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Roaming MitWelt: A Creative-Critical Inquiry into Ecopoetics and Ecotranslation

A thesis submitted for the degree of
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in

Englische Philologie
Philosophische Fakultät
Universität zu Köln (Germany)

Poetry: Text, Practice as Research
School of English
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Presented by
Katharina Maria Kalinowski
born on 29th March 1992
in Preetz (Germany)

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Abstract

This creative writing thesis situates itself at a nexus between literary ecology and translation ecology to investigate contemporary ecopoetics in relation to processes of translation. Against the backdrop of a global climate emergency, ecopoetics, as a symbiosis of ecological thinking and innovative poesis, seeks forms and expressions to engage with the ongoing destruction of an infinitely interconnected oikos. It thus participates in encounters at borders of human knowledge and perception, borders of the human skin, and borders of the human language that yet have to be explored in their translational capacities. Such an exploration is all the more called for in a controversially debated age of the Anthropocene, which is likewise dubbed an age of translation.

To that end, ecopoetics is propelled as an interdisciplinary, creative-critical edge. Self-composed poems are intertwined with theoretical considerations to navigate an attentive ecopoet(h)ics, resistant to categories, open to indeterminacy, and dedicated to weaving connections between textual and extra-textual ecologies, on and off the page. Correspondingly, translation is outlined as a creative connection-making process, expanding an interlingual framework and articulating a relational motion that necessarily entails transformation. In their shared interest in generating meeting spaces with the foreign and the unknown, translation and ecopoet(h)ics amalgamate to ecotranslation: a concept that frames its boundary compositions; a lens that magnifies power dynamics and cross-cultural layers; a relational writing practice that attends to more-than-human languages of the Mitwelt from a position of mutual entanglement.

In dialogue with reflections on my practice, readings of Cecilia Vicuña, Juliana Spahr, Les Murray, Jody Gladding, and Rita Wong substantiate these moves. Discussions of Sarah Kirsch and German ecopoetry further contribute to a German-English ecopoetic conversation, in which my own writing equally finds itself. The thesis therefore contributes to ecopoetics as a radical boundary node and translation as an experimental writing praxis. In their multiple unfolded facets, poethically reconfigured ecotranslations light up critical and imaginative interactions with a vulnerable physical-material multiverse that ultimately wagers on translation as tangible action.

Abstract

Die vorliegende kreative Arbeit verortet sich an einer Schnittstelle zwischen literarischer Ökologie und Ökologie der Übersetzung, um die Gegenwartsbewegung "ecopoetics" im Zusammenhang mit Übersetzungsprozessen zu untersuchen. Vor dem Hintergrund eines globalen Klimanotstands sucht ecopoetics als Symbiose aus ökologischer Denkweise und innovativer Poiesis Ausdrücke und Formen für die Auseinandersetzung mit einem in sich vernetzten Oikos. Entsprechend findet es sich in Begegnungen an Grenzen von menschlichem Wissen und menschlicher Wahrnehmung, Grenzen des menschlichen Empfindens und Grenzen der menschlichen Sprache, deren Übersetzungskapazitäten es noch zu erforschen gilt.

In diesem Sinne wird ecopoetics als interdisziplinäre Schwelle, als kritisch-kreativer Ökoton in den Mittelpunkt gerückt. Theoretische Überlegungen verweben sich mit selbstverfassten Gedichten und bilden den Orientierungspunkt für eine bewusste Ökopoet(h)ik ("ecopoet(h)ics"), die Kategorien ablehnt, Unschärfen zulässt und Verbindungen zwischen textuellen und extratextuellen Ökologien schafft, auf dem Papier und darüber hinaus. Parallel dazu wird Übersetzung als kreativer verbindungsschaffender Prozess entworfen, der den Rahmen interlingualer Übersetzung erweitert und eine relationale Bewegung ausdrückt, die notwendigerweise Veränderung mit sich bringt. Geeint in ihrem Interesse, Räume für Kontakt mit dem Fremden und dem Unbekannten zu öffnen, werden Übersetzung und ecopoet(h)ics in dem Begriff "ecotranslation" zusammengeführt: Als Konzept rahmt er Poesie in ihren grenzübergreifenden Gestaltungen; als Linse vergrößert er Machtverhältnisse und interkulturelle Ebenen; als verbindende Schreibpraxis wendet er sich aus einer Position gegenseitiger Verschränkung mehr-als-menschlichen Sprachen der Mitwelt zu.

Um diese Zusammenführung zu untermauern, werden im reflektierenden Zusammenspiel mit praktischen Überlegungen Arbeiten von Cecilia Vicuña, Juliana Spahr, Les Murray, Jody Gladding und Rita Wong beleuchtet. Weiterhin tragen Betrachtungen zu Sarah Kirsch und deutscher Ökopoese zu einem deutsch-englischen Dialog bei, an dem meine eigenen Gedichte gleichermaßen teilnehmen. Meine Arbeit bestärkt somit ecopoetics als radikalen Knotenpunkt und leistet gleichzeitig einen Beitrag zur Übersetzung als experimentelle Schreibpraxis. In ihren vielschichtigen Facetten lassen poethisch neu gestaltete ecotranslations kritische und imaginative Wechselspiele mit einem verwundbaren Multiversum ("multiverse") entstehen, die schlussendlich eine „Wette“ auf Übersetzung als greifbare Handlung formulieren.

Contents

Acknowledgements	10
Introduction	13
1 Dis/placing Ecopoetics: “Abandoning the Idea of Center for a Position in an Infinitely Extensive Net of Relations”	29
1.1 Ecologising the Field	31
1.1.1 The Edge of the Field	38
1.1.2 Navigating the Edge	43
1.2 Radical Landscapes of Ecopoetics	52
1.2.1 Ecopoetics without Walking, Urban Landscapes, and a Radical Pastoral . .	57
1.3 Ecopoet(h)ics On and Off the Page	70
1.3.1 Weaving Ecopoethical Connections	78
1.4 Making Ecopoethical Places	91
1.4.1 “things of any relation differently transformed”	96
1.4.2 Location, Lines, Language(s)	101
2 Expanding Translation: Co-ordinating an Ecological Translation Zone	107
2.1 Turning to Translation. Terms and Conditions	109
2.1.1 Translation in Expanded Context	113
2.1.2 The Ecopoet(h)ics of It	123
2.2 Writing Poetry in (M)other Tongues	141
2.3 Expanding the Ecological Translation Zone to Germany: The Crimes of Trees and Ökolyrik	159
2.3.1 No More Nature Poetry	168
2.4 Towards Ecotranslation	184
2.4.1 “nothing is apart enough for language”	190
3 EcoTranslating Matters in the Anthropocene	209
3.1 Are ‘We’ in <i>This</i> Together? – Layers and Markers of the Anthropocene	211
3.1.1 “Look what we’ve done!” Stories from Humanity’s ‘Grand’ Path	216
3.1.2 “look what we’ve <i>done</i> ”: Roaming the Self-Conscious Anthropocene with More-Than-Human Cosmonauts	223

3.1.3	“systems of relation between living things of all sorts” – The Age of Translation?	228
3.1.4	The Anthropocene as a Compass Point for Ecotranslation	233
3.2	Insectile Ecotranslations	244
3.2.1	“I’ve grown from apart of speech” – Anthropocene Losses and Beetle Love Poetry	250
3.3	Three Different Lines through Ecotranslations: “make us larger than the / sum of the individuals”	262
3.3.1	Borrowed Landscapes	263
3.3.2	De Quantificatione, Anthropozändichtung	271
3.3.3	Into the Toxic Anthropocene	278
3.4	On Ec(h)otranslating, Polysituatedness, and Roaming (A Retrospective Moving Forward)	295
3.4.1	Working Notes on Roaming Homes	302
	Conclusion	316
	List of German Source Poems	323
	Works Cited	325
	Annex	359

List of Poems

1	Staying connected	13
2	Roaming Earth	29
3	Roaming (“Where are you from?”)	30
4	Zusammenführung (with Dorothee Sölle)	46
5	View from the N59 road	47
6	Reiher im Sonnenbad	48
7	Leverkusen Chempark	49
8	Instagramability	50
9	It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful	51
10	The view on (a) plastic can the Irish Sea	66
11	Schienenersatzverkehr	67
12	„Sage nicht mein. Es ist dir alles geliehen.“ (Mascha Kaléko)	68
13	The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14	76
14	Poplar Row	85
15	Widerstrand	86
16	#	87
17	Zweite Haut	88
18	Canterbury Night	89
19	LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine’s Lebensfahrt)	90
20	Roaming Language	107
21	See-See (Reflections on Richter’s Seestück)	108
22	Brave New World	121
23	Translatalogues	122
24	New definitions	138
25	Far-House	139
26	Second Skin	143
27	Blick von der N59	145
28	Jelly fish ear	147
29	Oyster	149
30	Response: Anbaden	151
31	Response to Response: which stone	153

