual. Limited to the temporality of the moment, the epiphanies require Chandos to see "everything for the first time" ("jedes Ding jedesmal zum erstenmal") (*Gespräch über Gedichte* 501) and thus elude the very notion of repetition and generalization on which language as a prescribed system of signification is based. The phenomenon of the epiphany is opposed to the logic of the denotative language that Chandos criticizes in *Ein Brief.* Precisely because they refuse to participate in exchanges based on a system of fixed signs referring to original truths, the symbolic moments can endow ordinary things and "insignificant creature[s]" ("nichtige Kreatur[en]" with meaning and subsequently fill them with a life that recuperates the ossified words and "torpor of [his] brain" ("geistige Starre") (138; 345) Chandos experiences during his crisis.

The philosophy of language that Chandos presents in *Ein Brief* rests upon a "poetics of transgression," in which the crossing of boundaries between human and non-human animals is the decisive starting point for the emergence of a new and meaningful language.[11] Chandos' experience of merging with the animal in the rat episode serves as the paradigmatic symbolic moment that enables the following epiphanies to emerge and bestows them—albeit only temporarily and individually—with meaning. Chandos' inner experience resembles the concept of "becoming animal" that Gilles Deleuze and Félix

[11] Belinda Kleinhans coins the term "Poetologie des Übersetzens" in her article on becoming-animal in Günter Eich's work.

Guattari present in *A Thousand Plateaus.* As the authors emphasize, this notion has nothing to do with evolutionary becoming, but rather with a reevaluation of the human-animal relationship (Kleinhans 365). Becoming-animal always involves a pack; it is a matter of multiplicity: "We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity. A fascination for the outside? Or is the multiplicity that fascinates us already related to a multiplicity within us?" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 240). As Chandos emphasizes, his sensation has nothing to do with sympathy for the dying creature: "Forgive me this description, but do not think that it was pity I felt" ("Vergeben Sie mir diese Schilderung, denken Sie aber nicht, dass es Mitleid war, dass mich erfüllte" (137; 344). It is rather the sensation of "flowing over" ("Hinüberfließen" (Ibid.), a transgression of borders between species that presupposes the "overthrowing" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 240) of one's self:

> The rat and the man are in no way the same thing, but Being expresses them both in a single meaning in a language that is no longer that of words, in a matter that is no longer that of forms, in an affectability that is no longer that of subjects. *Unnatural participation.* (Ibid. 258)

The "unnatural participation" surpasses subjectivity and allows for the expression of Being in an alternative language beyond words. This idea of multiplicity and participation, Leonard Lawlor suggests, is already inherent in the human self-relation (or auto-affection), questioning, "the belief that humans have a kind of subjectivity that is substantially different from that of animals, the belief that humans have in their self-relation a relation of pure self-presence" ("Auto-Affection and Becoming (Part I): Who are We?" 1). Reevaluating the experience of human auto-affection, and expanding it to a multiplicity that involves other species, Lawlor also argues for the inclusion of animal

voices within ourselves: "In other words, it means that I find in myself other voices, which come from the past. There is no Platonic memory of one form, but there is a memory of multiplicity, the many voices are in me" (Ibid. 18). Similarly, it is *in* Chandos that "the soul of the animal bares its teeth at its monstrous destiny," which expresses its pain through "yelling of the death cries" ("Gellen der Todesschreie") (136; 344).

Hofmannsthal's text engages in a deconstruction of human subjectivity that is informed by twentieth-century phenomenology, especially the notion of "flesh" (Husserl's notion of *Leib*), and yields to a reconceptualization of the metaphor in *Das Gespräch über Gedichte*. Lawlor's phenomenology of "auto-affection" intersects not only with the concept of "becoming-animal," but also with the philosophical discourse and the developments in physics at the beginning of the twentieth-century, seeking to overthrow the Cartesian separation of subject and object, and captured most pointedly in Ernst Mach's figure of the *unrettbares Ich.*

Hofmannsthal's Poetics and Merleau-Ponty's Notion of the Flesh

Within the intellectual milieu of the twentieth-century that challenges the reductionist dualism of Western philosophy, to which Hofmannsthal belonged and with which he was familiar through his correspondence with Edmund Husserl and his studies of Henri Bergson and Ernst Mach[12], it is French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who argues most radically to "re-embody human consciousness," as Louise Westling argues ("Virginia Woolf" 862). His vision of the "flesh of the world" as the materiality of the

[12] For the influence on Henri Bergson on Hofmannsthal see, for example, David H. Miles' *Hofmannsthal's Novel 'Andreas:' Memory and Self*. Günter Figal (among others) explores the correspondence between Edmund Husserl and Hofmannsthal in *Erscheinungsdinge: Ästhetik als Phänomenologie*.

world, the "mysterious tissue or matrix" into which we are "corporeally embedded" (Abram 66; 65), is very close to what Chandos experiences in *Ein Brief*. In *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty explains:

> [W]e have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world with our body. (206)

The flesh, a term borrowed from Husserl (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 122), is the "carnal relation" (*Nature* 225) that structures our relation to ourselves and to our bodies, as well as to the world around us. It is the "equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing" (*The Visible and the Invisible* xxxiii), the duality already inherent in our self-relation, that allows for "the embeddedness of reflection or mind within nature," and provides an alternative to the dichotomy between the two as it is formulated in the Platonic heritage of Western philosophy (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 108; 122). Subsequently, Merleau-Ponty argues, the relation of *Einfühlung* to the entire being is already laid out in the body's self-relation: "The relation of my two hands: Something analogous in the relation with the things: they 'touch me' just as much as I touch them" (*Nature* 224). In a similar way, Chandos' relation to his own body structures the way he relates to the world around him:

> As once, through a magnifying glass, I had seen a piece of skin on my little finger look like a field full of holes and furrows, so I now perceived human beings and their actions. (134)

> So wie ich einmal in einem Vergrößerungsglas ein Stück von der Haut meines kleinen Fingers gesehen hatte, das einem Brachfeld mit Furchen und Höhlen glich, so ging es mir nun mit den Menschen und ihren Handlungen. (342)

The transgression of boundaries between human and animal that Chandos experiences therefore presupposes a duplicity, which already organizes his own body. Perceived as part of his self-alienating crisis of identity, it nevertheless allows for the symbolic moments or epiphanies to restore meaning to Chandos, and to incite hope for a new language.

The "strange kinship" of humanity-animality is at the heart of the flesh of the world, and from here symbolic meaning and expression arises at the site of the body as "'natural' symbolism" (*Nature* 226). As we enter a relation of "intercorporeity" (*Nature* 224) with other living beings, the human-animal relationship becomes the fundamental structure for this "corporeal schema" (Ibid.) and its symbolic expression. The body that is "irreducibly drawn and divided between animality and humanity" (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 77) is structured as *Ineinander,* as "the intertwining humanity-animality" (*Nature* 306) that organizes the entire being, and from which reflection and language emerges: "Animal being is, therefore, just as much as human being, an interrogative fold within the world's flesh" (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 96). When Chandos expresses his hope for a new language that is based on, and allows for, a different relationship to the world, he also refers to the body as the site where meaning is created:

> To me, then, it is as though my body consists of nothing but ciphers which

> gave me the key to everything; or as if we could enter into a new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence if only we begin to think with the heart. (138)
>
> Es ist mir dann, als bestünde mein Körper aus lauter Chiffren, die mir alles aufschließen. Oder als könnten wir in ein neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein treten, wenn wir anfingen, mit dem Herzen zu denken. (346)

It is only after his experience of the animal's pain inside him and the process of desubjectification that presupposed his "becoming-animal" that Chandos refers to his body as the possible root of symbolization. The "new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence" ("neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein") to which Chandos alludes at the end of his letter is therefore indeed different from the mystic and harmonious unity with the world that Chandos allegedly experienced as a young man. The body replaces nature as a system of meaningful signs, structured by a unified language, in which word and thing coincide (Kleinhans 367). Chandos enters a corporeal relationship with the world—the "flesh of the world" in Merleau-Ponty's words—at the heart of which our kinship to other non-human animals lies.

As Derrida argues, mortality and the capacity to suffer, which non-human and human animals share, is a point of departure for "the most radical thinking."

> Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking, the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the

> possibility of this non-power, the possibility of this impossibility.
>
> (*The Animal That Therefore I Am* 23)

This model of thinking reconceptualizes one's relation to death—a privilege exclusively reserved for the human in Heidegger's philosophy and its metaphysical separation between man and animal—to the "possibility of this impossibility" that we share with other living beings and our non-human kin: "But, since we only ever have access to the possibility of death … *as impossibility,* as something blinding, as something shared across countless others—we cannot say that we understand the possibility of death *truly*, naked even" ("Animals Have No Hand" 64). This impossibility places us in the position of non-mastery, of non-power, traditionally reserved for non-human animals and erases the decisive differences between human and animal. Citing Derrida, Lawlor points out: "All the living beings share in this weakness, in this lack of power, in 'this impotence [*impuissance*] at the heart of power'" ("Animals Have No Hand" 65).

Chandos' "immense sympathy" ("Anteilnehmen," a sentiment "far more and far less than pity" ("viel mehr und viel weniger als Mitleid") (137; 345) reflects his experience of "becoming-animal," in which his own vulnerability and mortality shared with other forms of life becomes present to him in the blink of an eye. After this event, language is no longer a prerogative of the human and instead becomes a fundamental expression for the entirety of being:

> [B]ecause the language in which I might be able not only to write but to think … a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me and wherein I may one day have to justify myself before an unknown judge. (140-141)

> [N]ämlich weil die Sprache, von deren Worten mir auch nicht eines bekannt ist, eine Sprache in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen, und in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekannten Richter mich verantworten werde. (348)

This new language allows for a meaningful relation to the world and enables the social engagement within it. It restores meaning to the world, even though it eludes conventionality and thus remains entangled in its aporetic structure (Müller and Larcati). It is a language that includes a multiplicity of voices, including the ones of animals that echo within us; a language, in which "inanimate things speak to me" ("die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen"), or, in Merleau-Ponty's words, a language that is "not the contrary of silence" (*The Visible and the Invisible* xxvii). Citing Paul Valéry, he concludes: "Language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves, and the forests" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 155). In a similar vein, Chandos experiences a participation and "perceptual immersion in the depths of an animate, expressive world" (Abrams 84) similar to a state of being that for Merleau-Ponty lies "at the heart of any language" (Ibid.). The Lord finds epiphanies that incite new words in unanimated things all around him:

> For what had it to do with pity, or with any comprehensible concatenation of human thought when, on another evening, on finding beneath a nut-tree a half-filled pitcher which a gardener boy had left there, and the pitcher and the water in it … sent through me such a shudder … running from the roots of my hair to the marrow of my heels? What was it that made me

want to break into words…? (137)

> Denn was hätte es mit Mitleid zu tun, was mit begreiflicher menschlicher Gedankenverknüpfung, wenn ich an einem anderen Abend unter einem Nußbaum eine halbvolle Gießkanne finde, die ein Gärtnerbursche dort vergessen hat, und wenn mich diese Gießkanne und das Wasser in ihr … von den Wurzeln der Haare bis ins Mark der Fersen mich durchschauert, daß ich in Worte ausbrechen möchte … (345)

In his new relation to the world, thinking appears to Chandos as "a kind of feverish thinking, but thinking in a medium more immediate, more liquid, more glowing than words" ("eine Art fieberisches Denken, aber Denken in einem Material, das unmittelbarer, flüssiger, glühender ist als Worte") (140). The rats become a "feverish thought" in Chandos "at the same time as the man becomes a rat gnashing its teeth in its death throes" (*A Thousand Pleateaus* 258). The vision of the rats in their death throes and Chandos' transformation of "becoming animal" that it instigates, also imply the hope to be able to write again:

> Then a strange imperative wells up in him: either stop writing or write like a rat … If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf etc. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 240).

The experience of intercorporeity transforms Chandos and grounds his self that was threatened to be "lost in swirls." Like the flesh of the world that structures the self and its

relation to the world like an "interrogative fold" (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 96) of the entire being, Chandos can enter a new relation with himself and to find a way out of his crisis: "It, too, forms whirlpools, but of a sort that do not seem to lead, as the whirlpools of language, into the abyss, but into myself and into the deepest womb of peace" ("Es sind gleichfalls Wirbel, aber solche, die nicht wie die Wirbel der Sprache ins Bodenlose zu führen scheinen, sondern irgendwie in mich selber und in den tiefsten Schoß des Friedens") (140).

The Animal as 'Original Metaphor:' Das Gespräch über Gedichte

Hofmannsthal marks the body's expression and the poetics of transgression as a point of departure for poetic language in other works as well. In "Zur Physiologie der modernen Liebe" ("About the Physiology of Modern Love"), he argues: "If our bodies can die, then we also owe the body, the senses, the foundation of poetry" ("Wenn wir am Körper sterben können, so danken wir auch dem Körper, den Sinnen die Grundlage der Poesie") (GW VIII 95). In *Das Gespräch über Gedichte*, a fictional dialogue from 1903, the two interlocutors Gabriel and Clemens converse about the nature of poetry.

Gabriel, the more sophisticated of the two, presents an aesthetic theory that explicitly links the experience of entanglement of human and animal with the origin of poetry:

> This animal, so alive, breathing in the dark, with its warm blood, so close, so familiar to him – suddenly the knife jerked into the animal's throat, and the warm blood trickled down the fur of the animal and at the same time down the chest, the arms of the man: and for a moment he must have

believed that this blood was his own, for one moment, while the sound of his sensual victory emerging from his throat mixed with the dying groans of the animal, he must have mistaken the exuberant joy of existence with the first convulsions of death: he had to, for one moment, die in the animal, only then could the animal die for him. That the animal could die for him became a big mystery, a big, secretive truth. The animal continued to die in the symbolic sacrifice. But everything relies on the fact that he also died in the animal, for one moment. That his being, for one moment, dissolved in the other's being. — that is the origin of poetry. (502-503)

Und dieses Tier, dieses Leben, dieses im Dunkel atmende, blutwarme, ihm so nah, so vertraut -- auf einmal zuckte dem Tier das Messer in die Kehle, und das warme Blut rieselte zugleich an dem Vließ des Tieres und an der Brust, an den Armen des Menschen hinab: und einen Augenblick lang muß er geglaubt haben, es sei sein eigenes Blut, einen Augenblick lang, während ein Laut des wollüstigen Triumphes aus seiner Kehle sich mit dem ersterbenden Stöhnen des Tieres mischte, muß er die Wollust gesteigerten Daseins für die erste Zuckung des Todes genommen haben: er muß, einen Augenblick lang, in dem Tier gestorben sein, nur so konnte das Tier für ihn sterben. Daß das Tier für ihn sterben konnte, wurde ein großes Mysterium, eine große geheimnisvolle Wahrheit. Das Tier starb hinfort den symbolischen Opfertod. Aber alles ruhte darin, daß auch er in dem Tier gestorben war, einen Augenblick lang. Daß sich sein Dasein, für

> die Dauer eines Atemzugs, in dem fremdes Dasein aufgelöst hatte. – Das ist die Wurzel der Poesie. (502-503)

Like Chandos in *Ein Brief,* Gabriel locates the origin of language—specifically poetic language—in the intertwinement of humanity-animality established in the moment when one's finitude is experienced as, in Derrida's words, the "possibility of impossibility." The text dedicates a large passage to the phenomenology of the sacrifice. Other critics have argued that Hofmannsthal's *Das Gespräch* negotiates different views on symbolism and metaphor (Robert Vilain; Margit Resch; Penrith Goff). The text is part of a long discourse in which poets, critics, and scholars of literature examine these literary figures. As Vilain points out: "[T]he story of the sacrifice is not intended to be a *history* of the origins of symbolism so much as the provision of a suggestive new perspective on the *nature* of the symbol" (307). This new perspective adds a decisively zoopoetic approach as the human-animal relationship is at the very heart of Hofmannsthal's endeavor to reconceptualize language, poetry, and the symbol; a fact that has been ignored by traditional reading of this text. Gabriel emphasizes: "He died in the animal, Clemens, because he dissolved for one moment into the other's existence, because for one moment, it was *really* his blood flowing out of the animal's throat" ("Er starb in dem Tiere, Clemens, weil er sich einen Augenblick lang in dies fremde Dasein aufgelöst hatte, weil einen Augenblick lang *wirklich* sein Blut aus der Kehle des Tieres gequollen war") (503). When Clemens inquiries into the extent to which Gabriel insists on the factuality of the event—"You said *really,* Gabriel" ("Du sagst *wirklich*, Gabriel?")—, the paratext indicates that an answer is denied: "*Pausing*" ("*Eine Pause*") (Ibid.). Like Chandos' experience, the boundaries between human and animal are transgressed for the

temporality of a moment, which yields to the emergence of poetry.