32	Improvising with Vogel	155
33	Eisvogel	157
34	Baumschule I	158
35	Willow rods	166
36	Nature poem	167
37	Baumschule II	178
38	Pearls & Dents	179
39	[BOCHUM]	180
40	Poetics of Disenchantment	181
41	Living deep in the wasteland but then again at a traffic junction	182
42	Nordsee 2.0	183
43	Sand tongue / Echo translation	184
44	Ec(h)o translations	184
45	Bones	207
46	Roaming More-than-human	209
47	We are in this together	210
48	Poor Parasites	215
49	Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others	239
50	Transport	240
51	Politics of the Conveyor Belt	241
52	Marienkäfer, flieg	242
53	Nothing	243
54	Animal Mass Production	257
55	pressed yellow wildflower, nightfall, ink	258
56	Poetica in 3 parts	259
57	Cologne in Pieces	260
58	Schiffschaukel	261
59	I actually wanted to be a singer/writer/actor/painter/journalist, but I thought it was too insecure - OR: Fears First	290
60	Home is where the WiFi connects automatically	291
61	Trash	292
62	Corona Cycle, 16.03.2020	293
63	Poetic Reflections, November 2017	294
64	Meerweh	299
65	The meshwork of storied knowledge	313

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*It is by means of our poetics that we simultaneously discover and compose
the times in which we live.*

Joan Retallack, through Gertrude Stein

Introduction

Point of departure: Staying connected

the pause after
 knowing the space
 between daisy
 leaves awkwardness
 at the end
 of a phone
 call before hanging up

is not the time

to think
 of paul celan
 infecting crowns
 weaving

through waterless eyes
 through eye-watering lessness
 through the waiting for a stone to bloom

through the time for time

für mehr räume
 als bäume im gedächtnis
 gewandelt sind

für mehr träume
 than there are noises for natural pain

für bewegungen die
 sich nicht in den pausen versammeln
 mohnschwarz, daisy-black
 unter entsteinten sternern

that don't count in phantom words
 that don't fear the hunger of space
 that don't grow

above
 the noise-line
 with
 out waiting

coding non-colours
 that wake in the light
 shells

that know like the Seine
 hanging up in the end
 can change

abbreviated similes
 are rainbowed smiles
 pulsing into each other

mouth-shaped love you-more-than sheets

when time is the space between connections
 the call to water a stone till it blooms
 the touch with a world built on
 a reason
 to be
 how

Written during the COVID-19 pandemic, this poem moves Paul Celan's poem "Corona" (1948) into contemporary context. Loosely translated phrases and images from his poem make their way into an open form that echoes the repeated call "for it to be time"; "for this to be known!"; for the stone engaging with the impossible "trouble to bloom".¹ There is no lyrical I; the poem functions through newly formed interconnections and relations that expand the call to stay connected from a digital meaning to a wider ecology. Resounding Celan's attentiveness to natural things („Mond“, „Meer“, „Muscheln“ (moon, sea, sea shells)) within a cyclical passing of time my poem textually embodies the envisioned wider a sense of connectedness through anaphora, re-occurring images, and assonances (räume — träume — bäume — noise). The shifts between

¹ Translated by Pierre Joris. The German lines read: „Es ist Zeit, daß man weiß! / Es ist Zeit daß der Stein sich zu blühen bequemt, / daß der Unrast ein Herz schlägt. / Es ist Zeit, daß es Zeit wird. / Es ist Zeit.“ (Celan, *Die Gedichte* 39) The source poem and Joris' translation can both be found here: <https://poets.org/poem/corona>. In a different translation by Michael Hamburger, the respective lines read: "it is time they knew! / It is time the stone made an effort to flower, / time unrest had a beating heart./ It is time it were time. / It is time." (59)

German and English enact alternations between closeness and distances in an enlarged, trans-boundary linguistic space. Reminiscent of Celan's poetic reinvention of German language that feels foreign as it is torqued, stretched, and bent in unexpected ways, the inclusion of more than one language draws attention to its sounds and materiality. Enjambments and spatial dynamics add to ambiguity and multilayeredness of the poem that leaves room for more than one reading, as it opens its lines to hover between bleak "hanging up in the end" and hope that "the end / can change". The desideratum of enacting care for the stone until it may "bloom" or "flower" returns in the final stanza, leaving the reader with an open question that wonders whether this renewed and reformed "touch with the world" may be enough reason to make the connection to the question of "how" to be. Stretching towards indeterminacy, the poem embraces what Joan Retallack calls a "poethical wager" (*Poethical Wager*) on the possibilities of language to create ethical attention, to create translatable forms of responsibility, and tangible connections with the stones and waters and stars that entangle us, mapping an ecopoetics.

Retrieved from Celan's idiosyncratic poetic intricacy that caused him to be "untranslatable" on the one hand and frequently translated on the other (cf. Beals), the urging for knowingness, for (e)motion of some kind („dass der unrust ein herz schlägt“ (“that unrest's heart started to beat”)), for telling, for a potential "coronation" of truth („der mund spricht wahr“ (“the mouth speaks true”)), have lost nothing of their relevance.² In fact, considering the Environmental Studies context of this thesis, Celan's final line „Es ist Zeit.“ (“It is time.”) can be directly related to a global environmental emergency that needs to be known, recognised, connected, and dealt with imminently. Using the urgent words of newspapers headlines and climate activists, “it is time” to “tell the truth” (Extinction Rebellion), “it is time to rebel” (Greta Thunberg in Danziger), “it is time for a carbon abolition movement” (Beinhocker).

To take up the last point and reach for knowingness, carbon dioxide is one of the main greenhouse gases. Like methane, water vapour, and nitrous oxide, it traps heat in the atmosphere, causing the phenomenon of global warming. Greenhouse gases are primarily produced through burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, agriculture, and livestock farming and are likely to remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years (cf. NASA; IPCC, *Fifth Assessment Report*). Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have already caused an average global warming of approximately 1°C above pre-industrial levels (*IPCC Special Report 51*), which concomitantly results in acidification and warming of the oceans, melting of ice caps, rising sea levels, extreme weather and climate events. It is currently unlikely that the legally binding treaty on climate change, namely the Paris Agreement, which aims “to limit global warming to well below” 2°C (United Nations, *Paris Agreement 3*), will be met (cf. Ritchie and Roser). While even an increased average temperature up to the envisioned 1.5°C would mean heat waves, draughts, reduced water and food resources, disappearance of ecosystems, and increasing displacement of people, a warming up to 2°C puts human and natural systems at incalculably higher risks (IPCC, *IPCC Special Report*). However, today's

² Translated by Pierre Joris (Joris and Celan).

global actions to curb climate change are not even in line with a 2°C scenario, and to varying degrees, we are already experiencing the harmful effects, ranging from record temperatures to mass extinction. Climate change is not an event that will take place in the future, it is already happening. While a number of factors remain unpredictable or altogether unknown, it is evident that the current emission rate, coupled with pollution, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss, involves unabated environmental destruction and will likely render large parts of the earth uninhabitable for many species.³

Against this backdrop, a group of scientists has proposed that the earth has entered a new, human-dominated geological epoch, the “Anthropocene” (Crutzen and Stoermer; Crutzen; Anthropocene Working Group, ‘The Anthropocene’; Zalasiewicz et al.; Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Results’). It is built on the premise that anthropogenic alterations of the planet have significantly altered Earth System processes and left measurable long-term sedimentary evidence in the strata of the planet. Atmospheric chemist and co-founder of this notion, Paul Crutzen writes: “[U]nless there is a global catastrophe — a meteorite impact, a world war or a pandemic — mankind will remain a major environmental force for many millennia.” (23) The current global pandemic adds a certain irony to his proposition, in its initial conception more speculative than factual. More fully discussed in the chapters to come,⁴ there are many reasons to remain suspicious of the “era of the human” which has not yet been formally approved as a geological time unit. One central controversy relates to the homogenising of “mankind” which tends to overlook highly unevenly distributed contributions to greenhouse gas emissions as well as highly unevenly distributed risks and burdens. While climate change is a global condition affecting “us” all, “we’re not all in it in the same way” (Nixon, ‘The Anthropocene’). The spread of COVID-19 has once again shown up explosive socio-economic disparities existing on both inter- and intranational level that expose vulnerable groups and poorer areas to disproportionately higher damage. In addition, the foregrounding of the *anthropos* in the Anthropocene echoes yet again a “coronation” of the human placed at the top of creation while leaving little space for the harm caused to those not visibly included in “mankind”.

With this in mind, the poetic call to keep “staying connected” emerges in close relation to the urging that it be time: It points to the need to connect with the lives and sufferings of others, to acknowledge the wider consequences of our actions, and to understand the interrelations behind what is immediately in front of us. Calling upon the strength of poetry to disclose abstract information as tangible images, the Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña phrases it as follows: “The earth is dying because people don’t see the connection (between a hamburger and the death of the rain forest, air conditioning and the death of the atmosphere.)” (‘Five Notebooks’ 793) For “this to be known”, for stretching towards a mode of care embracing the possibility to make the

³ Comprehensive information on the subject is provided by the International Panel on Climate Change and its respective Assessment Reports (e.g. 2014, 2018, 2019). For evidence on anthropogenic climate change also see ‘The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change’ (Oreskes).

⁴ Chapter 3 provides a profound overview of the Anthropocene concept and its implications.

“stone bloom”, “we” need practices able to make visible and enact these connections; practices that respond to a climate emergency in a mode of emergency (Hume 756), that “participate in realizing the full implications of our position as language-using animals in a world composed of interconnection.” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 261) It is high time.

Orientation

In light of this challenge, this thesis sets out to investigate ecopoetics as “creative-critical edges between writing (with an emphasis on poetry) and ecology (the theory and praxis of deliberate earthlings).” (Skinner, *ecopoetics 01* 1) Ecology moves beyond the science of ecology in this perspective and includes “all the ways we imagine how we live together.” (Morton, *Ecological Thought* 4) Surpassing centrism, stasis, and seclusion, it can be understood as a study of interactions, dynamic co-existences, and connections. An ecologically informed point of view “sees all life, including culture, as naturally co-evolved and interdependent.” (Wheeler 100) Interest in the integration of such a view into the Anglo-American Arts and Humanities began to emerge in the 70s (cf. Glotfelty xvi) concomitant with increasingly visible environmental destruction that pressured appraisals of wilderness and untouched natural spaces. Moving on from a programmatic “death of nature” (cf. McKibben; Merchant) as an envisioned realm “over there” (cf. Morton, *Ecological Thought* 2), representations of it had to account for a renewed ecological understanding of natural processes in interrelatedness with human impacts. Early notions of ecopoetry and ecopoetics thus evolved from nature poetry, drew on the legacy of Romanticism and American Transcendentalism (cf. Elder) and offered an alternative to post-structural critique (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* xiii). A rather loose term from the beginning, ecopoetics foregrounded socio-political sentiments (cf. Hönnighausen; Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry*) on the one and depoliticised phenomenological experience (Bate, *The Song of the Earth* 266) on the other hand. In both cases, special emphasis was and generally still is placed on poetry’s ability to evoke a sense of place that used to be driven by a nostalgically idealised return to an “atonement or at-one-ment with nature” (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 38) across a perceived rift posed by language and the conditions of modernity.

In a rapidly developing field of Environmental Studies propelled by equally rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions, however, different approaches to ecologically inclined poetics soon began to expand the scope. Jonathan Skinner’s literary magazine *ecopoetics 01* (2001) encompassed it as a more general poietic practice beyond poetry and particularly linked it to experimental approaches that had been previously dismissed as too logocentric to express an interest in the outside world (cf. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 56-58; Hönnighausen 281). Skinner’s interdisciplinary inquiries offered spaces where practitioners – who were often also critics – could enhance the discussion with insights into their various poetics that embraced the “eco-”prefix as a continuous challenge on and off the page. Collections such as ‘Ecopoetics and Women’ (Tarlo 2007), *Eco Language Reader* (Iijima 2010), or *Redstart: An Ecological Poetics* (Gander and Kinsella 2012)

provide similar exchanges, while impulses such as Pierre Joris' and Jerome Rothenberg's *Poems for the Millennium*, (1998), David Gilcrest's *Greening the Lyre: Environmental Poetics and Ethics* (2002), Camille Dungy's *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (2009), Ed Roberson's *To See the Earth before the End of the World* (2010), or Joshua Corey's *The Arcadia Project. North American Postmodern Pastoral* (2012) further pluralised and brought into view strands of environmental justice, postcolonialism, and environmental ethics. The first comprehensive anthology of American ecopoetry (edited by Anne Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street) appeared in 2013 and contains over 300 poems by 170 poets alongside an extensive introduction by former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass.⁵ While the editors' suggested compartmentalising into nature poetry, environmental poetry, and ecological poetry respectively clashes with ecopoetics as a transhistorical poetic capacity that inherently resists categorisation (cf. Reilly, 'Eco-Noise' 256), an inclusion of poets ranging from Walt Whitman to Robert Wrigley simultaneously invites various different lines and departure points within an expanded emancipated field of ecopoetics.⁶ Attesting to the momentum of the topic, the last years saw an increasing number of magazines, books, projects, and journals solely dedicated to ecopoetry and ecopoetics, including *Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene* (Keller 2017), *Unnatural Ecopoetics: Unlikely Spaces in Contemporary Poetry* (Nolan 2017), *Big Energy Poets: Ecopoetry Thinks Climate Change* (Staples and King 2017), *ecopoetics. Essays in the Field* (Hume and Osborne 2018), *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, Biology and Technology in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Solnick 2018), *Ecopoetics and the Global Landscape: Critical Essays* (Campos 2019), *Texts, Animals, Environments: Zoopoetics and Ecopoetics* (Middelhoff et al. 2019), *Cognitive Ecopoetics. A New Theory of Lyric* (Lattig 2020), *Poetics for the More-Than-Human World: An Anthology of Poetry and Commentary* (Newell et al. 2020), and *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonisation* (Rigby 2020).

In line with ecopoetry as an observed "global literary phenomenon" (Campos xvi), it has propelled investigations into Turkish literatures (*The Ecopoetics of Entanglement in Contemporary Turkish and American Literatures* (Ergin 2017)), South African poetry (*Of Land, Bones, and Money. Toward a South African Ecopoetics* (McGiffin 2019)), and Spanish, French, and German ecologically oriented poetics (cf. Goodbody, 'German Ecopoetry'; Bellarsi and J. Rauscher). The international Ginkgo Prize for Ecopoetry was launched in 2018 to support the development of ecopoetry and

⁵ Hass was one of the poets earlier scholars of ecopoetry dismissed as too "postmodern" to shift the focus from the "prison-house of language" to the physical world (cf. Scigaj *Sustainable Poetry* 56-58: 62, echoing Jameson's *The Prison-House of Language*. A critique and different reading is provided by American scholar Lynn Keller ("Green Reading" (2012)), who was among the advocates for an expansion of the ecopoetic canon beyond a narrow focus on wilderness and the literary pastoral whose troubling connotations had been laid out in William Cronon's influential volume *Uncommon Ground. Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1997).)

⁶ The broad definition of ecopoetry offered in *The Ecopoetry Anthology* departs from its earlier definition as a "subset of nature poetry" (Bryson, *Ecopoetry* 5). On a more horizontal scale, it includes nature poetry (mediating encounters between human subject and nature as subject matter, shaped by romanticism and transcendentalism), and environmental poetry (activist poetry committed to environmental justice) alongside ecopoetry (experimental; thematically and formally investigates the relationships between nature and culture, language and perception) (Fisher-Wirth and Street xxviii-xxix).

“highlight the role poetry can play in raising awareness, gaining insight, and provoking concern for the ecological imperatives of our time.” (‘Ginkgo Prize’) In 2020, a new revised edition of *The Ecopoetry Anthology* was published with an additional preface by Craig Santos Perez, a poet from the Chamorro people and spokesperson for the Pacific Islands. This speaks to an ongoing commitment to expand the field beyond its Anglo-American roots and continue to seek out ways to register and forge connections to the multifold transformations of the planet earth “that is the only home our species currently knows.” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’)

Co-ordinating

While there are thus a number of attempts to refute Skinner’s earlier observation that “ecopoetics is more used than discussed” (‘What is Ecopoetics?’), ongoing happenings in the ecological continuum that entangles us all press the need to keep discussing as well as using it further. In particular, the launch of the Anthropocene as a cultural concept has accelerated environmental research across disciplines and in its wake also generated questions regarding its relation to (e-co)poetry. The terminological inception of the Anthropocene as such underscores the necessity for linguistic reinvention in the face of unprecedented suffering that takes us beyond perceptual, imaginative, and cognitive borders. As Marcella Durand notices with regard to re-occurring implications concerning an assumed innate inadequacy of language compared to the world, “the problem is not that words are inadequate”, but rather that “there are no words” for this self-inflicted ecological disaster: “we ourselves,” she writes, “are the wilderness destroying the very systems of which we are a part, in a role we utterly do not understand.” (‘The Elegy of Ecopoetics’ 252)

Moreover, as the scope of ecopoetics widens, in tandem with the larger field in which it is roaming about, the challenge to keep its various “frictional nodes as active as possible” (Skinner in Hume 759) without rendering it unproductively vague at the other end gets increasingly difficult. In order to further ecopoetics as an ongoing, open inquiry, an “ecotone ... on the edge of numerous disciplines on the cutting edge of poetic innovation and ecological thinking” (Arigo 3), as this thesis seeks to do, it thus needs to be continuously redirected from self-explanatory rhetoric on the one and arresting labelling on the other hand. Although “ecopoetics” as a term tends to be favoured by scholars and practitioners engaging with its expanded, experimental meaning, the distinction from ecopoetry has accordingly remained fluid since their introduction. The continuing interchangeability points to an envisioned loose boundary between ecopoetical makings and the critical discourse, in other words, the object studied and its respective studies. However, ecocritics seem to be more likely to separate poetics as the conventional theory of poetry concerned with its formal devices and governing aesthetic principles (cf. Rigby, ‘Ecopoetics’).