In *Das Gespräch*, Hofmannsthal rejects the traditional notion of metaphor to "say one thing in terms of another" (Asmuth 308):

> Clemens: And yet I believe I heard you say that poetry never puts one thing for another.
>
> Gabriel: It never does. If it did, we would have to eliminate it like a hideously smoldering will-o'-the-wisp … There are ciphers which language is incapable to translate. (503)

> Clemens: Und dennoch glaubte ich dich sagen zu hören, daß die Poesie niemals eine Sache für eine andere setzt.
>
> Gabriel: Niemals tut sie das. Wenn sie das täte, müßte man sie austreten, wie ein häßliches schwelendes Irrlicht … Es sind Chiffren, welche aufzulösen die Sprache ohnmächtig ist. (503)

Gabriel dismisses the notion that used to shape our understanding of metaphor as a central device of poetry, most decisively described as "substitution metaphor" by Max Black in his 1955 essay "Metaphor." Showing that both the "substitution" and the "comparison" theory on metaphor is untenable, Black proposes the "interaction theory" of metaphor, in which—as Driscoll puts it—"the two terms … do not remain stable and unambiguously literal or figurative, but rather enter into a reciprocal relationship that generates new meaning that cannot be translated 'back' into some literal paraphrase" (226). Driscoll emphasizes the reciprocal nature of this organization, further suggesting that we might understand Black's theory of metaphor as a "deleuzo-guattarian statement

about mutual becoming and reciprocal deterritorialisation and retorrialisation," which is not "antithetical to the rule of metaphor but indeed entirely commensurate with it" (Ibid.). In a similar vein, Roland Borgards suggests supplementing Black's notion of the "substitution" and the "interaction metaphor" ("More About Metaphor") with the "material metaphor" ("Stubb Kills A Whale"). In his reading of *Moby-Dick* the metaphor is both involved in the production of meaning and insists on its materiality that constantly eludes transcendence:

> The material metaphor is like the interaction metaphor, which cannot be translated, but must be read as a trace only. However, it is not the trace of meaning, but the trace of an encounter, of a collision. Within the philosophy of language, material metaphors are both informative and need to be interpreted: they are signs of contact that human beings have with the world around them. (181-182)

> Wie im Modell der Interaktion ist die materielle Metapher nicht einfach rückübersetzbar, sondern lediglich als eine Spur lesbar, allerdings nicht als die Spur einer Bedeutung, sondern lediglich eines Aufeinandertreffens, einer Kollision. Sprachphilosophisch können materielle Metaphern als informative und zugleich bedeutungsbedürftig gelten: sie sind Aufzeichnungen des Kontakts, den die Menschen mit der Welt haben. (181-182)

Borgards understands the human-animal encounter less as a process of mutual becoming. It is rather the trace of the encounter, understood as a "collision" to which the metaphor

points. In his zoopoetic approach, Borgards shifts Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory from an exclusively human interaction to the inclusion of other animals and forms of life into the process of the making of meaning.

What these zoopoetic approaches tend to miss, however, is the aspect of performativity that is involved in the textual production of animals. Rather than a mimetic reproduction of an actual animal, or of its material trace in the text, performativity aims to elicit a certain affect in the reader, and engages—often in a playful or exaggerated way—with the alleged difference between the symbolic and the actual. As, in Chen's words, a "point of departure for a theoretical kinship frequently found between queerness and animality" (14), performativity also illustrates the importance for zoopoetics to be informed by queer theory and vice versa. While Gabriel insists on the material presence of the swans, which precludes their translation into a higher, immaterial meaning, the text also playfully alludes to its own limitations to represent the actual animal:

> Clemens: And these swans? Are they symbols? They mean—
>
> Gabriel: Let me interrupt you. Yes, they mean something, but don't say what they mean: whatever you would say, it would be wrong. They mean nothing but themselves: swans. (501)

> Clemens: Und diese Schwäne? Sie sind ein Symbol? Sie bedeuten —
>
> Gabriel: Laß mich dich unterbrechen. Ja, sie bedeuten, aber sprich es nicht aus, was sie bedeuten: was immer du sagen wolltest, es wäre unrichtig. Sie bedeuten hier nichts als sich selber: Schwäne. (501)

By foregrounding the corporeality of the swans and insisting they mean "nothing but themselves," the text also acknowledges the absence of any actual animal. Just like Gabriel's elusive answer to Clemens' inquiry into the incident of the sacrifice and its factuality ("You said *really,* Gabriel? *Pausing*"; "Du sagst *wirklich*, Gabriel? *Eine Pause*) (503), the text performs the tension between literal and figurative meaning, while employing the animal's body into this discourse.

Conflating signifier and referent, Gabriel on the one hand insists on the non-symbolic character of the swans. On the other hand, however, he acknowledges that there is "nothing but" comparisons and symbols ("es gibt nichts als das, nichts anderes," 499). Gabriel's reflection on the nature of the symbol needs to be understood as part of the discourse of *Srachkrise*, which—as Driscoll argues—"was in large part triggered by a revised understanding of language as *inherently* metaphorical" (220). Driscoll traces the phenomenon of *Sprachkrise* back to Nietzsche's observations in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* (1873):

> We believe that when we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers, we have knowledge of the things themselves, and yet we possess only metaphors of things which in no way correspond to the original entities. (144)

While, as Driscoll points out, the "inherently metaphorical" nature of language places the poet—as opposed to the scientist—in a privileged relationship to truth, this shift also instigates a crisis in anthropomorphism (220). Hence, both the belief in human exceptionalism and in the sign as a fixed and stable signifier are unsettled around 1900 and both phenomena mark Hofmannsthal's poetological texts and his reflections on

language, poetry, and animals.

The metaphor in Hofmannsthal's texts insists on its material irreducibility, while at the same time becomes the site of an inherently paradoxical sign that eludes its legibility. The animal as symbol performs the paradox of presence and absence, that—in Dieter Mersch's understanding—always characterizes the sign („Paradoxien der Verkörperungen" 45). Trying to bring together the material sign with its immaterial meaning, Mersch argues, the sign always appears as "more than one can decipher," as a "surplus, which confuses the signs in the very moment that they try to articulate themselves (*Was sich zeigt* 59). This surplus is already inherent in the body, which vacillates between cultural legibility and involuntary disclosure (Ibid.). Mersch concludes:

> There is therefore a side to the symbolic and to representations …, that reminds us of the inevitability of the phenomenon and with that of phenomenology amid the primary of the text and of the written „trace." („Paradoxien der Verkörperungen" 35)
>
> Es gibt demnach eine Seite am Symbolischen und an Darstellungen …, die inmitten des Primats der Texturen und ihrer Schrift-„Spuren" wieder die Unverzichtbarkeit des Phänomenalen und damit auch des Phänomenologischen auftauchen lässt.
> („Paradoxien der Verkörperungen" 35)

The irreducibility of the phenomenological in Hofmannsthal's texts is the animal body and its encounter and entanglement with the human. As a sign of transgression ("Überschreitungsfigur," *Was sich zeigt* 59) the symbol always also refers to the non-

linguistic or pre-linguistic site, its "Other" (Ibid. 153). The experience of Otherness, of the foreign that is yet strangely familiar ("so nah, so vertraut," as Gabriel puts it) but cannot be fully grasped is, according to Hofmannsthal, not only inherent in the symbol but also in the human-animal relationship. "Something encounters itself through the Other in us" ("Etwas begegnet sich in uns mit anderem"), Gabriel explains (497).

As their blood briefly intermingles, it also transcends the borders both between individuals and between species, and captures that which in Merleau-Ponty's notion structures the entire being as intertwining: "[T]he architectonic as structure belongs to the Understanding, to the world of the *Ineinander*—this is true as well for the intertwining humanity-animality" (*Nature* 306). The use of the ellipsis—"-- suddenly the knife jerked into the animal's throat, and the warm blood trickled down the fur of the animal and at the same time down the chest, down the arms of the man"—("auf einmal zuckte dem Tier das Messer in die Kehle, und das warme Blut rieselte zugleich an dem Vließ des Tieres und an der Brust, an den Armen des Menschen hinab")—adds to the enigmatic nature of the sacrifice and eludes an unequivocal attribution of subject and object. The sacrifice transforms both man and ram, it is a reciprocal becoming, in which the human experiences his finitude as "the possibility of the impossibility." It is therefore necessary to emphasize man's actual experience of his own death in the sacrifice albeit in the modus of impossibility: "Everything rests upon the fact that, for one moment, he also died in the animal" (503). Becoming-animal thus necessarily involves and alters both sides (Kleinhans 369), as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize: "Becoming is always double" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 275). The unity of animal and human—already grounded in the human body as "intertwinement humanity-animality"—precedes the reciprocal becoming

and differentiation between man and animal. It is a "unity-in-difference," the relationship of the "touching touched" (*Nature* 217) of two hands touching that structures the body's self-relation beyond the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity: The logic of the sacrifice resembles the chiasmic relation between human and animal that underlies the architectonic of the entire being as the flesh of the world. The chiasmic relation and the opening "at both intra- and intercorporal levels" at its heart (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* 112), inscribes the "slippage of identification" (Ibid. 114) into our self-relation that turns auto-affection into hetero-affection. "This slippage or gap between the sentient and the sensible aspects of the body is not a failure," Ted Toadvine emphasizes, but "precisely the disclosure of the world" (Ibid.).

The intertwinement of humanity-animality is therefore at the heart of this disclosure of the world, and from here language and poetry emerges. The encounter with our animal Other, in which the human briefly merges with the animal and boundaries between species are transgressed, leaves a trace in language that allows for the production of meaning despite the broken link between signifier and signified. The experience of merging with the animal presupposes a self-relation that is already marked by an intercorporeal relationship, which structures the entire being, and it is through the encounter with our animal Other that we sense this interconnection of our bodies, and may make it productive for language and poetry. As Toadvine argues: "Artistic expression, then, especially that of modern art, takes as its inspiration from the irrational kernel of human consciousness and finds there a profound kinship with … the animal" (85). The human-animal encounters both in *Ein Brief* and in *Das Gespräch* are transgressions of boundaries between individuals and between species. They create a

space, an opening, that Hofmannsthal makes productive for the "living language" to which Chandos directs his hope and for the emergence of poetry in *Das Gespräch*. The agony and often violent death many animals experience in Hofmannsthal's work are part of this trace, which leads back to the emergence of language.

The sacrifice of the ram in *Das Gespräch*, but also the death throes of the rats in *Ein Brief* envision an entanglement between human and animal that follows precisely this logic of transgression and encounter with the irreducible Other, that, according to Mersch, mark the history of the symbol as a paradoxical sign that resists legibility and translateability into meaning. Both experiences capture a moment of encounter with the Other in the self, of becoming-Other by becoming-animal, and take this phenomenology as a point of departure from which poetry emerges. In that regard, the animal becomes the "original metaphor" and what Driscoll describes as "animal phenomenology"—"the desire on the part of writers and thinkers to get inside the minds of animals and to find adequate expression for them in their works" (216)—evokes new forms of literary representation:

> Seen from this perspective, the animals are the original hieroglyphs, they are the living and mysterious ciphers with which God wrote unspeakable things into the world. Lucky is the poet who may weave these divine ciphers into his writing. (501)
>
> Gesehen mit diesen Augen sind die Tiere die eigentlichen Hieroglyphen, sind sie lebendige geheimnisvolle Chiffren, mit denen Gott unaussprechliche Dinge in die Welt geschrieben hat. Glücklich der Dichter,

daß er diese göttlichen Chiffren in seine Schrift verweben darf. (501)

This "animal phenomenology" in Hofmannsthal's texts imagines a "strange kinship" between human and animal that suggests both an intricate entanglement between human and animal *and* a violent separation that restores the order between species and reflects the anxiety the crisis of anthropomorphism evoked. Twentieth-century phenomenology imagines the body as a duplicity and yields to a zoopoetic approach in Hofmannsthal's texts, which understand the nature of the symbol precisely under the logic of this "slippage" and "unity-in-difference" that structures the human-animal relationship and creates the space for poetry to emerge, marking the animal as "the first metaphor" (Berger 7). At the same time, as Mersch points out, reflections on violence mark the history of the philosophy of language and are especially salient in many narratives concerned with the origin of the symbol (*Was sich zeigt* 177). This violence leaves a trace that in both *Ein Brief* and *Das Gespräch* leads back to the human-animal entanglement, and resurrects meaning.

In Merleau-Ponty's twentieth-century phenomenology, the body becomes the site of transgression where categories of human and animal dissolve and are transcended. In Hofmannsthal's texts, this notion enters his zoopoetic approach in which meaning emerges beyond the logic of a fixed signifying system and with the human-animal encounter as a point of departure. A concept of corporeality defies mimetic identification and incorporates a surplus of meaning, which evades its translateability and confuses its readability, informs Hofmannsthal's imagination of the symbol and poetic language. Representing the body as the site of intertwinement and transgression between humanity and animality, Hofmannsthal's texts also reconceptualize the symbolic body as

paradoxical and non-identical with itself. This underlying structure of the "duplicity of the body" finds its expression in a language that rejects inscription within an unequivocal semiotic system, but rather insists on the radical presence of the body and its performativity; the swans in *Das Gespräch* mean "nothing but themselves," they become ciphers, which language cannot translate. What emerges is a new form of expression beyond the human; a language in which "inanimate things speak to me" or—in Merleau-Ponty's words—a language that will not be the contrary of silence (*The Visible and the Invisible* xxvii). Rather than a mystic unity with all living beings, envisioned by the younger Lord Chandos prior to the crisis that presumably leaves him unable to converse and to write, Hofmannsthal's poetics takes the human-animal body as its point of departure to reconceptualize language and take the violence into account that marks both the history of the logocentric discourse and the human-animal relationship. Yet, despite the limitations of language that Hofmannsthal's texts and their larger embeddedness in the author's *Sprachkrise* acknowledge, both texts envision the hope for a resurrection of language and meaning in the end. "[T]he possibility of perfect poems is boundless, just like the possibility of such moments," Gabriel concludes *Das Gespräch.* He continues: "How rare they are, nevertheless, Clemens, how very rare. But that they emerge at all, isn't that a miracle?" ("[D]ie Möglichkeit vollkommener Gedichte ist ohne Grenzen wie die Möglichkeit solcher Augenblicke … Wie wenige gibt es dennoch, Clemens, wie sehr wenige. Aber daß ihrer überhaupt welche entstehen, ist es nicht wie ein Wunder?") (509). Both *Ein Brief* and *Das Gespräch* still believe in the miracle (poetic) language can perform—and place the strange kinship between human and animal at the heart of this miracle that entice poetry and bring language back to life. Hofmannsthal's zoopoetics

hence envision a human-animal relationship that overcomes the limits of language and resurrects meaning amid the *Sprachkrise* that threatens to render poetry and literature meaningless and forestall communication. As we will see in Chapter 3, this belief is dispensed in Franz Kafka's zoopoetics, in which the quest for meaning is replaced with the infinite play of references, and intersects with Kafka's curious imageries of animal bodies.