In this vein, there seems to be an opening gulf between theorisations of ecopoetics and ecopoetical practice, between definitions of ecopoetry as a “newer brand of nature poetry” (Bryson,

Ecopoetry 3) and the assertion that it has “nothing to do with nature poetry” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 255). Ecopoetics “not just as literary or art practice, but as spiritual, material, and ecological practice with a capacity to have real impact, as both register of and response to environmental degradation” (Hume 753) comes up against specific textual applications of “eco-poetical”, for instance defined as: “implications that, in regard to the human-nature relationship, can be deduced from references to fairy tales as well as from their linguistic-aesthetic realization.” (Stobbe 297) The gulf seems to widen when I turn to yet sparse but increasing German research on ecopoetry that often tends to be disconnected from experimental, creative takes on the term in particular.⁷ Conferences convened by the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE-UKI) regularly bring together practitioners as well as theorists, whereas its European counterpart (EASLCE) does not commonly include practice-based panels. While a strong tradition of theory-based scholarship finds anglophone approaches lacking taxonomic specificity (see for instance Zemanek and A. Rauscher 95-96), categorisation of ecologically-inclined poetry runs counter to the distrust of genre that many ecopoetics scholars express (cf. Sprague unpaginated; Reilly, ‘The Grief of Ecopoetics’ 255-56; Skinner, ‘Statement on “New Nature Writing”’ 127). Such a distrust corresponds to the desire for a more profound inclusion of the ecological notion as a radical non-hierarchical, decentring motion affecting textual and extra-textual ecologies in their interrelations. Ecopoetics can provide space for its different, occasionally clashing accounts, but it can only do so if they leave and make space for one another in turn.

In addition, it should be noted that poetry tends to be a niche topic in the larger field of Environmental Humanities. If ecopoetics is exclusively understood as a container of formal elements that “narrativize” environmental concerns in literature (Literature Green; Scaffai) or if it is equated with ecocriticism (cf. Phillips, ‘Ecocriticism, Ecopoetics, and A Creed Outworn’ 39), it runs danger to be detached from its other practical, experimental nodes, contributing once again to disjointed divisions in place of intersections. As ecopoetics continues to move across disciplinary and national boundaries, the need to “stay connected”; to keep alive its “edge effect” (Arigo 2), to keep discussing it, to propel dialogues in order to live up to it as a creative-critical study of relations emerges thus stronger than ever and is what drives the inquiry at hand.

Positioning

Acknowledging the wider challenges posed by a relatively young, rapidly evolving, and inherently multi-disciplinary field, ecopoetics in its various concerns for the yet again rapidly changing physical-material world faces the need to move and communicate across borders on all sides. At its most basic — which also happens to be the most complex — it emerges in form of a mediator between the state of the earth and words for it, ultimately tasked with nothing more or less than “saving” the former: Although the programmatic question entitling John Felstiner’s study *Can*

⁷ This will be further discussed in 2.3.

Poetry Save the Earth? hardly does justice to the manifold approaches currently making up the field (for starters, what would “poetry” have to be replaced with in order to turn the answer into a confident “yes”?), variations of this question continue to loom over environmentally-oriented literature in general (cf. T. Clark 17-19). Key driver of innovative ecological forms and art-activist collaborations at best, the Herculean task to “save the earth” can also disintegrate into refusals of either political or aesthetic intentions at worst. Eco-poetics is yet again confronted with boundaries and relation-making problems in this perspective: If, as Kate Rigby states in her definition, eco-poetics really amounts to “little more than ‘fiddling while Rome burns’”, unless “our words, however artfully crafted, emotionally compelling, or intellectually challenging, get linked to deeds” (‘Eco-poetics’ 81), then what is at stake for those continuing to deal with words is to find ways of incorporating connection points for envisioned deeds, at whatever scale, through their practice — or else negotiate a constant insufficient “fiddling”.

In either case, eco-poetics is not depicted in isolation but in encounters with its dynamic, complex, manifold vibrant surroundings, inscribed as a dialogic, relational, *ecological* practice at heart. Indeed, the notion that environmentally inclined poetry communicates the “voices of nature”, “gives a voice to nature”, or, more problematically “speaks for nature” can be found in its earliest analyses (cf. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 5, 80; Bate, *The Song of the Earth* 72). Versions and diversions of this notion can be traced throughout ecocritical literature. They range from the use as rhetorical figure commonly implying a preconceived gap between nature and human to more profound epistemological, ontological, ethical, and political inquiries impelling shifting key questions regarding eco-poetical form, content, and subjectivity (see for instance D. W. Gilcrest 37-60; Durand, ‘The Ecology of Poetry’; Rigby, ‘Earth, World, Text’; Ronda; Reilly, ‘The Grief of Eco-poetics’; H. Moore 4; Knickerbocker; Weston; Skinner, ‘Call the Pulsing Home’).

The dialogic component of eco-poetics is even more present in its communication attempts at the species boundary to non-human animals, which has lately propelled its own branch of zoopoetics (cf. ‘Toward Zoopoetics’ (Moe 2013), *Zoopoetics* (Moe 2014), *Texts, Animals, Environments: Zoopoetics and Eco-poetics* (Middelhoff et al. 2019)). Eco-poetic encounters that seek “to translate nonhuman languages into a human tongue” (Keller, *Recomposing Eco-poetics* 136) again take place along a fine line between challenging human exceptionalism, speaking for someone else in a manner of appropriation, registering the richness of the ecosphere, and reinforcing perceptions of absolute otherness (cf. DeMello; Middelhoff). Bold writerly acts at the porous border of humans and their physical-material surroundings are also enacted in biopoetry, which uses words from combinations of nucleotides and incorporates these “DNA words” into the genome of living organisms to generate “transgenic poems” (Kac; also see Bök; Ryan, ‘Biological Processes as Writerly?’). In its manifold forms and facets, eco-poetics embarks on borders of all kinds, shifting frontiers of language-making and imagination, hoping to “multiply points of contact” (Skinner, ‘Call the Pulsing Home’ 186) across languages, hoping to “alter perception in a way that translates into environmental change.” (Mathys)

In light of eco-poetics as a boundary practice embracing an emerging polyvocal call to “stay

connected”, its simultaneously emerging connection to translation thus deserves a closer look. The uses above already point to its frequent appearance in a broad sense, not always followed by clarification. Skinner includes translation among the various vectors of ecopoetics, suggesting it may pluralise the “‘monocrop’ of a hegemonic language like English” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’). The ecologically inclined contemporary poet John Kinsella writes: “Translation is the tool with which I commune with animals and plants, with the geology of the earth itself.” (*Polysituatedness* 157) Translation expands between these two notions, indicating everything from interlingual exchange to stances of earthly interconnectedness. A gesture to ecology is nevertheless present in both, indicating a potential connection. Translation is just as polymorphous as ecopoetics, just as troubled by the perennial question *what is it?* With regard to an accelerating use of translation as “*the* metaphor [,] of our globalized world” (Guldin 1), however, few accounts concerned with dialogic environmental encounters are dedicated to exploring translation as more than a trope that continues to hover between translatability and untranslatability, indistinctly signalling loss and invariability. Arguably even more wide in scope given centuries of scholarly research, “translation” is a vast field, related to its product, process, practice, politics, and policies, which makes an intensified connection all the more complex yet all the more necessary.

A look into Translation Studies, the discipline that fully emerged between the late 70s and early 90s (Bassnett, *Translation Studies*), retrieves approaches that advance translation in close contact with transformative, creative, and experimental practices (Loffredo and Perteghella; St-Pierre and Kar; Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’; Harding and Cortés). In the wake of a cultural turn in the field of translation (Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures*; ‘The Cultural Turn’), language is foregrounded as dynamically embedded in a socio-historical, cultural, political, economic continuum; translation never takes place “in a void”, writes Susan Bassnett (*Constructing Cultures* 123). Translation keeps language in motion, across borders, exposing its constant changes and alterations of meaning, as indicated by the contemporary significance of the coronavirus now pervading Celan’s poem. Further considerations account for its political, cultural, and ideological power dynamics, its underlying violence and ambiguous transformative potential, source of both conflict and reconciliation (cf. Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility*; Apter, *Translation Zone*; Bielsa and Hughes). In view of the paradigm shift of the Anthropocene, itself understood as a “Translation Age” (Cronin, *Eco-Translation* 7), omnipresent processes of translation enable global climate change negotiations, resulting for instance in the Paris Agreement, as well as economic transactions that further the plunder of the earth. As ecological perspectives begin to emerge in Translation Studies, they bring into view a “new translation ecology” (5), which yet has to be connected to ecopoetics and its various acts of translation.

It is therefore time to advance a nexus between literary ecology and translation ecology. My thesis accordingly situates itself along a practical creative writing axis between Translation Studies and Environmental Studies, at an ecopoetic edge “where different disciplines can meet and complicate one other.” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 6) It is dedicated to exploring ecopoetics in

emerging relations to translation processes, across borders of all kinds, across encounters with the manifold earth, across places, languages, and actions. How does it constitute itself as an ecologically-engaged practice, conceptually, formally, linguistically? How does ecopoetics make connections through tensions and disconnections, in the awareness of a global ecological crisis, in the need for changed attitudes towards the *Mitwelt*?⁸ How does it orient emerging ecotranslations in view of the Anthropocene?

Directions

Keeping in mind previously mentioned chasms between practical and theoretical considerations, I approach these questions and further concerns activated in their wake through creative-critical writings and translations. The pages that follow are not only *about* ecopoetics: as far as possible they seek to enact it, formally, methodically, and textually. They embrace ecopoetics as a temporally unbound – which does not mean ungrounded – mode, inquiry, attitude, “interest” (Durand, ‘Spatial Interpretations’ 201), “experimental instrument” (Retallack, ‘What Is Experimental Poetry’ para 37). In this sense, ecopoetics echoes Joan Retallack’s “poethics”, which I will conceptualise in relation to an ecopoet(h)ics that refutes a clear-cut separation between poetry and action as sketched by Rigby (‘Ecopoetics’ 81) and thus allows space for ecopoet(h)ical writing as a “deed” itself. Poethics is concerned with hierarchies that determine writing and thinking forms: challenging genre conventions, it “crisscrosses” (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 39) through boundaries; challenging disciplinary divisions, it follows the trail of language as a dynamic, investigative, unresting practice that connects us to “the fragile and finite territory our species named, claimed, exploited, sentimentalized, and aggrandized as ‘our world.’” (‘What Is Experimental Poetry’ para 30)

Interspersed with the three thesis chapters are therefore poems that have been developed over the course of this “practice as research” project. They began as an envisioned “place-based” collection, responding to the perennial prominence of bioregional and related locative interests in the larger field of ecocriticism. In dialogue with my critical research and my living circumstances that were shaped by the structure of the overarching trinational research programme, however, it did not seem productive to conceptualise either my poems or my places as being “based”.⁹ Both translation and ecological thinking (cf. Morton, *Ecological Thought* 26) can be seen as revolving around movement and decentred interconnectedness, calling for a concept of place as a plurality of “lines” (cf. Ingold, *Lines*), weaving through global-local tensions (cf. Massey, ‘A Global Sense of Place’) amidst which one finds oneself “polysituated” (cf. Kinsella, *Polysituatedness*).

⁸ In contrast to *Umwelt*, usually meaning environment, the German term *Mitwelt* seeks to overcome an implied passivity of a “surrounding world” in favour of an encompassing notion of kinship among all earthlings. Often associated with environmental ethics (Meyer-Abich) or environmental activism, *Mitwelt* emphasises being an active part of, being *with* (mit = with) the world (Welt = world), and thus showing care, concern, and consideration for others.

⁹ This will be further discussed in section 1.4 and section 3.4.

Composed while moving through different countries, my poems eventually fell into place(s) under the title and loose notion of *Roaming*, which facilitates thinking about them in terms of motion, mobility, globality, and place as a shifting constellation of interconnections. This includes a shifting proximity to language as well: My writing oscillates between the language pair in focus, German and English, already encountering each other in the opening poem. A destabilised notion of place instigates a view on languages that understands them less as demarcated entities and more as fluid surroundings that overlap, merge, and generate echoing layers. Languages often feel similarly foreign and familiar, evading possession and adding to the depth and ambiguity of texts. Remaining ungraspable in their totality, they always invite more than one meaning and more than one translation.

My writing practice embraces the ambiguity, multilinearity, and intricacy that condensed poetic textures particularly facilitate. Their shapes vary, but in one way or another they are all interested in exploring the ongoing destruction of our home planet and making connections between ungraspable scales of interdependencies and absurd inequalities. Outside of culture/nature, human/nature, human/animal hierarchies, they attend to the more-than-human as an acknowledgement of inextricable, vital material entanglements (cf. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Barad),¹⁰ a stance of humble unknowingness, an attempt at a broadening of scale of collective responsibility (cf. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*). As a belt of rubbish circles planet earth, microplastics float in the deep sea, and chemical contaminants are found in amniotic fluid, my poems aim to intertwine external and internal ecologies in order to make sense of what it means to be embodied and embedded in a world of interconnections.

In a mode of ecopoethics, they pursue trails of language that encompass changed attitudes towards the Mitwelt. To that end, they seek to generate language in resistance of assumptions as to how it should behave, thus pushing at its conventional, information-transmitting use that is inevitably complicit in violence and destruction. Drawing on open forms and free verse, my poems experiment with visual layout, unfix the lyrical I, flout syntactical rules, invent new words, involve close observations, and include extra-textual material. Some react specifically to a concept, a notion, or a line from another poem or academic book. Some include found material, overheard snippets of conversations, images, flowers. Some are interlingual translations from German in a stricter sense, some are self-translations, some are loose or partial translations similar to the opening poem. All of them engage with translation concerns in an unfolding wider ecological sense: as a view beyond the self, a letting in of other voices, a transformation, a creative writing, a response, an autonomous form, one among many possibles flowing from the source text as a site of plurality.

Interlingual translation is thus only one facet of the expanded translation framework that will

¹⁰ In Karen Barad's sense, "[T]o be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating." (ix) Jane Bennett's vital materialism will be further explored in chapter 3.

be disclosed; one however that aims to enable a sustainable connection between ecopoetics and translation as one of its models of communication. Drawing on literary and poetry translation in particular, which continues to be shrouded in mysteries of (im)possibility, scholars such as Walter Benjamin, Susan Bassnett, Lawrence Venuti, and Michael Cronin facilitate a translation freed from a faithfulness/betrayal paradigm and the perennial idea of loss. Informed by widened notions of cultural translations (cf. Bassnett, ‘The Translation Turn’; Harding and Cortés), the concept of ecotranslation is initially unpacked in tandem with Les Murray’s poetry collection *Translations from the Natural World*. It is inserted into the few existing approaches to the term (cf. Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’; Cronin, *Eco-Translation*) but pushes them further. Ecotranslation emphasises ecopoetics itself in its many translational components, as a relational poethic practice that reaches out, crosses boundaries, is always moving, always in transformation. Seeking to make connections across languages, places, disciplines, it becomes concept, practice, and investigative instrument to navigate overlapping textual and extra-textual relations. Insofar, it envisions contributing insights into cross-boundary, dialogic components in ecopoetics, as well as propelling its multi-linguistic aspirations. Meanwhile, an expanded creative ecopoetic approach in translation speaks to the growing area of cultural and literary translations with its articulated need to be “more creative, more experimental; it needs an avant-garde.” (Wright)

Throughout the discussion of concepts and theories, my poetry and prose inquiries continuously inform, provoke, complement, and reflect on each other, symbiotically intertwining writing – which includes translating as writing – and ecocritical thinking. To that end, one of the ongoing challenges is “to keep one eye on the ways in which ‘nature’ is always in some ways culturally constructed, and on the other on the fact that nature really exists, both the object and, albeit distantly, the origin of our discourse” (Garrard 10). The poems add different spaces and angles to keep an eye on this issue. At the same time, they relate to the overarching research questions and prioritise different aspects of the ecological crisis that is inaccessible as a whole, especially in view of the geological scale introduced by the Anthropocene. They allow for silences and circularity, give shape to inklings and unresolved contradictions, witness unconscious emotions and considerations, seek an ecopoet(h)ics of echoes, interconnections, translations.

The multilayeredness of poetry, one of its advantages being that it “can compress vast acreages of meaning into a small compass or perform the kind of bold linkages that it would take reams of academic argument to plot” (Farrier 5), results in a plurality of poetic and critical approaches. While I take a long view on the emergence of ecopoetics without temporally circumscribing it, I primarily draw on contemporary, mostly 21st century poets from various countries, writing in English or German. Among the ones discussed in greater detail are Cecilia Vicuña, Juliana Spahr, Sarah Kirsch, Jody Gladding, Marion Poschmann, and Rita Wong. Through close readings, I trace ecological lines in all their work, unearthed through and simultaneously contributing to ecotranslation. Significantly different in form and approach, articulated concerns include global movements, interspecies contact, multilingualism, environmental justice, intimacy with place, desire for actions, and a vibrant resistance to the Anthropocene as a unified narrative

of “man” controlling the earth. While its prominence within Environmental Studies cannot be ignored, ecopoethics extended into translation will show points of connection that challenge its hubristic, homogenising politics and orient it towards the many voices of a multi-verse. Disclosed as the “self-conscious Anthropocene” (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 1-2), it works in tandem with reflectiveness elicited by ecopoetics and translation to grapple with the task of staying connected across unimaginable geological, geographical, and temporal borders and understand the role of being human in a “feelingly” way (cf. Nixon, ‘The Anthropocene’).

In context with a poethic orientation in ecotranslation that “swerves” into indeterminacy (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 3), the interlingual connection has inspired me to engage with the German tradition of Ökolyrik (cf. Buch; Mayer-Tasch). Providing a poethic perspective on the perpetual „Gespräch über Bäume“,¹¹ these intercultural links contribute to the continuously widening scope of ecopoetics outside an Anglo-American focus. Conversely, I hope to begin to plant seeds in the German ecopoetic landscape that orient it towards a more encompassing sense of an “eco-”mode that can affect not only the studied object but also the form of the study, as well as further practices off the page. This relates to a larger gap this thesis inevitably finds itself situated in, as it entails practical elements generally viewed as unconventional in German academia and includes more extensive theoretical frameworks than perhaps conventional in anglophone practice-based research. Insofar emerging as a translational endeavour in itself, this project stays in the spirit of ecopoetics while it seeks to make connections on various levels.