CHAPTER IV

A CURIOUS CREATURE AND AN ALL-TOO-HUMAN BRIDGE: KAFKA'S TRANSGRESSIVE FIGURES AND THE BEGINNING OF LITERATURE

Franz Kafka's literary animals have arguably drawn more scholarly and popular attention than any of their textual kin. In recent years, entire monographs have been dedicated to the subject (e.g. *Kafkas Tiere* by Jochen Thermann). Edited volumes (e.g. *Kafka's Creatures* by Marc Lucht and Donna Yarri) have emerged, as well as literary seminars with the same, or a similar, title. The reason for this interest lies not only in the plethora of textual animals one can find in Kafka's oeuvre, or in the rising popularity of literary animal studies in general. It is also the versatility with which Kafka links his creatures to the various discourses permeating his work that make his animals both fruitful and challenging for interpretation. From Red Peter, the ape reporting on the genesis of culture, to Josephine, the 'singing' mouse whose 'talents' challenge our understanding—and the role—of art, Kafka's creatures are aporetic figures; hybrids, who oscillate between 'nature' and 'culture,' calling the demarcation between the two poles into question. Unlike their contemporaries, such as Waldemar Bonsels' *Biene Maja* (*Maya the Bee*), whose 'natural world' serves as a model of interpretation for the growing tension between nations prior to World War I and the subsumption of the individual 'bee' into the larger structure of Wilhelmine Germany, to the animals in *Brehms Tierleben* (*Brehm's Animal Life*),[13] who 'naturally' follow bourgeois norms in their family

[13] For a detailed reading of Brehm's "theriotopology" see Roland Borgards: "Wolf, Mensch, Hund: Theriotopologie in *Brehms Tierleben* und Storms *Aquis Submersus*."

organization, Kafka's creatures are forms of life 'in between.'[14] With their "ontological fuzziness," as Anniken Greve calls it, Kafka's animals break out of the discursive circularity that determined the human-animal debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As transgressive figures, they complicate the representation of their slippery evolution from animal to man, and make the reader question the possibilities and limits of their legibility. With Darwin's evolutionary discoveries, the notion of nature as a composition—with the human being as its *telos* and God as its author—had been replaced with life as an unforeseeable process of infinite becoming. As a "biocentric" thinker, in Margot Norris' words, Kafka responds to these discoveries and their attempts to classify and categorize life, by writing texts that complicate the notion of "nature" and "culture" and resist their appropriation by the reader. His hybrid figures are represented in ways that challenge the very notion of categorization and defy their own legibility. They break out of the circular logic of naturalizing and anthropomorphizing that routinely determined the discourse on nature, the human, and the animal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In this chapter I argue that Kafka negotiates questions of language, literature, and authority in his animal texts. While these topics permeate Kafka's oeuvre, his animals are paradigmatic in deconstructing language, placing what Derrida calls "Kafka's vast zoopoetics" (*The Animal That Therefore I Am* 8) at the center of his work. In "Die Brücke" ("The Bridge"), a fragment written around 1917, Kafka's zoopoetic approach is based on the conceptual uncertainty of the narrative figure. Displaying the features of both a bridge and a human being—the protagonist of this fragment is "in between" both

[14] I am indebted to Dr. Stephan Kammer and his seminar on "Kafka's Animals" in the summer semester of 2015 for the discussion on Bonsel and Brehm in the context of Kafka.

forms of beings, and deconstructs with this ontological status the illusion of metaphysical truth and the corresponding philosophy of language. I argue that Kafka's hybrid follows the logic of Derrida's "arche-trace" (*Of Grammatology* 61), and—by challenging the reader's expectations on literal versus metaphoric meaning through conflating and complicating both notions—reconceptualizes metaphor. By envisioning a hybrid between human and bridge, the text also engages with contemporary scientific discourses, such as Darwin's evolutionary theories, and reflects collective cultural responses to it. Moreover, Kafka's hybrid—in what Margot Norris calls the "biocentric" tradition—opens the text to a deleuzo-guattarian mode of reading while negotiating questions of authorship and sovereignty that permeates Kafka's oeuvre in a specific, zoopoetic way.

In a similar vein, Kafka's text "Eine Kreuzung" ("A Crossbreed") negotiates the writer's anxiety over the loss of control that this shift from writing to reading and from author to reader entails. I argue that the curious creature of this text constantly eludes the narrator's and reader's grasp and subsequently challenges the notion of the (animal) body's self-presence in the text. This elusiveness of the cross-breed follows the logic of "not-knowing" that, according to Derrida, is the point of departure for the literary text; making Kafka's zoopoetic approach inherent to poetry in general. Mel Y. Chen argues that transgressiveness is precisely what is at the heart of animality, or—as he suggests—of "animacy," queering animality and opening possibilities for non-normative forms of intimacies. Chen's concept of animacy not only takes the transgressive nature of Kafka's creature into account, but also the queer moments that unfold between narrator and kitten-lamb that disrupt normative ontologies and orders, inscribing queerness into the very nature of Kafka's zoopoetics.

"Under Erasure:" Kafka's "Die Brücke" and Deconstruction

The collapse of the bridge in Kafka's story illustrates a philosophy of language that operates as a differential network of meaning, rather than, in Christopher Norris's words, "the determination of a one-to-one link between signifier and signified" (24). Kafka's understanding of language resembles Nietzsche's notion of continuous sign-chains without origin and end that makes language "inherently metaphorical" (Driscoll 228), as discussed in Chapter 1. Influenced by Nietzsche's thought, Derrida reads the entire notion of semiosis as a suspension of meaning, which constantly escapes the structure of presence; making Kafka's texts paradigmatic for Derrida's *deconstruction*, or—as Maximilian Burkhart suggests—perhaps even the inspiration for it (390).

In Derrida's notion of deconstruction, the metaphor is the structure in which presence is always marked through absence and the gesture represents the very thing it keeps absent. "The sign cannot be taken as a homogenous unit bridging an origin (referent) and an end (meaning), as 'semiology,' as the study of signs, would have it," Spivak writes (xxxix). In this paradoxical double bind of presence and absence, the sign is always inhabited by another sign and must thus be read "under erasure" (*Of Grammatology* 72). Instead of achieved meaning, the reader is confronted with the indefinable deferring of meaning, which is only partly comprehensible through its negativity, its absence, and the difference to what-it-is-not.

Kafka's "Brücke" and the violent and graphic death of its protagonist inscribe "writing under erasure" into the configurations of the text. It is the "crossed out" sign that collapses at the very moment it comes into use. The bridge, which is also the narrator of

the story, collapses in the very moment a wanderer approaches it for the first time—a moment for which the bridge desperately has been waiting. Despite the bridge's best intention to hold up the traveler entrusted to it ("hold up the passenger entrusted to you;" "halte den dir Anvertrauten" 304; 411), it is terrified by an abrupt and forceful leap the wanderer undertakes on its back. Struck by the sudden pain the bridge has not anticipated, it turns around to see who inflicted such pain on it and despite the realization of its mistake—"a bridge to turn around!" (305); ("Brücke dreht sich um!" 412)— falls into the abyss and is pierced by the once peaceful stones "which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water" ("die mich immer so friedlich aus dem rasenden Wasser angestarrt hatten") (412; 305). The text dismantles any structure of binary oppositions as a mere comforting illusion of presence as it is conserved in the Saussurian sign (Spivak xl). Other than Hofmannsthal, who, as illustrated in Chapter 2, seeks to resurrect language's ability to produce meaning despite the *Sprachkrise*, Derrida's grammatology shows no nostalgia for the lost presence that encapsulates the unity of word and thing and hence the loss of origin and end. In fact, he determines metaphor as the sign by "the trace or track of that other that is forever absent" (Ibid. xviii). The trace is thus the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent presence. Derrida uses terms like *différance* and *trace* as "non-synonymous substitutions," which operate in "a similar dislocating fashion to describe the unfolding of the functioning structure of a concept" (Honderich 268). In *Writing and Difference,* Derrida clarifies the nature of the trace:

> The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly

> speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace. . . . In this way the metaphysical text is understood; it is still readable, and remains read. (403)

In an extension to these reflections, Kafka's "Brücke" may be read as the metaphoric crossing out of the sign, leaving nothing but the traces of the torn bridge at the bottom of the abyss, replacing the Saussurian sign with the fragmented trace.

Derrida's deconstruction contrasts the nostalgia for the lost presence with Nietzsche's affirmative joy, which is reflected in the paradoxical wit of Kafka's poetic text. As Darwin's and Nietzsche's thinking reach public awareness at the beginning of the twentieth century, the relationship between man as "master" or steward over nature and animal begins to topple, and is being replaced with concepts that acknowledge a more intricate entanglement between human and nonhuman animals. At the same time, this shift also affects how language is understood and perceived. Rather than conceiving of nature as a "book" with God as the author, who controls the prescribed plot for which the human is the *telos,* Darwin's theories abolished God "along with the fiction of the subject as the origin of the text" (Margot Norris 26). This inversion between author and reader effects the conception of language as a prerogative of the human that determines the "final, introvertible difference between man and animal" (Ibid. 27). Margot Norris argues that

> [w]hether or not Darwin recognized the logocentric nature of the metaphors that dominated natural science and natural theology in his day, he liberated both language and Nature from the Subject—the *autor* (Latin; originator), Author, Authority—by making language analogous to natural

> life in its developmental and evolutionary processes.
>
> (28)

This liberation from the author, however, also unleashed a fundamental skepticism concerning the ability of language to transport meaning and emotions—in short, to serve as a reliable tool to communicate "truth." In fact, the notion of an immutable truth itself now becomes questionable. And with that, words no longer refer to a fixed and objective "reality" or higher philosophical "truth," but engage in a free interplay with no stable underlying meaning or referent. In the tradition of this *Sprachkrise* at the turn of the century, Derrida interprets the metaphor as an "outside the self — in itself" (*Of Grammatology* 272). Of the ambivalent structure of origin and trace, Derrida writes:

> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin, … it means that the origin did not even disappear, that is never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. (*Of Grammatology* 161)

In the image of the scattered bridge at the end of Kafka's story, the text points toward its own openness and encapsulates a performative aspect. It calls out for the reader to collect the broken pieces and transform them into meaning. In this way, the traces of the bridge bear within themselves the presence and the loss of an origin that can be put together reciprocally and becomes the "origin of the origin" as the bridge reappears in its own title of "Die Brücke."

As what Clayton Koelb calls a "strong figure of metaphoricity," the bridge insists upon "the concrete reality of the person as a human body (*Leib*) possessing feet, hands, teeth, and hair and wearing clothes" (134-135). Its violent death emphasizes the

Leibhaftigkeit and performs the metaphor's impossibility of translating or "carrying over" thoughts and ideas into language. Well aware that the concept "bridge" already contains "much of the figurative content of the notion 'metaphor' itself" (*Inventions of Reading* 134), Kafka rejects traditional models of metaphoricity and engages in what Borgards calls a "neo-materialistic" theory of metaphor ("neumaterialistische Metapherntheorie;" "Stubb Kills A Whale" 181). Destabilizing the difference between literal and figurative speech, the text implies a "deconstructive-materialistic" (Ibid. 173) notion of metaphor that requires the structural ambivalence of its narrative figure. On the one hand, Kafka invites a figural reading of his text, alluding to the role of metaphor to "bridge" the gap between signifier and signified, or word and "thing in itself." On the other hand, however, the insistence of the bridge's actual materiality and corporeality—"I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine" ("Ich war steif und kalt, ich war eine Brücke, über einem Abgrund lag ich") (411; 304)—complicates this image. The bridge's anticipation of its own visceral death at the beginning of the story—"Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge" ("Ohne einzustürzen kann keine einmal errichtete Brücke aufhören, Brücke zu sein") (Ibid.)—further foregrounds its corporeality, and turns the figure of the bridge into a complex literal-metaphorical/material-semiotic entanglement.

Kafka's playful engagement with the concept of metaphoricity allows the reader to question the dichotomy of 'original' versus 'copy,' which underlies the logocentric discourse, and replaces it with the logic of what Derrida calls "transcendental arche:"

> The value of the transcendental arche [origin] must make its necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of the arche-trace must comply

> with that necessity and that erasure. It is in fact contradictory and not acceptable within the logic of identity. (*Of Grammatology* 61)

It is precisely because the "concept of the arche-trace" is incommensurable with the logic of identity, that Kafka's hybrids in his zoopoetic texts are paradigmatic for his understanding of language. Marianne Schuller points out that the ontology of Kafka's hybrids follow the logic of a chiasm that both constitutes and denies the notion of species (20). Rather than fitting into the matrix of a differentiating taxonomy, Schuller suggests, Kafka's animals represent difference as inherent in identity and the self ("die in sich selbst differierende Differenz") (Ibid.). With that, however, Kafka's animals cease to complement and to assure human identity in their role as an "Other," and instead allude to the distance or gap within one's self that human and animals might share.

Rather than the reassurance of human identity, this hybrid therefore questions not only human identity as different and superior to animals, but also the very notion of identity. By continually suspending unequivocal readings of their identity, the hybrid resembles the structure of Derrida's "arche-trace." Kafkas "Brücke" playfully alludes to the necessity with which the figure of the "arche-trace" needs to comply before it performs its own erasure. However, the text varies this structure to what Erica Weitzmann calls "almost necessity." As Weitzmann points out, the "almost necessary" occurs frequently in Kafka's work and "constantly provides the criteria for situations and actions that are just as lamentable as they are amusing and as amusing as they are lamentable" (592). She continues: "Seeming inevitability and logical circularity not only provides a certain comic tension, but furnishes the whole inner impetus and mechanism of the plot at large" (Ibid.). The "almost necessary" structure is settled between the

superfluous and the necessary, and is thus more than the paradoxical reversal of expected logic. It cannot be re-reversed into its "original truth" and remains a "permanent paradox" that cannot be dissolved. While Hofmannsthal's concept of metaphors and symbols still operates under the assumption of synthesis that can overcome the inherently paradoxical nature of the sign, Kafka's zoopoetics embrace the aporetic logic of its hybrid figures.

Kafka's Zoopoetic Modes of Reading

As the skepticism toward language as a decoding system that operates under the assumption of the "original" and its translation into a signifier is embodied in Kafka's hybrids they unsettle the traditional notion of reading as deciphering meaning. Aporia, Terry Eagleton points out, "is the impasse of meaning, where texts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict themselves" (275). This inherent contradiction of the text is precisely where, according to Vilém Flusser, "an entirely different kind of reading" can emerge:

> Yet it is still possible to find within this crisis an entirely different kind of reading and to go on reading in the future. Until now, *to read* was understood to be the unraveling of a mystery. Wittgenstein rightly points out that there is no longer anything to unravel. Having lost our faith, we are actually incapable of recognizing a mystery in the world or in ourselves that can be read and resolved. But it is also possible to translate *to read* as "to guess," and rather than mystery one might have a montage game—a jigsaw puzzle—in mind. (84)

As Flusser argues, "Only on the basis of some kind of belief is reading possible" (Ibid.).

Having lost the belief in legibility, he continues, "there is nothing more to read and even less to write" (Ibid.). However, the formation of an alternative "consciousness that reads in the future" can resurrect reading as a process that affirms unknowability rather than aiming at unraveling the mystery the text presents. As the bridge collapses, it is transformed into pieces—resembling the material experience of reading as a piecing together of "peckable, assembled mosaics" (Flusser 85), during which meaning is conferred to the text.

Kafka's text invites a mode of reading that is decisively non-anthropocentric. As Flusser's metaphor of the "peckable" mosaics in the text suggests, reading can deconstruct logocentrism that is legitimized through and perpetuates power relations between genders, races, and species based on identity categories. Kafka's zoopoetic approach to reading inverts traditional relationship between author and reader by transferring the production of meaning to the reader. Like other figures in Kafka's texts, this hybrid's conceptual uncertainty embodies the possibility of multiple meanings that emerge in the process of reading this strange being. This shift from the writer to the reader is emphasized through the destruction of the bridge at the end of the narration. What Gölz argues regarding Kafka's *Trial* is also true for "Die Brücke:" with the protagonist's death, writing ceases and the process of reading commences (119). The *Sprachkrise* therefore also includes a crisis in authorship, as Margot Norris argues:

> The resulting crisis is one of authorship. As model and analogue of human reason. God is abolished along with the fiction of the subject as the origin of the text. (26)

"Die Brücke" allows a mode of reading that takes what Deleuze and Guattari call

"the multiplicity dwelling within us" into account (*A Thousand Plateaus* 240), which makes not only writing but also reading a matter of becoming. Serpell points out that the different "mode of reading" into which Kafka's "Brücke" engages the reader also allows for a reconceptualization of sovereignty: "[T]his mode of reading allows subjunctive possibilities to come into brief contact in the condition that Nancy calls 'being singular plural' and that forms the basis for his new conception of sovereignty" (20). Although sovereignty is a self-relation, Nancy argues, this relation is always marked by a "being with" or "singular plural" (Nancy 86). At the heart of sovereignty and our very own identity is therefore always the multiplicity of a co-existence: "Sovereignty is nothing more than the *com-* as such, it is always and indefinitely 'to be completed' as in com-munism or com-passion" (106). Kafka's hybrids illustrate how this multiplicity is already inherently part of our being. As the bridge is described in "chiastically inverted" terms, evoking the unsettling effect of juxtaposing the "description of feature's of a person's dress with that of a portion of wild, natural terrain (*Inventions of Reading* 135-136), this chiastic form also marks the very being of the bridge. The intertwinement of person and bridge is integral to its existence to the point where the interpellation into "subjecthood" of either-or leads to its destruction. In the process of reading, the reader experiences this "being with" at the heart of the hybrid's identity as "nonsimultaneity" that, as Lawlor puts it, "is always there, in all of us" ("Animals Have No Hand" 65).

The ambiguity inherent in Kafka's figure of the bridge—it is both human and bridge, part of figurative speech and the textual embodiment of a material bridge—allows for multiple readings that continues the text beyond the writer's control. As traditional readers, Koelb argues, we "urgently wish to decide whether we are dealing with a bridge

that is like a person or a person that is like a bridge" (138). The ambiguity of the bridge, however, rejects a decisive reading. The bridge collapses the very moment it is called upon—and responds to—its identity as bridge. As the bridge turns around to inspect the identity of the intruder, it cries out: "A bridge to turn around!" ("Brücke dreht sich um!"). It responds to what Louis Althusser describes as the "interpellation" that calls the subject into being:

> I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!" Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject.* Why? Because he has recognized that hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it was *really him* who was hailed" (and not someone else). (174)

The bridge itself executes the *interpellation* or "hailing;" as it addresses itself as "bridge," it turns around and subsequently falls into the abyss, where it is "transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at it so peacefully from the rushing water." The moment the individual is "transformed" into a subject, it gives up the ambiguity of its hybrid being. Kafka's hybrid figures are therefore especially well-suited to address the questions of authority and sovereignty that play a major role in his oeuvre. Following the

logic of Derrida's "arche-trace," they reconceptualize identity to multiplicity and becoming, and install "otherness" at the very heart of the subject. Unlike Hofmannthal, who sacrificed the animal Other in his attempt to resurrect meaning to language and to safeguard the authority of the poet, Kafka insists on this radical notion of Otherness that cannot be synthesized for the notion of an original identity. This insistence can also be seen in the text "Eine Kreuzung," ("A Crossbreed"), in which a hybrid between kitten and lamb rejects its appropriation through zoological classification, and perpetuates the impossibility to grasp its meaning through discursive knowledge.

Reading the Kitten-Lamb: Kafka's "Eine Kreuzung" ("A Crossbread")

Half kitten and half lamb, the narrator's "curious animal" ("eigentümliches Tier") (426; 16) in "Eine Kreuzung" subverts zoological knowledge and traditional approaches to make life legible. As children gather around this neighborhood attraction, the narrator observes:

> Then the strangest questions are asked, which no human being could answer: Why there is only one such animal, why I of all people should have come to own it, whether there was ever an animal like it before and what would happen if it died, whether it feels lonely, why it has no children, what it is called, etc. (426)

> Da werden die sonderbarsten Fragen gestellt, die kein Mensch beantworten kann: Warum es nur ein solches Tier gibt, warum gerade ich es habe, ob es vor ihm schon ein solchen Tier gegeben hat, und wie es

> nach seinem Tode sein wird, ob es sich einsam fühlt, warum es keine Jungen hat, wie es heißt und so weiter. (19-20)

The narrator dismisses the "most wondrous questions asked" by the seemingly naïve children and declares them as impossible to answer. However, at a second glance, their questions seem less outrageous. Their inquiries rather read like a poignant commentary on the zoological discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth century, oscillating between anthropomorphizing and naturalizing the animal and the human. In that regard, the passage can be read as a commentary on practices of reading.

The ambiguity with which Kafka treated his own writing still presents challenges to the editorial practices of his textual legacy (Annette Steinrich). "Eine Kreuzung" is among the many fragments that Max Brod published after Kafka's death. Like the creature it presents, the text itself appears to be a strange hybrid and an heirloom that brings responsibilities to the one who inherits it.[15] The text illustrates the awareness of its "split" into production and reception and inscribes it into the figure of the animal. As Wolf Kittler and Gerhard Neumann point out, Kafka's "double situatedness" places his texts both "in the flow of writing and as part of a work constituted by a distant and editorial gaze" (Gölz 116). Sabine Gölz argues:

> Kafka's writing is highly self-conscious. It can no longer deny to itself that it will eventually be subjugated to reading and, what is more, that this irreducible intervention of reading is always already perpetrated by writing itself—leaving a trace in the form of a disjunction between Kafka

[15] See Judith Butler, "Who Owns Kafka?" on the recent trial in Tel Aviv and the quarrel around Kafka's legacy of published and unpublished work.

> the writer and Kafka the editor. (116-117)

In the process of reading, meaning unfolds in unforeseeable directions, eluding the author's control and involving the text in an infinite process of becoming. With the creation of this animal figure, Kafka both embraces the ambivalences of the text and engages with the anxieties over its legacy—in the process of reading, or literally, beyond the writer's demise. As Walter Sokel in "A Life of Reading Kafka" points out:

> He [Kafka] turned into a reader, trying to interpret and make sense of his texts … When the writer fails in his task as a reader, he turns to another reader. Thus the reader is to continue the writer's work of bringing his visionary inner world closer to the light of understanding. Even though, according to Kafka's view of myth, a full "explanation" will, because of the groundless nature of being, never be possible, portions of the way toward understanding can become progressively clearer through the process of interpretative reading. (56-57)

"Eine Kreuzung" displays signs of awareness of its reader in the text and the interpretative work she can do. The "groundless nature of being" pertains both to the realm of nature and of language, opening new possibilities for the textual production and for the reception of Kafka's zoopoetic texts.

The narrative around Kafka's curious animal reflects the collective anxiety over the loss of a metaphysical and universal truth and subsequently over its representation in language as a reliable system, but also challenges the resurrection of the corporeal as an alternative. The children's questions reveal the underlying desire to classify and categorize this living being, and thus to restore the logic of life that is unsettled by this

transgressive figure. They bear witness to the "effort of naturalization" in the reader to contain the underlying anxiety, caused by a figure that defies her attempts to classify and categorize through efforts of "bring[ing] it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible," as Jonathan Culler puts it (138). Through simply showing what he or she has to offer, the narrator attempts to assuage the children's "wondrous" questions: "I never trouble to answer, but confine myself without further explanation to exhibiting my possession" ("Ich gebe mir keine Mühe zu antworten, sondern begnüge mich ohne weitere Erklärungen damit, das zu zeigen, was ich habe") (426;20), the narrator explains. However, the narrator's innocuous willingness to "show what I have" does not bring much clarity to the matter, either. Kafka's animal complicates the notion that the body were a guarantee for truth where meaning can be established—a belief that Hofmannsthal still tries to uphold by declaring the animal's body as "the original metaphor," which "means nothing but itself." As Burkhart argues (citing Derrida): "If God does not exist anymore (Nietzsche) to guarentee the relationship between thing and word (res and verba), then the sign refers only to itself as different signs in space and time („spatialization" and „temporalization");" ("Existiert kein Gott mehr (Nietzsche), der den Zusammenhang von Sache und Wort (res und verba) garantiert, so verweist das Zeichen letztlich nur noch auf sich selbst als ein in Raum und Zeit ("Verräumlichung" und "Temporisation") verschiedenes Zeichen") (390). Unlike Hofmannsthal, whose epiphanies refer to the origin of the symbol and therefore still follow a certain signifying logic, Kafka's text embraces the arbitrariness and the self-referentiality of signs that ultimately renders corporeality as illegible as well.

The Kitten-Lamb's "Subject-Body"

Kafka's animal playfully mocks any attempts to understand it with discursive knowledge and to appropriate its being with zoological terminology. The "crossbreed's" very embodiment resists taxonomical fixation, and, as it oscillates between lamb and kitten, it is excluded from the kinship of either species:

> From the cat it takes its head and claws, from the lamb its size and shape; from both its eyes, which are wild and flickering, its hair, which is soft, lying close to its body, its movements, which partake both of skipping and slinking. Lying on the windowsill in the sun it curls up in a ball and purrs; out in the meadow it rushes about like mad and is scarcely to be caught. (426)

> Von der Katze Kopf und Krallen, vom Lamm Größe und Gestalt; von beiden die Augen, die flackernd und mild sind, das Fellhaar, das weich ist und knapp anliegt, die Bewegungen, die sowohl Hüpfen als Schleichen sind. Im Sonnenschein auf dem Fensterbrett macht es sich rund und schnurrt, auf der Wiese läuft es wie toll und ist kaum einzufangen. (16)

This "curious animal" displays at one and the same time the features and behavior of both kitten and lamb, and of neither of the two. It cannot be subsumed under the name of a species or be described according to its respective characteristics precisely because the conceptual link between signifier and signified, between sign and meaning, no longer functions. The "crossbreed" thus draws attention to the larger debate on truth and knowledge that, as Burkhart points out, marks the beginning of modernity (392). With

Kant, Burkhart argues, the subject recognizes the world around it according to preconceived categories in his or her mind (Ibid.). That makes it impossible, however, to conceive the individual phenomenon in its uniqueness (Ibid.), which is precisely the dilemma in which Kafka's narrator finds him- or herself, too.

Within the philosophical and intellectual milieu in the beginning of the twentieth century that casts doubt on the reliability of language, Kafka's creatures emerge as figures of reflection for epistemology and language. As the creature eludes the constant attempts to be grasped with conceptual knowledge and to be categorized within an already existing taxonomy of species, the narrator turns to the animal's body in order to understand its being:

> It flees from cats and makes to attack lambs. On moonlight nights its favorite promenade is along the eaves. It cannot mew and it loathes rats. Beside the hencoop it can lie for hours in ambush, but it has never yet seized an opportunity for murder. (426)

> Vor Katzen flieht es, Lämmer will es anfallen. In der Mondnacht ist die Dachtraufe sein liebster Weg. Miauen kann es nicht und vor Ratten hat es Abscheu. Neben dem Hühnerstall kann es stundenlang auf der Lauer liegen, doch hat es noch niemals eine Mordgelegenheit ausgenutzt. (16-17)

These observations expose the intricate intertwinement between the animal's embodiment and its 'inner life.' Just as its body is trapped 'in between' kitten and lamb, so is its demeanor indicative of both species. The crossbreed exposes and resists the

"temptation of dualism" that, as Greve argues, resides not only in the history of philosophy, but also in all of us (53). It defies the notion of a separation between body and mind, matter and soul that determines Cartesian dualism and its pervasive tradition in Western thought. This creature, the narrator seems to suggest, has no autonomous inner life that is detached from its embodiment. Its consciousness and the way it relates to the world around it are rather constituted by what Merleau-Ponty calls a "subject-body." It lacks an autonomous inner life—a "soul" that is detached from its body and that would clarify its species belonging in a more decisive way than its "crossbred" body does.

In focusing on the body in attempting to grasp the meaning of this curious being, the narrator's process of understanding reflects a larger epistemological shift in modernity. At a time when the arbitrariness of the signifier has made the functioning of language as a reliable system of communication and categorization questionable, the body appears as the last guarantee for truth (Burkhart 391). It is thus at the beginning of the twentieth century that the philosophy of phenomenology fully develops as an alternative to the metaphysical tradition—the very moment in time, when literary texts like Kafka's "Kreuzung" emerge that insist on their radical performativity and complicate their own legibility. As Margot Norris argues:

> Because their extirpation of philosophical assumptions leads to that leveling of values that renders the symbolic order transparent, phenomenology and its existentialist elaborations provide uniquely effective tools for the modern critique of anthropocentrism. (232)

The body of this creature—and thus its whole being—is marked by an ontological status

'in between.' The narrative of its experience resembles what Merleau-Ponty called "Consciousness" as a matter of 'I can' rather than 'I think' (*Phenomenology of Perception* 137):

> Our bodily experience of movement … provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a "praktognosia" [practical knowledge], which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my "symbolic" or "objectifying function." (Ibid. 140-141)

While in his later writings Merleau-Ponty determines the body precisely as the site of symbolization (*Nature*), he still regards the "symbolic" or "objectifying function" as separated from the body in *The Phenomenology of Perception.* This shift marks the development in Merleau-Ponty's thinking from an idiosyncratic and obscure corporeality to a more "symbolic" and "objectified" one. Kafka's kitten-lamb, however, rejects its symbolic service, as it insists on its unique situatedness in the world that renders any attempts to categorize it futile. Because the "I can" experience of Kafka's hybrid is hindered, its access to either world of cat or lamb foreclosed: "It flees from cats and wants to attack lambs" ("Vor Katzen flieht es, Lämmer will es anfallen").

If we perceive and understand the world though our body and its movement within it, others also understand us through our bodies. Following the logic of the "subject-body," the animal's body can "speak for itself." Yet, our understanding of its body is complicated by both this ambivalent, slippery, and unique figure that constantly seems to change its behavior and appearance *and* by the fact that we are still confronted with a literary animal mediated through words. The narrator's innocuous offer to put the

animal on display and "let it speak for itself" may therefore also be read as a playful commentary on attempts to represent animals in literature that often falsely assume the self-presence of the animal. As Chen puts it:

> Though the difference between symbolic and actual is easily observed, the *quality* of this difference between a symbolic and actual animal is important. Critics of animal studies might interject that one fault of animal representation is that it appears to ignore the "real" lives of animals. Such a conflation takes too easily as given the indelible link between an animal signifier and its referents, as well as the purity of the natural "real." (101)

"Eine Kreuzung" displays signs of awareness of this "indelible link between animal signifier and its referents." Moreover, the text gets its inspiration precisely from this tension between alleged self-presence and the chain of signifiers that challenges the notion of the body as a stable and self-identical entity that it expands from the individual's identity to the literary text. Kafka's zoopoetic approach therefore places the animal at the heart of language and literature. As "arche-trace," and as paradigmatic figure for what Derrida calls the "impurity at the heart of purity" ("The Law of Genre" 14) that marks the poetic text, they also deconstruct notions of genre and question concepts of sovereignty and self-assertion.

A Legacy's Sovereignty

In "Eine Kreuzung," questions of sovereignty and ownership—which have "always been vexed" for Kafka (Serpell 5)—come to life and haunt the narrator in the form of this "curious animal." The latest battle over Kafka's estate in Israel, trying to tie

the ownership of his remains to his linguistic and cultural belonging despite the controversial ambiguities of Kafka's "impure" cultural identity (Butler; "Who Owns Kafka?"), and Kafka's own wish for most of his texts to be burnt after his death, illustrate the complicated nature of these concepts for this writer. The battles over Kafka's remains seem to continue and echo the main topic of many of his texts: the tension between the assertiveness of selfhood and the "self's dependence on and subjection to the power figure" (Sokel 56). As Sokel argues, this "unresolvable contradiction between these two perspectives underlies and permeates all of Kafka's work … The fundamental ambivalence of Kafka's writing precludes an ultimate judgment that could be called an 'explanation'" (Ibid.). The "unreadability" of Kafka's texts is therefore also attributed to their oscillation between two mutually exclusive perspectives and a self that sways between self-assertion and subjection.

The tension between self-autonomy and dependence also characterizes "Eine Kreuzung." It adds another layer of complexity to this hybrid being on which the text is centered, and structures the relationship between narrator, animal, and the father figure, whose power extends beyond his death. While the narrator introduces the "curious animal" as "eigentümlich," indicating the strange nature of this creature as much as alluding to the fact that it literally "owns itself," the animal is also an heirloom from his or her father's estate. As such, the narrator is prohibited from redeeming the creature in view of its pain, and is required to keep it alive:

> Perhaps the knife of the butcher would be a redemption for this animal; but as it is a legacy I must deny it that. So it must wait until the breath voluntarily leaves its body, even though it sometimes gazes at me with a

> look of human understanding, challenging me to do the thing of which both of us are thinking. (427)

> Vielleicht wäre für dieses Tier das Messer des Fleischers eine Erlösung, die muß ich ihm aber als einem Erbstück versagen. Es muß deshalb warten, bis ihm der Atem von selbst ausgeht, wenn es mich manchmal auch wie aus verständigen Menschenaugen ansieht, die zu verständigem Tun auffordern. (31)

The animal embodies the law of the father that perpetuates its powerful authority over the narrator beyond his death. Derrida argues in his reading of Freud's *Totem und Tabu* (*Totem and Taboo*) in "Devant La Loi" that this authority of the dead father marks both the origin of the moral law, prohibiting the murder of the powerful father, and the beginning of narration: "This is the origin of literature and of the law at once —like the dead father, a story told (…) [w]hether or not it is fantastic … does not diminish the imperious necessity of what it tells, its law" (138). Although the law presumably has its origin in the prohibition—"Thou shalt not kill"—the killing of the father takes place in the realm of fiction and fantasy (Ibid.). What emerges from this prohibition is the literary text; self-identical with "respect to itself" and always already outside of the law (Ibid.) This text, Derrida continues, "has its own identity, uniqueness, and unity … no matter how enigmatic the conditions of this self-identity actually remain" (129). The text itself therefore oscillates between self-assertion of its—albeit "improper"—self-identity and the subjection to the author as the father figure who is responsible for its origin, whose power only increases after his death.