Desire Lines

Given the more or less untrodden ground that will be probed in ecopoetics as well as in translation, the thesis is as explorative as it is navigational. In view of previously outlined gaps and disciplinary divisions, connections between the fields will be grounded just as they will be furthered. On the way towards a beginning understanding of ecopoetics functioning in relation to an expanded practice of translation, three chapters are presented, respectively composed of four sections divided into further subsections. Each chapter is opened by a prose-poem introducing a related theme that will take a stronger focus in the chapter. In line with an introductory exploration of ecopoetics in relation to my practice, the first theme is “earth”. The second chapter delves into translation and is therefore accompanied by a focus on “language”. Since ecopoetics and translation will have fully amalgamated by the end of chapter 2, the third chapter employs the “more-than-human” while it substantiates their ecotranslation imbrication with an orientation to the Anthropocene.

The poems weave through the chapters, composing longer poetic sequences before, after, or between sections as well as directly facing them. When discussing German poems that are not part of my poetry collection, I usually provide translations that are directly embedded in the text

¹¹ This is the subject of section 2.3.

and stay closer to the form of the source poem — which does not mean aesthetic and poethic considerations are dismissed altogether. Although my poetry collection is not chronologically organised, the overall arc of the thesis as a whole partially mirrors my ecopoetic journey. It consequently offers an in-depth exploration of ecopoetics beginning with the historical development of literary ecology that shows its close relation to concomitant socio-political trends (1.1). What follows are three “compass points” (cf. Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’) that amplify ecopoetics as a transformative, poethic connection-making in dialogue with the poems gathered in this chapter. Refuting idyllic ideas of “nature” as a beautified realm “over there”, section 1.2. subsequently discusses notions of radical landscape poetry, motion, and a radical pastoral. Activist desiderata encompassed in an emerging ecopoet(h)ics are unpacked in the next section (1.3), in response to the multidisciplinary art of Cecilia Vicuña. The final compass point ecopoethicises place practices by drawing on Juliana Spahr’s *Things of Each Possible Relation Hashing Against One Another* that attends to global-local movements in ecologies, languages, and the things they interact with (1.4).

This opens the inquiry to chapter 2, which expands translation through an ecological translation zone towards the notion of ecotranslation. Translation is explored in theoretical context (2.1), subsequently decoupled from of an instrumental equivalence model, and furthered as creative, autonomous work in its own right. This is simultaneously foregrounded by the poems included in the chapter, which are disclosed as shifting mouth-texts from infinite sources (2.2). Drawing on a continuously emphasised embedding of language in cultural, political context, the following section (2.3) expands the ecological translation zone to Germany. It traces a changing stance towards representations of nature during the 70s and challenges the dismissal of concurrently emerging ecological poetics from a perspective of ecopoethics and translation as transformative connection-making. Building on that, the final section (2.4) reveals ecotranslation as a relational poethic practice through Les Murray’s *Translations from the Natural World*. It emphasises ecopoetics as a boundary practice seeking encounters with the vital, plurivocal, more-than-human tradosphere.

The emerging posthuman stance towards the human as one among many expressive species leads to chapter 3 and its reinforcement of agential more-than-human matter. It explores different facets of ecotranslation in orientation to a politically controversial Anthropocene that is discussed, challenged, and calibrated by means of the qualifier “self-conscious” (3.1). Jody Gladding’s *Translations from Bark Beetle: Poems* subsequently shows a formally and grammatically innovative, manifold ecotranslation that adds layers of planetary destruction to multispecies awareness (3.2). The third section (3.3) yet expands ecotranslation outside a creaturely focus and discusses interlocking textual and extra-textual ecologies in Marion Poschmann, Daniel Falb, and particularly in Rita Wong. Her collection *forage* artfully shows connections between human and environmental exploitation across growing socio-economic disparities and gives room to hold on to an idea of ecopoethical translation as a force of change. The chapter is concluded by an extended reflection on my writing as research that returns to place, collects loose ends, and inquires

into a roaming place practice as echotranslating (3.4). This notion necessarily entails motion, humility, transformation, room for multiple conversations, and an ongoing sensual attentiveness that shores up responsiveness as response-ability in the presence of a continuously destroyed home planet.

During the various swerves through eco-poetics, poethics, translation, I am shuttling between perspectives as a poet, critic, reader, and translator. More than anything, however, I am an earthling, like you are, and I begin this in times of corona, in the need for connection in more than one sense, in the need for this to be known, in the awareness that it is time, and in the hope that there still will be enough time to stay with the earth that sustains us all.

Chapter 1

Dis/placing Ecopoetics:

“Abandoning the Idea of Center for a Position in an Infinitely Extensive Net of Relations”

Roaming

eARTh

Humans, humus, earthly, from the earth, earthlings. From the centre, from the heart of the earth, from the hearth. To the blurry marble, the blue planet, the spaceship. Leaving earth, reading earth, down to earth, made of earth, Earth First! Mother Earth, Gaia, Terra, Erde, terre, orbis terrae, erda = ground, soil, grounded. Earth, with a capital; third world, developing world, one earth. earthly pleasures, costing the earth, three worlds, one earth, hell on earth. Material earth, phenomenological earth, historical earth, middle earth, geological earth, conceptual earth, autopoietic earth. “- it is too large for us to comprehend.” The face of the earth, the song of the earth, Google Earth. “The Earth is a part of our present world, past worlds, and the future world to come”. Salt of the earth, planet earth = Not world, not only all that we know. Not from this earth, from other earths. “It is easier to reach Mars than our planet’s core.” Earth to you, earthing, seeing earth, *imagining* earth: Fire, water, air, earth, four corners of the earth. Away from the heavens, heaven/paradise on earth: physicality of the globe, moving heaven and earth, eternal, not forever: “earth is the ground from which life springs, is lived, and returns at dea(r)th.” Eine Hand voll Erde. The ends of earth, roaming earth, the earth is just a giant landstrip floating on water, earths, without art earth would just be eh, we are earth, what/why/how/who/where on earth, Eartheartheartheartearthearth, bringing you (back) to earth.

Roaming (“Where are you from?”)

From nowhere, I’m from nowhere, I fell down when the pinnacle of the TV tower
pierced a grey cloud and unfolded on the bony grounds,
unfolded over two snails and a plastic film

From the street crossing the forest, I ran away, mouths full of wild bear leek,
feet furry in moss green pools, margins so damp, so wound,
I jumped over the crying sirens into rubber gloves

From the volcanic earth, I ate truffle and mussels at the rim of champagne and lava bread,
toes blackened in the richness how my liver bubbled in the heat

From the tiny blood seed that travels through arteries that travels
through vessels that travels through fat cells that clings on to water that enters the plumbing

From the bar where I had three gins and whisky and vodka, everything, careful not to step
into any stereotypes here, to drink myself into global anaesthesia

From other places, which I left behind now to PET sculptured trees and
pretend I speak / don’t speak / listen to everything, pretend
we all love and laugh and laaf all the same, pretend
we all don’t do it similarly / differently, holy fck, does it really

matter

“As a consequence of the slavish ‘categoryitis’ the scientifically illogical, and as we shall see, often meaningless questions ‘Where do you live?’ ‘What are you?’ ‘What religion?’ ‘What race?’ ‘What nationality?’ are all thought of today as logical questions. By the twenty-first century it either will have become evident to humanity that these questions are absurd and anti-evolutionary or men will no longer be living on Earth.” *Buckminster Fuller*, 1969 (31)

1.1 Ecologising the Field

ecology is my word: tag
 me with that: come
 in there:
 you will find yourself
 in a firmless country:
 centers & peripheries
 in motion,
 organic,
 interrelations!

A. R. Ammons, 1965, *Tape for the Turn of the Year* (112)

In 1962, American non-fiction writer and biologist Rachel Carson's years of research on the detrimental use of synthetic pesticides culminated in the publication of what would become her most influential work. *Silent Spring*, a non-fiction novel that combines lyrical prose with scientific evidence, is now widely regarded as a landmark text in the launch of modern environmentalism. It brought ecology and ecological concerns to public attention, advocated responsibility towards the natural world, and inspired environmental movements to successfully campaign for a nationwide ban of DDT.¹ That the popularity of the frequently translated "Fable for Tomorrow" (R. Carson 1) eventually trumped the fierce criticism it aroused in the chemical industry seemed to resonate with the general climate of a post-nuclear world. During the rapid economic expansion following World War II, particularly in the United States, the Soviet Union, East Asia, and Western Europe, ecological consequences of relentless industrial growth started to become more and more apparent. Propelled by social and political anti-war, civil rights, and feminist movements that erupted in the US, UK, France, and Germany, reactions to nuclear power, deforestation, and pollution grew louder. They initiated the formation of environmental parties and eventually led to the foundation of the supranational non-government organisation Greenpeace in the early 70s.

Scientific and technological advances contributed to a changing awareness of the human relationship with the earth as the expansion of transboundary economic activities, accelerated by new technological infrastructures, steered the emerging Western world towards the late stage of multinational capitalism.² R. Buckminster Fuller's trope of the "spaceship earth", popularised during the "race to space" in the late 60s, emphasised the need to operate the finite resources of

¹ The chemical compound dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) was developed as a synthetic insecticide in the 1940s and extremely widely used for insect control in agriculture and private homes. After its highly toxicological effects on environment and health were discovered, it was banned for agricultural use in the US in 1972 and with few exceptions globally prohibited in 2004. Its resistance to degradation means that residues of DDT continue to persist in sediments, soil, living organisms, and especially in water (Bouwman et al.; Mansouri et al.; Kurek et al.).