Trapped between these two poles, the literary text displays a circular and self-referential movement, "announcing the identity in itself of a bequeathed corpus that pronounces the non-identity in itself" ("Devant La Loi" 145). Just as the self-referentiality of the animal in "Eine Kreuzung," a "bequeathed corpus" itself, points to the *différance* at the heart of its hybrid being, the literary text is marked by a self-identity that is never fully identical with itself, allowing the reader to take it to different and unforeseeable places. Identity, Derrida remarks, is not "natural," but determined by a political discourse:

> Neither identity nor non-identity is natural, but rather the effect of a juridical performative. This (no doubt what we call the writing, the act and signature of the "writer") poses *before* us, preposes or proposes a text that lays down the law, and in the first place with respect to itself. (145)

Kafka's animal "lays down the law" that, according to Derrida, prescribes "the unreadability of the text, if one understands by this the impossibility of acceding to its proper significance and its possibly inconsistent content" (144). The hybrid creature is the textual production, which is born in the attempt "to read" it and invites the interpretative work of the reader while at the same time it "pronounces the law that protects it and renders it untangible" (Ibid.). Precisely because it keeps evolving and cannot be grasped, the animal invites multivalent readings while resisting to be understood in a univocal and decisive way. Similarly, Derrida determines this "state of not-knowing" to be "the beginning of literature" (142). Kafka's transgressive animal figures are therefore the point of departure for the poetic text.

At the same time, however, this self-sovereignty is in stark contrast with the

narrator's denial of the animal's wish for redemption, which hinders its autonomy and emphasizes its dependence on the powerful father figure as its origin. Just as the hybrid sways between kitten and lamb—and aspires to the status of a dog as well as a human—the text emerges in the tensions between author and reader, origin and becoming, and subjection and self-sovereignty. Kafka's oeuvre is constituted of fragments and letters, diary entries, and notes that are neither fully private nor entirely intended for the public, and therefore "in between" the public and the private realm (Burkhart 386). As such, Burkhart argues in line with Derrida's "Devant La Loi," Kafka's texts are also situated "outside the law" (Ibid.), while stating their own law precisely in their unreadability, and extending questions of identity and sovereignty to the literary text. After considering naming his text "Ein Erbstück" ("Heirloom" or "Legacy"), Kafka eventually settled on "Eine Kreuzung" (Schuller 16)—alluding to the artificial process of breeding new species by crossing two family lines and subverting the seemingly "natural" and biological connotation the word evokes. At the same time, as Marianne Schuller points out, the indefinite article "eine" ("a") alludes to the designation of a genre (Ibid.). By implying the poetological link, the title thus pertains the allusion of purity, which is—according to Derrida—always inherent in the notion of genre, masquerading as the "law of purity" while also subverting it (Ibid.). Subsequently, the literary animal to which it refers reflects not only anxiety over humanity's exceptional status once Darwinism rendered life a biological continuum with unforeseeable and uncontrollable forces; it also questions the "purity" of the literary text as a genre.

Animate Transgressions

Although Kafka's animal lacks biological kinship to both cat and lamb, it displays close ties and even a family bond to the human narrator. As its bodily *poesis* keeps evolving throughout the text—the narrator observes that it has started to fully develop only since it is in his or her possession ("Es ist ein Erbstück aus meines Vaters Besitz, entwickelt hat es sich aber doch erst in meiner Zeit")—it transgresses borders not only between kitten and lamb, but also displays canine behavior and an uncanny familiarity with the human narrator:

> Sometimes I cannot help laughing when it sniffs around me and winds itself between my legs and simply will not be parted from me. Not content with being lamb and cat, it almost insists on being a dog as well. Once when, as may happen to anyone, I could see no way out of my business problems and all that they involved, and was ready to let everything go, and in this mood was lying in my rocking chair in my room, the beast on my knees, I happened to glance down and saw tears dropping from its huge whiskers. Were they mine, or were they the animal's? Had this cat, along with the soul of a lamb, the ambitions of a human being? I did not inherit much from my father, but this legacy is quite remarkable. (427)

> Manchmal muß ich lachen, wenn es mich umschnuppert, zwischen den Beine sich durchwindet und gar nicht von mir zu trennen ist. Nicht genug damit, daß es Lamm und Katze ist, will es fast auch noch ein Hund sein. - Einmal als ich, wie es ja jedem geschehen kann, in meinen Geschäften und allem, was damit zusammenhängt, keinen Ausweg mehr finden konnte,

> alles verfallen lassen wollte und in solcher Verfassung zu Hause im Schaukelstuhl lag, das Tier auf dem Schoß, da tropften, als ich zufällig einmal hinuntersah, von seinen riesenhaften Barthaaren Tränen. Waren es meine, waren es seine? - Hatte diese Katze mit Lammesseele auch Menschenehrgeiz? - Ich habe nicht viel von meinem Vater geerbt, dieses Erbstück aber kann sich sehen lassen. (30)

The "crossbreed" is indeed in such proximity to the narrator that they "simply cannot be separated." Subsequently, he or she seems hardly surprised by the impossibility to determine the source of the tears: "Were they mine, or were they the animal's?". The intimate relation between (human) narrator and animal is further represented in the reciprocal exchange of glances: "It sometimes gazes at me with a look of human judiciousness, challenging me to act judiciously." Rather than a moment of mutual recognition, in which the human establishes itself as a "cultural body" and distinctively different from its animal other and which determined the long tradition of animal glances in the history of art and literature ("Der Blick des Anderen" 326), this hybrid looks at the human with human eyes. It questions "Verständigkeit"—the ability to know and judge wisely, but also to act accordingly—as a distinctively human trait, while mocking the alleged superiority of human *episteme*; after all, the narrator's knowledge and insight, as well as his or her ability to act accordingly, is severely limited and challenged by this living being.

Rather than recognizing one's own humanity in the animal Other, this hybrid's gaze exposes an uncanny familiarity and exposes the multifold and complex structures of borders between animal and human that Derrida coined as "limitrophy." It is precisely the

transgressive nature of this animal and its continuously evolving trajectory throughout the text that allows for the destabilization of binaries and subsequently for new forms of intimacy beyond species boundaries to emerge. Rather than constituting the representation of an 'actual' animal, this creature resembles the structure of what Chen calls "animacy." Rejecting the fixation of this term—and defending the systematic need to keep it fluid and flexible—he argues for the potential of animacy to disrupt binary thinking:

> Animacy activates new theoretical formations that trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference, including dynamism/stasis, life/death, subject/object, speech/nonspeech, human/animal, natural body/cyborg. In its more sensitive figurations, animacy has the capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy, engendering different communalisms and revising biopolitical spheres, or, at least, how we might theorize them. (3)

Like Derrida's concept of "arche-trace," animacy allows for the multiplication of differences. However, much like the deleuzo-guattarian concept of "becoming," animacy takes the mobility and flexibility of evolving and ever-changing forms of life into account, while also adding insights of affect and queer theory. The concept of animacy and of "animate transgression" is therefore inherently queer as it reconceptualizes identity as fluid and instable and disturbs normative ontologies and forms of intimacies:

> [M]y core sense of queer refers … to exceptions to the conventional ordering of sex, reproduction, and intimacy, though it at times also refers to animacy's veering away from dominant ontologies and the normativities they promulgate. That is, I suggest that queering is

> immanent to animate transgressions, violating proper intimacies (including between humans and nonhuman things). (11)

Like Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte," Kafka's text queers its zoopoetic approach by displaying the intimacy between individuals of different species, and by making this desire the point of departure for the poetic text. In a similar way, the crossbreed's *poeisis* continues to evolve along with the narrator, whose refusal to sacrifice this curious creature entails a critique of what Derrida calls a "carno-phallogocentric" identity that would attribute "authority and autonomy to the man rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal" ("Eating Well" 280). The concept of transgressive animacy, however, allows us to also challenge the very concept of species and directs our attention to the affective moments between forms of life. The bodily proximity between kitten lamb and narrator, and the intimacy with which the animal curls up on his or her knees ("das Tier auf dem Schoß") are queer moments in the narration that continue to transgress boundaries and violate "proper intimacies." The continuous transgressions of this curious creature motivate and mobilize the text, making queer zoopoetics a point of departure not only for Kafka's animal stories, but for "the beginning of literature" in general.

CHAPTER V

THE POETICS OF PHENOMENOLOGY: ANIMALS IN THE POETRY OF RAINER MARIA RILKE AND GEORG TRAKL

In his poetry Rainer Maria Rilke represents subjective experience as a phenomenology of a "non-dualistic disclosure" (Fischer 16) of the world. He aims to bridge the chasm between the "material" and the "ideal" or between "world" and "mind" that metaphysics upholds (Ibid. 21), and challenges the dualism on which metaphysical thought and our philosophical tradition rest by evoking in the reader the lived experience of a phenomenology of perception. Influenced by Cézanne's paintings and their non-realistic modes of representation, Rilke's poetry follows a structure of epistemology that allows the reader to experience perception in a non-dualistic way. In doing so, Rilke not only subverts metaphysics as the dominant school of thought in the history of philosophy, which structures power relations underpinning perceptions of gender, sexuality, and race.[16] He also reevaluates the role of art and the artist in challenging metaphysics and makes the case for a poetics of phenomenology that evokes in the reader the experience of such a non-dualistic disclosure.

While other studies have focused on the epistemological structure of Rilke's poetry (Hamburger; Fischer)[17], this chapter addresses the specific intersections of his

[16] See Val Plumwood

[17] Hamburger focuses on the notion of Husserl's *Wesensschau* in Rilke's poetry, whereas Fischer convincingly argues for the intellectual and philosophical intersections specifically between Heidegger, Rilke, and Merleau-Ponty: "The late Heidegger saw in Cézanne's late work a painterly analogue of his own efforts to overcome metaphysics, a 'post-metaphysical painting.' Thus for Rilke, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne was of crucial importance; moreover their reflections on Cézanne intersect in significant ways" (99-100). While Fischer concentrates on Rilke's animals as a reflection on interspecies *Wesensschau* and on Uexküll's theory of *Umwelt,* my reading centers on the relevance of the inter-subjective encounter across species lines for Rilke's poetry and their phenomenological structure.

poems—specifically the *Neue Gedichte* (*New Poems*)— with Martin Heidegger's philosophy of language as well as with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and theory of aesthetics. In his essay "Eye and Mind" (1961) Merleau-Ponty argues that the poet is in the unique position to 'undo metaphysics' through exposing the "invisible lining" behind the visible "by lending his body to the world" (123). This body, he further suggests, is an "intertwinement of vision and movement" (Ibid.) that structures not only the individual being but also the world around us as the all-encompassing "flesh of the world." Vision has a pivotal role in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology; it undermines dualistic modes as it "teaches us that beings that are different / 'exterior,' foreign to one another, are yet absolutely *together*, are 'simultaneity'" ("Eye and Mind" 146). In a similar way, Rilke's poetic language in the *Neue Gedichte* is highly imbued with the vocabulary of vision and the face, disclosing the world to the reader in a non-dualistic structure and reconceptualizing notions of "subject" and "object," "sameness" and "difference" and "interiority" and "exteriority."

Within the phenomenological structure of Rilke's poetics, animals inhabit a privileged role. While the panthers, dogs, gazelles, and unicorns populating Rilke's *Neue Gedichte* have not gone unnoticed by Rilke scholars, readings of Rilke's animals— until the recent "animal turn" in literary and animal studies—remained within the scope of what Luke Fischer calls "humanistic interpretations" (232). As Fischer argues, these reading practices perpetuate the "hermeneutic violence" of reducing the animal to being a mere reflection of human experience (Ibid.). Yet, a close reading of Rilke's animals reveals their significance precisely as that of representing and evoking the non-dualistic phenomenology of perception in the reader. I argue that Rilke employs the body of the

panther, the dog and the gazelle—turning these animals from what Karl-Heinz Fingerhut identified as "objectifications" of an alleged Rilkean "solipsism" (169) to figures that reflect aesthetical questions and hence to narrative agents in Roland Borgards's understanding of the term ("Tiere in der Literatur"). Mapping Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory into the realm of the interspecies encounter, Borgards argues that animals are the fundamental requirement for art (Ibid. 108).[18] In the context of Rilke's poetry in the *Neue Gedichte* this means that the encounter between actors of different species is constitutive for his project of a poetics of phenomenology.

Rilke's animal poems facilitate an encounter between the (human) reader and the poetic animals, exemplifying the role of vision for perception and a non-dualistic disclosure while expanding intersubjectivity to the interspecies realm and turning the animals into what Borgards (in reference to Donna Haraway's use of the term) calls "material-semiotic actors." Rilke's zoopoetics therefore relies on the material presence of the animals evoked in the poems. They bear significant similarities to Georg Trakl's poems in "Im Dorf." Not only do the latter place a similar importance on vision and the face; Trakl's poetry also evokes an experience of perception that transcends dualistic modes of subjectivity and objectivity, which motivates Heidegger to use Trakl's poetic language as an example for the essence of language as being fundamentally non-subjective and anti-metaphysical ("Die Sprache spricht" in "Die Sprache" 30). However, the ubiquity of animals in Trakl's poetry has been largely ignored by Heidegger, or—following Heidegger's arguments—the animal has been dismissed as being bereft of language and consequently "poor in world." Yet, Trakl's animals are figures for a poetic

[18] In his *Nature* lectures, Merleau-Ponty grants animals a role of similar importance.

reflection of an entire world that is deprived of language and communication. His animal figures are reduced to the very materiality of their "species bodies" (Nicole Shukin)—an impetus that Heidegger's reading only supports when understanding Trakl's animals according to the logic of Nietzsche's "noch nicht festgestellter Mensch" ("not yet confirmed human"). This reduction in Trakl's poems encompasses both humans and animals alike and creates an atmosphere of loneliness, death, and destruction.

Vision and Corporeality: Epistemology in Merleau-Ponty's Aesthetic Theory

In his essays "Indirect Language and Voices of Silence" (1961) and "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty investigates the aesthetic experience evoked by Cézanne's paintings. However, his observations do not limit themselves to the realm of fine arts. They rather pertain to the artwork in general—including the poetic text and literary work— and raise questions regarding the phenomenology of our perception and the politics of representation. As Galen A. Johnson points out: "Merleau-Ponty denies that the relation of the painting to the world is a resemblance, he views the relation of the painting to the world as one of revealing or disclosing (dévoiler)" ("Structures in Painting" 33). Recalling Heidegger's notion of language and art as disclosing the truth of Being, Merleau-Ponty argues that "word and world are interlaced" as he writes "towards a new post-Cartesian ontology of visibility and invisibility" (Johnson; "Eye and Mind" 51; 35). However, contrary to Heidegger's philosophy, Merleau-Ponty grounds his phenomenology in the moment of an embodied inter-subjective encounter. The fact that this embodiment exceeds the human subject is part of his conceptualization of "flesh" as the material texture that structures our world. While Heidegger argues that "language

speaks" ("Die Sprache"), Merleau-Ponty locates the will of expression in the flesh: "The desire or conatus of the Flesh is the demand for expression, and the demand that the world be brought forth over and over again in its visibility" (Johnson; "Eye and Mind" 51). By grounding expression in the all-encompassing "flesh of the world," Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language relies on the body as its primary origin. As flesh, this body includes other forms of life into this "demand for expression," expanding *logos* beyond the human being and allowing for an emergence of what Westling calls "the logos of the living world." The flesh reconceptualizes embodiment as one's individual body—the "subject"—that is opposed to its "Other"—the object—and circumvents the Cartesian dualism in the figure of a chiasm: "Chiasm, instead of the For the Other: that means that there is not only a me-other rivalry, but a co-functioning. We function as one unique body" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 215). As illustrated in previous chapters, this notion of co-functioning that underlies the idea of the "flesh" and is pertinent in twentieth century phenomenology also inspired the zoopoetic approaches to language and literature at that time.