² My understanding of this term draws on Fredric Jameson, who dates the emergence of late capitalism to the 50s (*Postmodernism* 1). Inseparable from his extensive analysis of postmodernism, selected aspects important here are the transnational organisation of businesses, the formation of international banking structures, and the rise of the media. All of these foster the pervasiveness of capitalism that influences not only economic but also cultural structures and begins to infuse every aspect of our lives (e.g. x, xv).

the planet with a sense of responsibility and justice (e.g. Fuller 65-69). Facts about anthropogenic climate change and global warming as a long-term threat for the entire emerging “global village” (McLuhan 31) gradually galvanised a wider public. The first Earth Day, last year (2020) celebrated across more than 190 countries, was initiated by activist and student movements in the US in 1970. Two years later, the same year MIT Club of Rome’s internationally influential study *The Limits to Growth* was published, the first pictures of planet earth as a celestial body in its entirety were taken from space. The image and concomitant narrative of the fragile, precious, and unique Blue Marble turned into an important icon for James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis and environmental groups to come (cf. U. K. Heise, *Sense of Place* 22-25). Although the field of ecocriticism did not directly emerge from an activist movement (cf. U. K. Heise, ‘Hitchhiker’s Guide’ 506), its inception is arguably impossible to decouple from social and political events of the time. The following developments in the literary landscape therefore need to be contextualised within a greening wave that swept across Europe, eventually washing up eco-poetry with a renewed focus on that part of nature which humans are “destroying, wasting and polluting” (Soper 4).

In 1972, the essay “The Comedy of Survival” by Joseph Meeker introduced the term *ecology* into Literary Studies in the anglophone world. Meeker defined Literary Ecology, the nascent field of Environmental Studies, as “the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species.” (9) The summer that year saw the inaugural UN conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. Its resulting resolution not only determined goals for environmental protection but concurrently identified human justice issues arising from imbalanced economisation and a growing hegemony of the US (cf. United Nations, *Report on Human Environment*). In the shadows of the Cold War, Chernobyl, Bhopal, Exxon Valdez, and increasingly clouded cosmopolitan dreams, the 80s witnessed a substantial number of literary works dealing with natural disasters and a proclaimed “end of nature” (cf. McKibben; Merchant).³ Corresponding academic publications and conferences concerning literary representations of nature eventually led to the foundation of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in the US in 1992. As it became more and more apparent that no space on earth proved to be “immune from anthropogenic toxification” (Buell, *The Future* 41), the idea of nature as a realm outside the human sphere of influence was in urgent need of reconfiguration – conceptually as well as poetically.

Presumably taking its name from William Rueckert’s 1978 essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”, the term ecocriticism was formally introduced in Cheryll Glotfelty’s and Harold Fromm’s now seminal text *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology*

³ Bill McKibben’s seminal *The End of Nature* (1989) asserts that the idea of nature as an eternal other, as an independent realm separate from society is no longer tenable (e.g. 48). From a feminist’s perspective, Carolyn Merchant’s important contribution to ecofeminism, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), analyses how an interlinked domination of nature and women is legitimised through a mechanised view on nature. She argues that its “death” pertains to the lost pre-modern notion of the earth as a living organism that facilitates ongoing ecological destruction (Merchant e.g. 3, 42, 149).

(1966) as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). A relatively young and rapidly growing “interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international” (xxv) discipline shaped by a plurality of voices and discourses, the roots of ecocriticism are, as one of the founding figures asserts, “very ancient” (Buell, *The Future* 2). Creation myths, folklore, Zen Buddhism, texts from the Bible, traditions of pastoralism and wilderness, Romantic sublimity, and American transcendentalism influence the field up to today, as do works by scholars ranging from Wilhelm von Humboldt and Charles Darwin to John Muir, Jakob von Uexküll, Aldo Leopold, Gregory Bateson, Arne Naess, Leo Marx, Raymond Williams, Karl Kroeber, Glen A. Love, Donald Worster, Max Oelschlaeger, William Cronon, Jonathan Bate, and Lawrence Buell.

The latter was in particular responsible for establishing a general set of criteria for “environmentally oriented works” (*Environmental Imagination* 7),⁴ which later also found application in analyses of ecopoetry (see for example Bryson, *Ecopoetry* 5; Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 10). According to Buell, the environmental crisis famously involves a “crisis of the imagination, the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it” (*Environmental Imagination* 2). The resulting opportunity for literature and literary studies to intervene in this crisis by means of their imaginative properties remains a tenet of ecocriticism (cf. Bergthaller, ‘Housebreaking’ 730; Morton, *Ecological Thought* 10).⁵ Buell’s subsequent prompt to read environmental literature “for its experiential or referential aspects” rather than for “its structural or ideological properties” (*Environmental Imagination* 36) heralded a common ecocritical suspicion of post-structural literary theory which supposedly led the focus away from the endangered world outside the text.

While much of the early “first-wave ecocriticism”⁶ thus focused on retrieving classic nature writing prose and studying by now ecocritical landmark texts by Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Annie Dillard, or Barry Lopez,⁷ a simultaneously renewed critical interest in nature poetry arose in the 90s. It led to publications including *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Bate 1991), *Poems for a Small Planet: Contemporary American Na-*

⁴ Buell outlined environmental literature as featuring a biocentric approach, an inclusion of non-human interests, an orientation towards environmental ethics and human accountability, and a sense of the environment as a dynamic process rather than a constant (*Environmental Imagination* 7-8).

⁵ For a renewed critical view on this cornerstone of ecocriticism, see Timothy Clark (17-21).

⁶ The development of ecocriticism is commonly explained by the wave metaphor. Rather than being strictly successive, however, the waves indicate various currents that overlap, continue to “run strong” and “involve building on as well as quarrelling with precursors” (Buell, *The Future* 17). Accordingly, the first wave (1980-present) is particularly invested in nonfiction nature writing, American and British literature, bioregionalism, environmentalist movements, nonhuman nature and wilderness preservation. The second wave (1995-present) broadened the cultural scope, increasingly addressed urban ecologies and environmental justice issues, and brought other genres and other artistic representations outside literature into view. A third wave (2000-present) shifts the focus to global concepts of place, material ecofeminism, queer theory, posthumanism, animality, and movements across ethnic and national boundaries. A fourth wave is said to have started in 2008, emphasising a turn to trans-corporeality and material ecocriticism (Slovic, ‘The Third Wave of Ecocriticism’; ‘Seasick among the Waves’). These phases may help to historicise the field and gain an overview, but I generally take a more integrative approach and seek connections across these waves.

⁷ According to Scott Slovic, nature writing can be understood as “literary nonfiction that offers scientific scrutiny of the world (as in the older tradition of literary natural history), explores the private experience of the individual human observer of the world, or reflects upon the political and philosophical implications of the relationships among human beings and the larger planet” (Krech III et al. 888).

ture Poetry (Pack and Parini 1991), *Reading and Writing Nature: The Poetry of Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Elizabeth Bishop* (Rotella 1991), *Green Voices* (Gifford 1995), 'Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature' (Elder 1996), and *Notations of the Wild: Ecology in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* (Voros 1997). Nature poetry, too, allegedly at the "edge between mankind and nonhuman nature" (Elder 210) had to find ways of dealing with its increasingly concreted, polluted, and critically endangered subject matter.

Although he is not always credited for it,⁸ the American Studies scholar Lothar Hönnighausen might have been one of the first to pen the term "ecopoetics" in his essay on Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry in 1995. His definition reads as follows:

Naturally, we will first consider how the new literary genre, which we propose to term "ecopoetics", relates to ecological criticism. By "ecopoetics" we understand the special poetics emerging from ecological concerns, reflections relating questions of poetic form to the more comprehensive socio-political and moral philosophy inspiring them. (281)

Hönnighausen set out a clearly socio-political agenda for ecopoetics. He found its forerunners in John Ruskin, William Morris, and the "politically minded naturalism of Whitman and Thoreau" rather than "the nature poems of Wordsworth or the impact of German idealism" (282). This expressed a widely held sceptical attitude of romanticised representations of nature that felt increasingly disconnected from oil spills, polluted water, declining forests, and loss of species. Identifying both Snyder and Berry as writers of ecological poems, Hönnighausen suggested that Snyder in particular was bringing forth a more suitable contemporary ecopoetical mode (cf. 287).