In his essays on aesthetics, but also in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the role of vision in revealing this embodiment of the world both in its visibility and its invisibility. Through our gaze, we recognize our own embodiment and—as we experience ourselves as both observer and observed—get an understanding of the body as a "system of system" structuring the whole of being as flesh while bestowing it with meaning:

> We must therefore recognize that what is designated by the terms *glance*, *hand*, and in general *body* is a system of systems, destined for the

> inspection a world and capable of leaping over distances, piercing the perceptual future, and outlining hollows and reliefs, distances and deviations—a meaning—in the inconceivable flatness of being. ("Languages and Voices" 103-104).

Vision is for Merleau-Ponty the "meeting … of all aspects of Being" and "vision alone teaches us that beings that are different / 'exterior,' foreign to one another, are yet absolutely *together,* are 'simultaneity'" ("Eye and Mind" 149; 146). Vision can hence reveal the "invisible lining" behind the visible—it can bring forth the flesh of the world in all its depths, hollows, and gaps as well as in the unique intertwinement of all living beings. Already in *The Phenomenology of Perception,* Merleau-Ponty argues for vision as having a pivotal role in his phenomenology and in circumventing the Cartesian dualism:

> Rather than defining vision as "thought that one is seeing" [*pensée de voir*] (according to Descartes's phrase), through phenomenological reflection I find vision to be the gaze gazing into the visible world, and this is why that expressive instrument that we call a face can bear an existence just as my existence is borne by the knowing apparatus that is my body. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 367)

In this passage, Merleau-Ponty also points to the significance of the face; as the "expressive instrument"—and site of the gaze—the face is the "knowing apparatus." It facilitates an act of seeing that constitutes both the subject and its opposite in their corporeality through a reciprocal movement of perception. The body for Merleau-Ponty is constituted through both, vision and movement.

The act of seeing is inspired and evoked not only by the artist, but also by the poet: "The writer's act of expression is not very different from the painter's," Merleau-Ponty argues ("Indirect Language and Voices" 82). Through the work of art, the artist can 'teach us to see;' an act of seeing that reveals or discloses the flesh of the world in its expression. As Luke Fischer points out, "poems foster a twofold vision of things for the reader's imagination" (69). Kathrin Stengel illustrates how movement in space—the movement of the gaze, of the breath, or in short the body—is constitutive for Merleau-Ponty's epistemology as the ability to differentiate between oneself and the world (127). She points out how this corporeal movement is a prerequisite for reflection; the experience of reflection—mediated through the work of art as an aesthetic experience—relies on pre-reflective processes of movement in a space of inter-subjective encounters. (Ibid.). For Merleau-Ponty, she further argues, the act of expression is anchored in this very space of intersubjectivity and pre-reflection (134). This idea bears significant implications for philosophy:

> Because intersubjectivity is no longer understood as an exchange between two static subjects, but as pre-reflective process of movements, which enables reflection, this process of movement must be incorporated into philosophy. (Ibid.)

> Indem Intersubjektivität nicht länger als Austausch zwischen zwei in sich ruhenden Subjekten betrachtet wird, sondern als präreflexiver Bewegungsprozess, der erst die Reflexion ermöglicht, muss sie sich als dieser Bewegungsprozess auch im Philosophieren niederschlagen. (Ibid.)

Rather than considering it as a philosophical argument, Stengel argues for the role of the poetic text to evoke the aesthetic experience of perception situated in a pre-reflective and therefore also pre-linguistic space: "In the act of reading the reader experiences herself precisely in suspense between thought and vision, which she needs for the experience of reflection;" ("Im Lesen erfährt der Leser sich genau in der Schwebe des Denkens und des Schauens, deren er für die Reflexionserfahrung bedarf") (138). Expression is a process that is simultaneously intertwined with a corporeal and inter-subjective encounter during which the participants experience themselves as subjects and their opposites as "other," or as "world." In a way similar to Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty makes the case for a non-subjective or pre-subjective language that incorporates silence in its very essence: "[T]his silence will not be the contrary of language" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 179). Contrary to Heidegger, however, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy requires the inter-subjective encounter as corporeality and movement as a prerequisite for expression and language to emerge and argues for the significance of the gaze and the face within this process. In Rilke's animal poems, this inter-subjective encounter is transferred to the inter-species realm, emphasizing the animal's gaze for and its epistemological function within the poem.

Revealing the "Invisible Lining:" The Animal Body in Rilke's Poetry

Among the artists that evoke the lived experience of such a non-dualistic phenomenology in Merleau-Ponty's understanding, Rilke stands out for various reasons. As Fischer illustrates, the face and the act of seeing "stand in the center of Rilke's middle period" during which the *Neue Gedichte* emerged (73). Furthermore, Rilke's way of

seeing was influenced by Rodin and Cézanne (Ibid. 74), marking Cézanne's painting as a common point of departure both for Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic reflections and for Rilke's poetry.[19]

In the following poem, "Die Gazelle" ("The Gazelle"), the encounter with a gazelle prompts the lyrical I to reflect on language and its limitations. The inter-species encounter—and subsequently the memory of it—serves as a point of departure that allows the lyrical I a glimpse into the space that Merleau-Ponty understands as antecedent to language and reflection:

The Gazelle

Gazella Dorcas

Enchanted thing: however can the chime
of two selected words attain the true
rhyme that, as beckoned, comes and goes in you?
Out of your forehead leaf and lyre climb,

and all you are has been in simile
Passing though those love-songs continually
whose words will cover lights of leaves of rose,
the no-more-reader's eyes, which he will close:

only to look upon you: so impelled

[19] For a more detailed study on the influence of Cézanne on Rilke, see Luke Fischer's *The Poet as Phenomenologist.*

as though each limb of yours with leaps were laden,

and held its fire but whole the neck is upheld

the head in hearkening: as when a maiden

breaks off from bathing in some lonely place,

the forest-lake within her swift-turn face.

(89)

Die Gazelle

Gazella Dorcas

Verzauberte: wie kann der Einklang zweier

erwählter Worte je den Reim erreichen,

der in dir kommt und geht, wie auf ein Zeichen.

Aus deiner Stirne steigen Laub und Leier,

und alles Deine geht schon im Vergleich

durch Liebeslieder, deren Worte, weich

wie Rosenblätter, dem, der nicht mehr liest,

sich auf die Augen legen, die er schließt:

um dich zu sehen: hingetragen, als

wäre mit Sprüngen jeder Lauf geladen

und schösse nur nicht ab, solang der Hals

das Haupt ins Horchen hält: wie wenn beim Baden im Wald

die Badende sich unterbricht:

den Waldsee im gewendeten Gesicht.

(496-497)

The poem opens with the apostrophe of the animal as being enchanted ("Verzauberte"), situating the animal in a non-realistic and magical realm. This appellation creates a certain tension between the title of the poem and the very specific—and taxonomically "correct"—designation of species in the subheading (*Gazella Dorcas*). This tension is incorporated in the body of the animal in the first stanza: in its body harmonious rhymes "come and go" as words emerge and are released. The gazelle's body seems to exceed the talent of the poet: no matter how well chosen the latter's combinations of words and rhymes are, they nevertheless lag behind the word magic that this animal performs so naturally.

The second stanza introduces the human being in the figure of someone who stopped reading ("der nicht mehr liest"), evoking the reader *ex negativo*. The previous stanza suggests that it is his disenchantment with the work of the poets that motivates the person to turn away from reading literature. His inward gaze turns to the animal instead ("um dich zu sehen") and he finds himself carried away to the gazelle. The animal's body is captured between its readiness to move fast at any moment—alluding to the animal as prey for the hunter ("als wäre mit Sprüngen jeder Lauf geladen")—and a steadfast attentiveness that the lyrical I compares to someone pausing while taking a bath in a lake. While the evoked imagery is reminiscent of Narcissus, admiring the reflection of his own face in the surface of the water, the last verse of "Die Gazelle" reverses subjectivity and

objectivity in a peculiar way. It is not the reflection of her face *in the lake* that the person observes, but rather "the forest-lake lake within her face" ("den Waldsee im gewendeten Gesicht"). The curiosity of this statement is even more pronounced if we consider the fact that the verb is omitted—the reader finds no indication whether the lake is reflected in her face or lake and face are conflated. Only the allusion to Narcissus allows the reader to understand the ending of the poem under the pretext of reflection, which makes the reversal of subject and object (emphasized also through the ambiguity the word "gewendet"—"turned"—carries) even more noticeable.

The inter-species encounter between the lyrical I and the gazelle opens a space where subject and object ("Badende" and "Waldsee") and interiority and exteriority ("self" and "other") become almost indistinguishable. It is only the movement of the lake's surface that breaks the illusion and allows an observer of this scene to distinguish between reflection and original. The inversion of reflection and original in the moment of self-observation draws attention to the origin of the dichotomy between subject and object and points to a pre-reflective space where this distinction is not yet formed. In that regard, Rilke's inverted grammar resembles a language game in Wittgenstein's sense, which—as Stengel argues—follows the very same logic as Merleau-Ponty's corporeality (6). It evokes "what cannot be said:" a notion of pre-reflective knowledge that takes intersubjectivity as its point of departure from which epistemology emerges as the ability to see similarities (Ibid. 66). Rilke's language games emphasize the process of perception that elicits the separation of subject and object and cannot be communicated in a direct way. Human ("Badende") and nature ("Waldsee") are intertwined in a peculiar way that makes it impossible to disentangle them on a linguistic plane. The image Rilke evokes

resembles Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiastic structure of inter-corporeality; the flesh of the world, in which all living forms of beings are structured as "one unique body" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 215). In this interplay of subjectivity and objectivity, original and reflection, the bathing maiden's breaking off ("sich unterbricht")—which is formally reflected in the recurring colons throughout the poem—inserts a rupture in the poem. This moment follows the logic of the "slippage of identification" that in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy allows for an opening of the world and the emergence of poetry.

As an "enchanted" being, the animal's attentiveness ("solang der Hals das Haupt ins Horchen hält") allows it to transcend our traditional understanding of language and the world around us. It unveils the "invisible lining" of the visible world as subject and object, interiority and exteriority are not understood as dichotomies, but as intricately intertwined. The gazelle unifies art and nature ("Laub und Leier"). Despite Merleau-Ponty's claim that "animals cannot *look at* things, cannot penetrate them in expectation of nothing but the truth" ("Cézanne's Doubt" 67), Rilke's poem presents the animal precisely as the one who discloses the truth in what Fischer calls a "non-dualistic way" (96) and it is through the inter-species encounter that the human being can get a glimpse of the truth as well.

The following poem, "Der Hund" ("The Dog"), which is also part of Rilke's *Neue Gedichte*, takes the narrative perspective of a dog to call a humanistic understanding of the world as "universal truth" into question:

The Dog

Up there's the image of a world which glances

are always re-establishing as true.
At times, though, secretly, a thing advances
and stands beside him when he's squeezing through

that image that, he so different, down below;
neither excluded nor incorporate,
and squandering, as in doubt, his true estate
upon that image he forgets, although

he still keeps pushing so persistently
his face into it, almost with beseeching,
so close to comprehension, nearly reaching,
and yet renouncing: for he wouldn't *be*.
(293)

Der Hund

Da oben wird das Bild von einer Welt
aus Blicken immerfort erneut und gilt.
Nur manchmal, heimlich, kommt ein Ding und stellt
sich neben ihn, wenn er durch dieses Bild

sich drängt, ganz unten, anders, wie er ist;
nicht ausgestoßen und nicht eingereiht,

und wie im Zweifel seine Wirklichkeit
weggebend an das Bild, das er vergisst,

um dennoch immer wieder sein Gesicht
hineinzuhalten, fast mit einem Flehen,
beinah begreifend, nah am Einverstehen
und doch verzichtend: denn er wäre nicht.
(585)

The first stanza situates the narrating figure in a space below the authorities over the world and its interpretation ("Da oben wird das Bild von einer Welt / aus Blicken immerfort erneut und gilt"). This spatial relation allows the reader to assume that the voice belongs to the dog to which the poem's title refers. As non-human animal, he is traditionally excluded from interpreting the world and "incapable" of making sense of it in a reasonable way. It is therefore the humans "above" him that constitute their shared world and secure its meaning among them.

However, the second half of the stanza introduces a disruption to this human centered worldview: sometimes, the canine narrator announces, a "thing" secretively enters this world and accompanies him as he pushes through this image. As the authority over the formation of images, the representation of world and constitution of reality, is associated with the humans above him in the first verse, the image seems to refer to the human world. The moment the dog is "pushing into" this image, he invades the human world and potentially unsettles the power relations at work in the production of meaning. This process also transforms the dog himself, which becomes clear in the second stanza:

the dog gives up his reality that is differentiated from the human worldview, which subsequently alters his being ("anders als er ist"). Yet, the third stanza puts the trespassing dog back into its place—"nearly reaching" comprehension of the world, the dog opts to relinquish. He understands, after all, that this experience would not only alter his being, but also the hierarchy of beings in the world. No longer would he be dog ("denn er wäre nicht") if he reached a full understanding and insight into what traditionally is foreclosed to non-human animals.

Rilke's poem is part of a long tradition of canine narrators in literary history, ranging from Cervantes' *Coloquio de los Perros* (*Dialogues of the Dogs*) (1613) to Franz Kafka's "Forschungen eines Hundes" ("Investigations of a Dog") (1922) via Oskar Panizza's *From the Diary of a Dog* (1891).[20] The dog is often not only man's best friend, but also privy to his darkest secrets; a fact that causes discomfort in us and accounts for the image of the dog as a ridiculed and insufficient impersonator of human traits and behavior in popular culture, as Joela Jacobs argues. Rilke's poem seems to reflect on that tradition; it acknowledges the epistemological differences that construe the canine world as distinct from that of the human and suggests an advantage of the former over the latter. Like the gazelle in the previous poem, Rilke's dog seems to have an insight into the world that is foreclosed to the human. He reverses the traditional gaze between human and dog and challenges the epistemological framework of man as 'universally true.' At the same time, however, Rilke's dog is aware of his place below the human in the "Great Chain of Being." Contrary to the gazelle, there is nothing magical or "enchanted" about this animal; he is just a dog, domesticated and at times uncomfortably close to his human

[20] See Joela Jacob's "The Grammar of Zoopoetics" (unpublished manuscript).

companion. As such, he is not supposed to have the insightful observation of the world and the epistemological advantage over the human to which the first two stanzas allude.

The poem "Das Einhorn" ("The Unicorn"), turns its focus again to an enchanted or magical literary animal. Contrary to the dog, this creature can transcend all earthly things with her gaze. Like the gazelle, the unicorn's gaze is associated with a magical realm that opens up new worlds and encapsulates a different approach to language:

The Unicorn

And then the saint looked up, and in surprise
the prayer fell like a helmet from his head:
for softly neared that never-credited
white creature, which, like some unparented,
some helpless hind, beseeches with its eyes.

The ivory framework of the limbs so light
moved like a pair of balances deflected,
there glided through the coat a gleam of white,
and on the forehead, where the beams collected,
stood, like a mon-lit tower, the horn so bright,
at every footstep proudly re-erected.

Its mouth was slightly open, and a trace
of white through the soft down of grey and rose

(whitest of whites) came from the gleaming teeth;

its nostrils panted gently for repose.

Its gaze, though, checked by nothing here beneath,

Projecting pictures into space,

Brought a blue saga-cycle to a close.

(91)

Das Einhorn

Der Heilige hob das Haupt, und das Gebet

fiel wie ein Helm zurück von seinem Haupte:

denn lautlos nahte sich das niegeglaubte,

das weiße Tier, das wie eine geraubte

'hülflose Hindin' mit den Augen fleht.

Der Beine elfenbeinernes Gestell

bewegte sich in leichten Gleichgewichten,

ein weißer Glanz glitt selig durch das Fell,

und auf der Tierstirn, auf der stillen, lichten,

stand wie ein Turm im Mond, das Horn so hell,

und jeder Schritt geschah, es aufzurichten.

Das Maul mit seinem rosagrauen Flaum

war leicht gerafft, so daß ein wenig Weiß

(weißer als alles) von den Zähnen glänzte;

die Nüstern nahmen auf und lechzten leis.

Doch seine Blicke, die kein Ding begrenzte,

warfen sich Bilder in den Raum

und schlossen einen blauen Sagenkreis.

(470)

The first stanza introduces the unicorn in the encounter with a nameless "saint" ("der Heilige"). The appearance of this fabulous and "never-credited" animal ("das nie geglaubte") affects him deeply to the extent that the prayer he directed to the sky above falls back onto and beyond him. The unicorn's existence, it seems, shakes his belief in god and renders his prayers useless. The first stanza also draws attention to the creature's eyes, which—like the dog's eyes in "Der Hund"—are marked by a helpless pleading. The last stanza takes up the notion of the animal's gaze again: through her gaze, not limited by worldly things, images project themselves into space and form a blue sage-cycle ("Doch seine Blicke, die kein Ding begrenzte / warfen sich Bilder in den Raum / und schlossen einen blauen Sagenkreis").

This poem connects language and the production of narratives to the animal in a similar way as "Die Gazelle" does. In that regard, Rilke's animal poems are seemingly in line with theorists like John Berger, Jacques Derrida, and Akira Lippit, who argue for what Nicole Shukin calls a "primal link between the animal and the metaphor" (40). At a closer look, however, Rilke's literary animals complicate the notion of metaphoricity. Rather than simply serving as a metaphor, they embody a different understanding of language and the world. Focusing on the gaze and the description of movements, Rilke's

animal poems elicit an aesthetic experience that allows the reader to reconceptualize notions of subjectivity, objectivity, and language. To speak with Merleau-Ponty, it is precisely the animal's face in Rilke that provides the "knowing apparatus" for the reader and opens ways of understanding beyond binary structures. In Rilke's animal poetry, the animal body is the point of departure that evokes an aesthetic experience in the reader beyond the metaphysical twofold that structures our language and the representation of the world. The inter-subjective encounter established through the gaze is here also an inter-species encounter that emerges both between animal and the ——presumably human—lyrical I, and between human reader and diegetic animal. The diegetic animals that inhabit Rilke's poetic texts are often both observer and observed, subject and object of the gaze, whose reciprocal Other seems to be reader herself. The poetic text therefore provides the aesthetic experience that, according to Stengel, is a prerequisite for our conscious experience of reflection (138). Rilke's zoopoetics allude to the pre-reflective, pre-linguistic space that cannot be expressed in words, but to which words can only point, and for which animality becomes the paradigmatic key.

The animals in *Neue Gedichte* are represented as magical and fantastic beings, but are also described in a naturalistic and detailed way. They are representatives of both species that Borgards distinguishes as literary animals ("Tiere in der Literatur" 92); they are fantastic (the unicorn) and realistic animals (the dog), and sometimes have qualities of both (the gazelle). Rilke's animals are the descendants of a long lineage of magical creatures in fairy tales and fables, while their representation is also shaped by the increasing possibilities to encounter and observe real and sometimes "exotic" animals,

such as the gazelle, in the twentieth century.[21] The aesthetic experience evoked in the reader relies on their material presence in the text. The animals are "material-semiotic nodes" (Haraway; Borgards) as they both signify and at the same time rely on their materiality that the text invokes.

Rilke's endeavor to move beyond a dualistic view of things and to challenge metaphysical thought and modes of representation also identifies him as a truly modernist writer rather than, as Fischer also remarks critically, a "late Romanticist" (94). Within modernity as the historical moment of breakdown and skepticism towards philosophical and aesthetic traditions—which finds its most pronounced articulation in the *Sprachkrise* as a symptom of the collapse of the metaphysical worldview—the body becomes the new hallmark for authenticity and truth while the notion of the body is also complicated in its "translateability" into meaning. In Rilke's poetry we see the animal body emerge as what Merleau-Ponty calls the "imaginary body" ("Language and Voices" 113), which performs and evokes the phenomenology of perception. Like Hofmannsthal, Rilke reestablishes the magical and mystical qualities of language despite the *Sprachkrise.* Facilitated through new possibilities in the twentieth century—such as the rising popularity and availability of zoos in European urban centers (Colley)—to "look at animals," as John Berger puts it, and fueled by Darwin's evolutionary findings that also inspired new and "non-metaphysical" ways of representation (*Beasts of Modern Imagination*), the animal's body in Rilke's poetry becomes a "system of systems destined for the inspection of a world and capable of …outlining…a meaning in the inconceivable

[21] See, for example, the letter Rilke had written a month before the publication of "Die Gazelle:" "Yesterday, by the way, I spent a whole morning in the Jardin des Plantes, in front of the gazelles…I saw only one of them stand up for a moment, it lay down again immediately; but I saw, while they were stretching and testing themselves, the magnificent workmanship of these limbs: (they are like guns from which leaps are fired)" (*New Poems* 89).

flatness of being" ("Language and Voices" 103-104). Following the logic of what Merleau-Ponty calls a homonymic relationship between content and form ("Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" 113), the diegetic animals not only animate Rilke's poetry in terms of their content, but also organize the formal structure of the poems.

The animal body shapes the literary text in allowing the reader to experience perception as a non-dualistic disclosure of the world that challenges dichotomies, above all the one between human and animal. Rilke's zoopoetics relies on the material presence of the animal body as the encounter between human and non-human animals provides the reader with the aesthetic experience that transcends reflection. A reading that focuses purely on the metaphorical and symbolical function of Rilke's animals would necessarily remain limited to a solipsistic interpretation and misses the profound critique on metaphysics and the poetics of phenomenology that Rilke envisions in his *Neue Gedichte.*

"O Nearness of Death:" Trakl's Animals in the Cycle of Poems "Im Dorf" ("In the Village")

Like Rilke's *Neue Gedichte*, Trakl's poems in the cycle "Im Dorf" ("In the Village") present language as a phenomenon independent of the individual speaker. Not surprisingly, scholars often describe the language evoked in his poetry as "non-subjective," connecting this "latent subjectivity" with Trakl's ekphrastic rhetoric that focuses especially on the vivid description of colors (Görner 149; 147). Moreover, Trakl's poetry also points to phenomenological perception beyond dualism that is closely connected to the animal's vision and gaze. However, by paying close attention to the animals in Trakl's poems "Im Dorf," the reader experiences a very different interaction

between human and non-human animals. Contrary to Rilke's animal poems, Trakl's poetry displays the inter-species encounter as inhibited and denies the reader an aesthetic experience of intertwinement of vision and movement that would hint to the larger intertwinement of body and world in any fulfilling way. By closing off the possibility of an exchange of gazes and by evoking the animal's body as immobile and dead, Trakl's poems in "Im Dorf" elicit a yearning for a living and breathing counterpart that they simultaneously deny to their reader, creating an atmosphere of isolation and loneliness in the texts, engaging a "negative zoopoetics" that invokes animal absences.

Trakl's "Nachtlied" ("Nocturne") draws the reader's attention specifically to the animal's face in its opening line:

Nocturne

Breath without motion. An animal's face
Stiffens with blue, its sanctity.
Enormous is the silence in the stone.

Mask of a nocturnal bird. Softly three bells
Peal in one. Elai! Your face
Curves mutely above blue water.

O you still mirrors of truth.
The ivory temples of the lonely man
Reflect a radiance of fallen angels.
(73)

Nachtlied

Des Unbewegten Odem. Ein Tiergesicht

Erstarrt vor Bläue, ihrer Heiligkeit.

Gewaltig ist das Schweigen im Stein.

Die Maske eines nächtlichen Vogels. Sanfter Dreiklang

Verklingt in einem. Elai! dein Antlitz

Beugt sich sprachlos über bläuliche Wasser.

O! Ihr stillen Spiegel der Wahrheit.

An des Einsamen elfenbeinerner Schläfe

Erscheint der Abglanz gefallener Engel.

(83)

While "Nachtlied" opens with the face of the animal, this face remains inaccessible; it is frozen or petrified ("erstarrt"), covered by a mask, and generally lacking a counterpart, visualized for example through the absence of a reflection on the water surface or the mirror as indicated through the words "mutely" ("sprachlos") and "still" ("stillen"). While in Rilke's poem "Die Gazelle" the act of reflecting one's face becomes the site of a word-play that challenges the notion of subject and object, Trakl's poem emphasizes the loneliness of the subject deprived of a counterpart. If in Rilke's poetry the face is constitutive for the inter-subjective encounter that allows a reconceptualization of language and representation in a non-dualistic way, then Trakl's poem inhibits this encounter. Yet the face is even more present in its absence; each stanza draws attention to

the inhibition of the inter-subjective encounter and the lack of an exchange of gazes that subsequently results in muteness and silence.

In his essay "Die Sprache im Gedicht" ("Language in the Poem), Heidegger turns to Georg Trakl's poetry as an example for how a non-subjective language can reveal the truth of Being in a non-dualistic way. Arguably delivering the most famous interpretation of Trakl's poetry, Heidegger views Trakl's poems as paradigmatic for the ability of the (German) language to "speak itself:" independent of human action or interaction, language emerges from an "attuned silence" that is constitutive for, and an essential part of, it, and reveals the truth of Being. For Heidegger, this understanding of the essence of language as non-subjective is fundamental for his larger concept of philosophy. Contrary to the history of philosophy that—according to Heidegger—has fallen prey to metaphysical thought and remains attached to solipsism since ancient Greece, his phenomenological approach means to overcome the subject's centrality and the dichotomy between subject and object. Specifically focusing on Trakl's "Nachtlied," this poem serves as a point of departure and is paradigmatic for Heidegger's argument that we need a different relationship to language—and subsequently to Being—that encompasses silence:

> *Language speaks as the peal of stillness.* Stillness stills by the carrying out, the bearing and enduring, of world and things in their presence. The carrying out of world and thing in the manner of stilling is the appropriative taking place of the difference. Language, the peal of stillness, is, inasmuch as the dif-ference takes place. Language goes on as the taking place of the dif-ference for world and things. ("Language" 207).

> *Die Sprache spricht als das Geläut der Stille.* Die Stille stillt, indem sie Welt und Ding in ihr Wesen austrägt. Das Austragen von Welt und Ding in der Weise des Stillens ist das Ereignis des Unter-Schiedes. Die Sprache, das Geläut der Stille, ist, indem sich der Unter-Schied ereignet. Die Sprache west als der sich ereignende Unter-Schied für Welt und Dinge. ("Die Sprache" 30)

While Heidegger reads this silence as integral to language and understands the poem as paradigmatic for making the case for a non-subjective language that comes into being through the attunement of silence, this reading ignores how all-encompassing and pervasive silence is presented in "Nachtlied:" "Gewaltig ist das Schweigen im Stein" ("Enormous is the silence in the stone"). Moreover, Heidegger's interpretation overlooks the significance of the animals in the poem. In line with his argument that the animal does not possess language and is subsequently "poor in world" (see *Concepts of Metaphysics*), his reading ignores the centrality of the animal's face in the opening line of the poem as much as the bird's mask or his song that is mentioned and reduces the animal to Nietzsche's notion of the "noch nicht festgestellte Mensch" ("not yet determined animal"):

> Who is the blue wild game to whom the poet calls out that it recall the stranger? Is is an animal? No doubt. Is it just an animal? No. … The blue game is an animal whose animality presumably does not consist in its animal nature, but in that thoughtfully recalling look for which the poet calls. This animality is still far away, and barely to be seen. The animality

> of the animal here intended thus vacillates in the indefinite. It has not yet been gathered up into its essential being. This animal—the thinking animal, *animal rationale,* man—is, as Nietzsche said, not yet determined. ("Language in the Poem" 166-167)

> Wer ist das blaue Wild, dem der Dichter zuruft, es möchte doch des Fremdlings gedenken. Ein Tier? Gewiß. Und nur ein Tier? Keineswegs. … Das blaue Wild ist ein Tier, dessen Tierheit vermutlich nicht im Tierischen, sondern in jenem schauenden Gedenken beruht, nach dem der Dichter ruft. Diese Tierheit ist noch fern und kaum zu erblicken. So schwankt dann die Tierheit des hier gemeinten Tieres im Unbestimmten. Sie ist noch nicht in ihr Wesen eingebracht. Dieses Tier, nämlich das denkende, das *animal rationale,* der Mensch, ist nach einem Wort Nietzsches noch nicht festgestellt. ("Die Sprache im Gedicht" 45)

Subsuming animality in Trakl's poem under a not yet fully developed humanity, Heidegger not only denies the animals their specific significance in the text, but also grants a higher significance to the human beings than the text allows. It is the striking absence of the animal as a living, moving, and breathing being and consequently the lack of an inter-subjective encounter across species lines that stands out in "Nachtlied." The animal is not only dead, it is petrified ("erstarrt"), his face has turned blue or has become a lifeless mask while his song has faded away. All that remains in Trakl's poem is an overwhelming silence. This silence is evoked as being so powerful that Heidegger's reading of the poem as paradigmatic for a silence that allows Being to emerge and unfold

seems far-fetched. Trakl's notion of silence is reminiscent of Lord Chandos's crisis. As such, the poem is indicative of the *Sprachkrise* and envisions similar consequences for society without presenting the reader with the possibility of a rehabilitation for language.

The petrified and mute animals in "Nachtlied" evoke the atmosphere of loneliness and death that marks the overall atmosphere of the poem. More than mere rhetorical devices, however, the animals serve as agents *ex negativo*. It is the foreclosure of the inter-subjective encounter that makes the silence of this poem so pervasive and accounts for the loneliness of the living being in the last stanza ("des Einsamen"). With the face being petrified or hidden behind a mask, no exchange of gazes is possible. As Merleau-Ponty argues, "Vision is the meeting, as at a crossroads, of all aspects of Being" ("Eye and Mind" 147). In "Nachtlied," these crossroads are barred, which makes silence all encompassing and powerful. Trakl chooses the inter-species encounter to elicit a world that is deprived of communication and meaningful exchanges, which leaves the living being isolated and alone.

Trakl's "Im Dorf" ("In the Village") focuses specifically on the evocation of death and sickness. The poem conjures up the remainders of the dead animals in a visceral way—their bodies haunt the poem through their uncanny presence:

In the Village

1.

From brown walls emerges a village, a field.

A shepherd moulders on an old stone.

The forest edge envelops blue animals,

Soft leaves falling in stillness.

Browned foreheads of workers. Long ring

The evening bells; beautiful is devout custom.

Black head of the savior, wreathed in thorns,

Cool room appeased by death.

How pale the mothers are. Blue sinks

Upon glass and chest, which proudly preserve their meaning;

And an aged white head bends

To the grandchild who drinks milk and stars.

2.

The poor one who died lonely in spirit

Climbs waxen over an old path.

Pale trees sink bare and calm

Into the colors of their fruit, which blackly rots.

The dried straw roof still arches

Above the slumber of cattle. The blind maid

Appears in the courtyard; blue water grieves.

A horse's skull stares from the crumbling gate.

Uncomprehending, the idiot speaks a word

Of love, which echoes in the black bush

Where a slender dream-form stands.

The sound of evening fades in misty blue.

3.

Branches bared by wind knock at the window.

A wild grief grows in the farmwife's womb.

A black snow ripples through their arms;

Golden-eyed owls flutter round her head.

The bare walls stare gray-soiled

Into cool darkness. In the fever-bed

The pregnant belly freezes; boldly the moon watches.

A dog has died in front of her chamber.

Darkly three men step through the gate

With scythes broken in the field.

Through the window moans the red evening wind,

From which emerges a black angel.

(68-69).

Im Dorf

Aus braunen Mauern tritt ein Dorf, ein Feld.

Ein Hirt verwest auf einem alten Stein.

Der Saum des Waldes schließt blaue Tiere ein,

Das sanfte Laub, das in die Stille fällt.

Der Bauern braune Stirnen. Lange tönt

Die Abendglocke; schön ist frommer Brauch,

Des Heilands schwarzes Haupt im Dornenstrauch,

Die kühle Stube, die der Tod versöhnt.

Wie bleich die Mütter sind. Die Bläue sinkt

Auf Glas und Truh, die stolz ihr Sinn bewahrt;

Auch neigt ein weißes Haupt sich hochbejahrt

Aufs Enkelkind, das Milch und Sterne trinkt.

2.

Der Arme, der im Geiste einsam starb,

Steigt wächsern über einen alten Pfad.

Die Apfelbäume sinken kahl und stad

Ins Farbige ihrer Frucht, die schwarz verdarb.

Noch immer wölbt das Dach aus dürrem Stroh

Sich übern Schlaf der Kühe. Die blinde Magd

Erscheint im Hof; ein blaues Wasser klagt;

Ein Pferdeschädel starrt vom morschen Tor.

Der Idiot spricht dunklen Sinns ein Wort

Der Liebe, das im schwarzen Busch verhallt,

Wo jene steht in schmaler Traumgestalt.

Der Abend tönt in feuchter Bläue fort.

3.

Ans Fenster schlagen Äste föhnentlaubt.

Im Schoß der Bäurin wächst ein wildes Weh.

Durch ihre Arme rieselt schwarzer Schnee;

Goldäugige Eulen flattern um ihr Haupt.

Die Mauern starren kahl und grauverdreckt

Ins kühle Dunkel. Im Fieberbette friert

Der schwangere Leib, den frech der Mond bestiert.

Vor ihrer Kammer ist ein Hund verreckt.

Drei Männer treten finster durch das Tor

Mit Sensen, die im Feld zerbrochen sind.

Durchs Fenster klirrt der rote Abendwind;

Ein schwarzer Engel tritt daraus hervor.

(79-80)

The animals in this poem are reduced to the very materiality of their bodies; the horse's head is stripped down to its bare skeleton ("Pferdeschädel") and the dog's corpse is a

relic of its painful and undignified death ("verreckt"). Like in "Nachtlied," the animal's face is distorted to a lifeless mask; the horse's gaze resembles a rigid and lifeless stare ("starrt") and the owls' eyes are metonymically displaced with gold ("goldäugige Eulen"). The notion of the staring gaze is repeated twice in the second and third stanza of the poem's second part ("die Mauern starren kahl und grauverdreckt;" "den frech der Mond bestiert"). Here, the subjects of this gaze are inanimate things, walls or the moon, and the gaze takes on an intrusive and even voyeuristic quality ("bestiert"), deprived of the possibility for a meaningful exchange between individuals.

The sickly carnal presence used to evoke the animals in the poem also pertains to its human figures. The "pregnant belly" ("Der schwangere Leib") serves as a metonymy for a woman, bedridden and exposed to the moon's staring gaze. Rather than growing life inside of her—and releasing it through the act of labor ("Wehen")—the womb of the farmer's wife contains uncontrollable woes or grief ("ein wildes Weh"). Within this world of sickness and decay, not only the individual life, but also death loses its meaning: the dog perishes ("verrecken"), a shepherd's corpse is exposed as it decays "on an old stone" ("Ein Hirt verwest auf einem alten Stein"), and the men return from their work on the fields with broken scythes ("Mit Sensen, die im Feld zerbrochen sind"). Metonymically standing in for death as the "grim reaper" ("Sensenmann"), the image of the broken scythes is even more unsettling, especially since this verse is directly followed by the red evening braze rattling through the windows and setting the stage for the arrival of a black angel. The last stanza of "Im Dorf" enhances the menacing atmosphere of the poem to an almost apocalyptic scenario. It opens the enclosed world of the village to the transcending figure of the black angel, while at the same time distorting the hope for a

meaning beyond sickness and decay of this world.

Trakl's poem evokes a world deprived of meaning and communication; the only affectionate word ("ein Wort der Liebe") is uttered by "the idiot" and fades away in the darkness. The flesh of human and non-human animals is isolated; the poem closes off any possibility for embeddednes or intertwinement of beings that allows for the revelation of meaning behind the bleak materiality of the world in "Im Dorf." Trakl's poem envisions a scenario of life as, in Agamben's words, "that [which] may be killed and yet not sacrified" (*Homo Sacer* 8), as "bare life" that is "neither an animal life nor a human life, but only life that is separated and excluded from itself" (*The Open* 38). Both human and non-human life are reduced to the bare life of the "species body" (Shukin 10), de-individualizing life and ultimately rendering it meaningless. Such "species body," Shukin argues, is detached from the actual animal, and subsequently functions "predominantly as a metaphor for that corporeal part of 'man' that becomes subject to biopolitical calculation" (Ibid.). In that regard, the animal as metaphor no longer serves a humanistic interpretation of the text, but evokes an apocalyptic posthumanism in which individual life is rendered meaningless and disposable.

The "Rosenkranzlieder" ("Hymns for a Rosary")—"An die Schwester" ("To the Sister"), "Nähe des Todes" ("Nearness of Death"), and "Amen" ("Amen")—take up the notion of death and decay once again. The poems ironically invert the sequence and meaning of the three prayers in the rosary, "The Lord's Prayer," "Hail Mary" and "Glory Be," as they culminate not in the resurrection of Jesus, but in the arrival of Azrael, the Angel of Death in the Hebrew Bible and simultaneously in the end of mankind.

The first poem, "An die Schwester" ("To the Sister") is addressed to the

“Karfreitagskind” (“Child of the Passion”), a neologism alluding perhaps to Jesus and evoking the sorrow of this Christian day that is often also called “Stiller Freitag” (“Quiet” or “Silent Friday”). The blue deer (“blaues Wild”), a trope in many of Trakl’s poems in the cycle “Ein Dorf,” also appears in “An die Schwester:”

To the Sister

Autumn and evening are where you walk,

Blue deer, who sings under trees,

The lonely evening pond.

Softly sounds the flight of the bird,

The sadness of your forehead.

Your thin smile sings.

God has twisted your eyelids.

Child of the Passion,

At night stars seek the arch of your brow.

(61)

An die Schwester

Wo du gehst wird Herbst und Abend,

Blaues Wild, das unter Bäumen tönt,

Einsamer Weiher am Wald.

Leise der Flug der Vögel tönt

Die Schwermut über deinen Augenbogen

Dein schmales Lächeln tönt.

Gott hat deine Lider verbogen

Sterne suchen nachts, Karfreitagskind,

Deinen Stirnenbogen.

(60)

As in the poem "Im Dorf," the blue deer inhabits the forest and is separated from the human dwelling. The word "tönen" ("sings") is repeated three times throughout the poem; the blue deer "sounds" under the trees, the flight of the birds "sounds" quietly, and so does the thin smile of the "Karfreitagskind." However, the fact that it is not the birds' singing, but rather the flapping of their wings that creates the sound in this poem, draws attention to the overall silence in this scenario. The oxymoron of the "singing thin smile" creates a similar effect in the reader. The poem's last stanza points to the absence of the gaze; as God bent the "Karfreitagskind's" eyelids, her face is closed off to the world, and the stars look for a counterpart in vain.

The poem "Nähe des Todes" ("Nearness of Death") evokes the natural world as the bearer of the gaze as well. However, this gaze is again presented as closed off ("O der Wald, der leise die braunen Augen senkt."), contributing to the loneliness that not only determines the human's whole being as indicated through the epithet ("der Einsame"), but also the atmosphere of the poem:

Nearness of Death

Evening settles in dim villages of childhood.

The pond under the willows fills

With poisoned sighs of grief.

The forest gently lowers brown eyes,

And from the gnarled hands of the lonely man

Fade the purple days of his ecstasy.

O nearness of death. Let us pray.

In this night upon warm pillows yellowed by incense

The delicate limbs of lovers relax.

(61)

Nähe des Todes

O der Abend, der in die finseren Dörfer der Kindheit geht.

Der Weiher unter den Weiden

Füllt sich mit verpesteten Seufzern der Schwermut.

O der Wald, der leise die braunen Augen senkt,

Da aus des Einsamen knöchernen Händen

Der Purpur seiner verzückten Tage hinsinkt.

O die Nähe des Todes. Laß uns beten.

In dieser Nacht lösen auf lauen Kissen

Vergilbt von Weihrauch sich der Liebenden schmächtige Glieder.

(77)

Eventually, the lover's slender limbs are separated as well, emphasizing the atmosphere of isolation while again drawing attention to the materiality of their (isolated) bodies.

In "Amen," the nearness of death for the human figures is announced by the silence of the animal world that presupposes the arrival of the Angel of Death, Azrael:

Amen

Decay gliding through the mouldered chamber;

Shadows on yellow walls. In dark mirrors

The ivory sorrow of our hands closes in an arch.

Brown pearls trickle through dead fingers.

In the silence

An angel's blue poppy-eyes open.

And blue is the evening;

The hour of our dying, Azrael's shadow

Darkening a brown garden.

(63)

Amen

Verwestes gleitend durch die morsche Stube;

Schatten an gelben Tapeten; in dunklen Spiegeln wölbt

Sich unserer Hände elfenbeinerne Traurigkeit.

Braune Perlen rinnen durch die erstorbenen Finger.

In der Stille

Tun sich eines Engels blaue Mohnaugen auf.

Blau ist auch der Abend.

Die Stunde unseres Absterbens, Azraels Schatten,

Der ein braunes Gärtchen verdunkelt.

(78)

This poem renders life as decayed and rotten material that is not further specified ("Verwestes"), illustrating the consequences of the "species body" that devalues individual life. Like in "Nachtlied," the image of a mirror without reflection ("in dunklen Spiegeln") is evoked, as well as the symbolism of ivory—in "Amen" used to elicit the cold and lifeless quality of sorrow ("elfenbeinerne Traurigkeit"). The image of the fingers that died away ("die erstorbenen Finger") is a synecdoche for the human that, as the last stanza alludes, is in the process of dying, too ("die Stunde unseres Absterbens"). The all-encompassing silence that marks this poem is disrupted only by the look of the angel; his blue eyes are compared to blue poppies ("blaue Mohnaugen"), evoking the darkness of

this figure and alluding to the use of this plant for drugs, with which Trakl was familiar in his own life. The last stanza announces the arrival of the black angel, which is associated with the passing away of the human beings as a collective species ("unser Ableben"). It is again only the figure of the dark angel that can transcend the cycle of death and decay, in which both human and non-human animals are encircled.

Within the anticipation of World War I and the foreshadowing of death and destruction, Trakl's poems envision an apocalyptic scenario that deprives human and non-human animals alike of their individuality. Despite the bucolic title that alludes to the possibility of a pastoral idyll, in which human and non-human animals co-exist naturally, the poems in the circle "Im Dorf" evoke a world lacking inter-subjective encounters. They present life in its most isolated form, in which communication is absent and silence prevails. In Trakl's poems, individual life is reduced to the bare life of the "species bodies," reducing both human and non-human animals to the bare materiality of their bodies. According to Merleau-Ponty, the inter-subjective encounter is a prerequisite for expression and language to emerge, with the face and the gaze of the Other as essential within this process. Trakl's animal poems draw attention to this significance precisely by depriving their envisioned scenarios off such encounters. They envision a world of isolation rather than intertwinement, of silence rather than expression, and of the bare life of species bodies rather than the rich and lively notion of flesh.

By reading Rilke's *Neue Gedichte* as well as Trakl's cycle of poems "Im Dorf" alongside Merleau-Ponty's essays "Eye and Mind" and "Indirect Languages and the Voices of Silence" I illustrated in this chapter how poetry can provide an aesthetic experience for the reader that challenges metaphysical thought and our common

philosophy of language based upon it. Rather than excluding the animal from the production of language and meaning, as Heidegger argues, these poems reveal the encounter between human and animal as pivotal for the emergence of language, foreshadowing a central aspect of Merleau-Ponty's late *Nature* lectures and making a case for language and expression that exceeds the human and encompasses other living beings and the world. As Trakl's animal poems illustrate, the absence of an inter-subjective encounter across species lines accounts for a "flatness of being" (*Phenomenology of Perception)* that renders everything meaningless. Within Rilke's and Trakl's poetics of phenomenology, non-human animals are agents in the process of meaning-making and the emergence of a meaningful expression. Trakl's negative zoopoetic approach engages the figure of the dead animal and evokes animal absences to allude to a silence that encompasses the entire world and its beings. Like Rilke, Trakl's animal poems draw attention precisely to the relevance of the inter-subjective and inter-species encounter—and the gaze and face as constitutive for it—for the emergence of language. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely through the absence of this encounter, that Trakl's poems evoke the sensation of an all-encompassing and overwhelmingly powerful silence, loneliness, and apocalyptic destruction that marks his poetry on the cusp of World War I. While Hofmannsthal invokes the sacrifice of the animal to resurrect language and meaning despite the *Sprachkrise*, Trakl's poems deny the reader this gratification, and illustrate a world void of communication and intersubjectivity.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Literary criticism and theory must take the animal 'seriously' to come to a richer understanding of the complexities that are often involved in animal figurations. Textual animals are a site of intersection, and it is only once we have taken animality into consideration that we can fully grasp and conceptualize how identities are constructed as racialized, sexualized, gendered, and able-bodied. While much work has been done in critical animal studies that focuses on these intersections, there is still more to be explored and theorized within zoopoetics as the study of animality and language. As Driscoll argues, animals in literature challenge our understanding of metaphoric language, and illustrate the need to move away from an "overly narrow" conception of metaphor (227). Animals in texts are not just "empty signifiers" (Chen) in which different (human) identity categories intersect and interplay. Rather, real animals as living and breathing creatures are at work in the emergence of textual animals, and the latter influence the actual lives of the former. In that regard, Donna Haraway's understanding of literary animals as "material-semiotic nodes" (*The Companion Species Manifesto*), or Roland Borgards's notion of "material metaphor" (*Stubb Kills A Whale*) provides a helpful framework to replace theories of metaphor that operate under the assumption that "one thing substitutes the other" (Driscoll 227). As I have shown in Chapter 2, Hofmannsthal's *Das Gespräch über Gedichte* engages with this zoopoetic debate in the insistence that the swans mean "nothing but themselves," and by referring to the animal's material presence in the text.

Zoopoetics and the study of animals in literature can also promote a different understanding of species and reconceptualize binary thinking that is at work in logocentrism and undergirds speciesism, racism, sexism, and ableism. As shown in Chapter 3, Mel Y. Chen's notion of animacy is a helpful framework to not only account for the ontologies of Kafka's creatures that fall out of heteronormative orders or taxonomies, but also to challenge what Derrida calls the "carno-phallogocentric discourse" ("Eating Well") that perpetuates violence against animals and other groups associated with animality. This violence is at the heart of our very understanding of and approach to language and subjectivity, which also continues to justify our treatment of real animals. This dissertation has traced the critique of logocentrism back to the turn-of-the-century and illustrated the potential in the phenomenon of *Sprachkrise* to challenge anthropocentrism.

Paying attention to the animals in their specific roles and functions within poetic texts opens new ways to read and interpret these texts. Unless we become sensitive to the moments of intimacy that unfold in texts across species borders, texts such as Hofmannsthal's "Reitergeschichte" continue to affirm what Jackson calls "the epistemological authority of 'Man'" (670). As Jennifer Cooke points out, literary texts can portray intimacy and engage their readers intimately by prompting emotional responses (3). The "scenes of intimacy" that emerge in poetic texts between humans and other animals allows us to apprehend "improper" affiliations. They also enhance the reader's capacity for empathy across species; a capacity deeply needed in the age of what Elizabeth Kolbert calls the "Sixth Extinction." Contemporary literature and film, such as Yoko Tawada's *Etüden im Schnee* (*Memoirs of a Polar Bear*) or Nicolette Krebitz's

"Wild" continue to queer the encounters between humans and other species, and might ultimately help us to come to a different understanding of what intimacy, love, and sexuality mean.

Lastly, zoopoetic approaches need to draw on various disciplines. While queer theory can help us to apprehend "slippery figures" and forms of affect across species borders, phenomenological philosophy and its focus on consciousness as worldly situated, embodied, and relational provides the theoretical frameworks to challenge Cartesian dualism and the underlying assumption of the separation of body and mind that still structure our understanding of subjectivity and language. The animal poems by Rilke and Trakl exemplify a zoopoetic approach that incorporates a poetics of phenomenology. As Hofmannsthal's *Ein Brief* illustrates, this critique cannot be brought forth in its full extent through theoretical discourse. It relies on poetry to facilitate encounters between humans and other animals, and require a zoopoetic reading that is attentive to animals and animality in the poetic text.

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