While a critique of local environmental policies and a succinct bioregional "love for the land" characterised Snyder's as well as Berry's ecological poetics, Berry's work, so Hönnighausen, was "flawed by an outmoded vocabulary of romantic nature poetry." (287) Since his analysis does not specify how exactly this romantic tone manifests itself or generates a quantifiable less ecopoetical agenda than Snyder's "effective shape and terse, and technical diction" (284), the distinction between the two modes remains rather muddy. It fed, however, into a growing legacy of Snyder as the "most complete ecopoet" (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 271). Descending from the Beat Generation and Black Mountain School, Snyder's skilful way of weaving together anthropological research with personal experience, non-dualistic thinking modes inspired by Zen Buddhism with an intimate local sense of becoming native to North America created an award-winning free verse poetics of wilderness that was both innovative and widely accessible. Adding to this was his gen-

⁸ For instance, neither Bryson's introductory anthology, nor Keller's overview ("Green Reading"), nor Nolan's study, nor Hume and Osborne's groundbreaking collection mention Hönnighausen's name when tracing definitions of the term ecopoetics.

eral lifestyle, his association with counterculture, deep ecology,⁹ and environmental activism that made him a lasting prominent figure in the field, nationally as well as internationally.

Given that Hönnighausen's loose argument for Snyder's specific ecopoetics draws on formal and stylistic elements, his initial prioritisation of political over aesthetic intent is all the more surprising. In accordance with this line of reasoning, he contrasts ecopoetics with the "poetological poems of William Cullen Bryant or William Carlos Williams, where discussion has tended to focus more on literary history and aesthetics than on politics" (Hönnighausen 281). This also fit into a common sentiment shaping the beginnings of ecopoetry and ecocriticism's alleged "earth-centred approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii) more broadly: Blaming a neglect of environmental concerns on postmodern scepticism and the post-structural deconstruction of "nature" as a cultural construct, realism and mimetic writing became favoured modes, as did phenomenological approaches heeding Buell's experiential reading prompt. The works of mid-century avant-garde poets such as Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, or Ron Silliman consequently gained a reputation of being too logocentric, self-contained, artificial linguistic constructs to successfully relate to the world outside and rectify the "crisis of the imagination" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 2). Generating a "poetics of textuality", the self-referentiality of such postmodern texts allegedly "removes us from the practical world we must engage, moment to moment." (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 57)

In response, Leonard M. Scigaj, publisher of the first book dedicated to ecopoetry, called for a "sustainable poetry, a poetry, that does not allow the degradation of ecosystems through inattention to the referential base of all language." (5) He not only claimed that a "preoccupation with the aesthetics of language both eliminates ecopoetry by ignoring it", but further that it "creates more literary criticism hermetically sealed from any discernible reference to the actual events of the quotidian world in which we live." (25) This was by no means an isolated argument but resonated with the controversies of the "science wars", attacks on language theory, and disputes between new formalist and lyric traditions in American Poetry Studies (U. K. Heise, 'Hitchhiker's Guide' 506; Quetchenbach, 'Primary Concerns'). Opposing artistic liberties with the need for socio-political critique furthermore echoes a perennial dichotomy between ethics and aesthetics in literature that continues to inform discussions revolving around environmental ethics and eco-aesthetics (cf. Knickerbocker; A. Carson; Krishanu and Chakraborty).¹⁰

Influenced by Derrida, Scigaj's normative characteristics for an envisioned contemporary ecopoetry of "référance" rather than "différance" (cf. Scigaj, 'Ecological and Environmental Poetry'; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*) echoed Lawrence Buell's earlier criteria (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 10-

⁹ Emerging with the Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess, the deep ecology movement distances itself from "shallow" environmentalism seeking an instrumentalised preservation of natural resources for the affluence of people in developed countries only (Naess 95). Deep ecology identifies a Western split between nature and culture as the root of environmental destruction and thus calls for a deep, structural reform that includes a turn from anthropocentrism to biocentrism to facilitate a holistic understanding of and ethical accountability for the ecosphere. Also see *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Sessions 1995).

¹⁰ Section 2.3 engages further with this opposition.

11). Regarded as the result of an “act of reading nature” (51), ecopoetry was consequently defined as “poetry that persistently stresses human cooperation with nature conceived as a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems.” (37) This cybernetically influenced view on nature in particular was the feature that distinguished it, so Scigaj, from related environmental poetry. His focus on A.R. Ammons, W.S. Merwin, Wendell Berry, and Gary Snyder consolidated the latter two poets as ecocanonical figures with Robinson Jeffers as their mentor and spiritual father (42). It also continued an ecocritical trend that was predominantly male and white (cf. Keller, ‘Green Reading’ 7). Different in their approaches, Scigaj claimed that all four ecopoets analysed succeeded in representing the earth as an autonomous and equal other (*Sustainable Poetry* 5). No longer the bucolic idyll taking a background role for anthropocentric concerns, ecopoetry’s aim was to give nature “its own voice” in order to restore human’s harmony with the planet (5, 80). At the same time, the act of voicing nature had to be characterised by a reflexive stance, suspicious and aware of the limits of language. Considered as an invented system of signs, language was seen as a flawed tool inherently unable to fully account for human experience (80, 192). Thus, the highest aim of an “ecopoem” (37) was to imitate and turn the reader’s attention to the rhythms of nature, its real point of reference.

Ecopoetry as sustainable poetry therefore had a clear didactic, if not activist mission that consisted in altering the reader’s perceptions from anthropocentrism to biocentrism and helping “us to live our lives by encouraging us to understand, respect, and cooperate with the laws of nature that sustain us.” (81) Scigaj’s wrestle with giving nature a voice while simultaneously considering language as inherently unable to bridge an identified gap between world and word — in other words a wrestle with poetic representation pressured by a presumed distinction between nature and culture — points to a concern that remains relevant until today. However, Scigaj’s envisioned desire of *restoring* a sense of connectedness speaks to a nostalgia for a pre-modern time when humans were assumed to live in harmony with nature that is largely typical for early, first-wave ecocriticism.

It is thus also echoed in British scholar Jonathan Bate’s influential book *The Song of the Earth* (2000). Instead of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who had become Scigaj’s ecophenomenological guide, Bate’s analysis of British Romantic poetry looked to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and his ethics of dwelling. Bate’s concept of ecopoetics with an emphasis on *poiesis*, making, was no longer restricted to poetry but sought a new phenomenological mode within ecocriticism. Poetry nevertheless deserved a special place in Bate’s opinion, since “it could be that it is language’s most direct path to the return to the oikos, because metre itself [...] is an answering to nature’s own rhythms, and echoing of the song of the earth itself.” (*The Song of the Earth* 76) This suggestion displays a rather conservative view on poetry primarily defined as metric verse poetry, which is underpinned by Bate’s turn to William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Clare in favour of contemporary or experimental works. According to Bate, who in turn drew on Heidegger, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, poets had to “speak the earth” (262), “re-enchant the world” (167), and unify a

Cartesian rift between mind and environment (245). The poet's project was notably not political; instead poems were tasked to make recreational ecosystems, "imaginary parks in which we may breathe an air that is not toxic and accommodate ourselves to a mode of dwelling that is not alienated." (64) Through a phenomenological experience of reading, the poet's representation of nature could live up to Buell's outlined literary potential and help readers to imagine different ways of dwelling *with* the earth.

Although Bate's Heideggerian endeavour received criticism later, not least because the poets he singled out for his project represented yet again a "rather exclusive club of neo-romantic, male poets" (Tarlo, 'Ecopoetics and Women' 5), it moved ecopoetics into the critical realm, particularly in the UK, and influenced a number of ecopoetical approaches (cf. Peters and Irwin; Killingsworth; Lidström and Garrard). Nevertheless, the emphasis on an apolitical agenda of ecopoetics not only forms a stark contrast to earlier studies in the field but also neglects the conditions that brought about the ecocritical movement in the first place. Unless one regards literature as cut-off from the socio-political realm and simultaneously ignores the amount of activist poetry explicitly written in response to the climate crisis, framing ecopoetics as apolitical runs counter to ecological thinking seeking to understand interdependencies and interconnections between economic, cultural, environmental, and political systems weaving the complex net of relations that make up "our" world.

The exclusive selection of writers that tended to be read under the sign of ecopoetry started to widen with publications such as Bernard Quetchenbach's *Back from the Far Field: American Nature Poetry in the Late Twentieth Century* (2000) and J. Scott Bryson's *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (2002). Both texts drew attention to the relation between non-human and human disclosed in the works of Robert Bly, Louise Glück, Jo Harjo, Denise Levertov, Mary Oliver, Simon Ortiz, Kenneth Rexroth, Arthur Sze — poets that had previously often been rejected due to their association with formal experimentation presumably at odds with an ecological orientation. Bryson's critical introductory anthology began to imagine ecopoetry as a more inclusive, international habitat that considered issues of gender, ethnicity, or postcolonialism as part of an overall ecological agenda. Outlining Ralph Waldo Emerson, W. B. Yeats, and Robinson Jeffers as its forerunners, he nevertheless continued ecopoetry as a category that favoured a lyrical tradition descending from nature writing. Bryson subsequently loosely defined ecopoetry as:

a subset of nature poetry that, while adhering to certain conventions of romanticism, also advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues, thus resulting in a version of nature poetry generally marked by three primary characteristics. (*Ecopoetry* 5)

The respective characteristics, iterated in Bryson's later ecopoetical exploration of Wendell Berry, Joy Harjo, Mary Oliver, and W. S. Merwin, are:

an ecological and biocentric perspective recognizing the interdependent nature of the world; a deep humility with regard to our relationships with human and non-

human nature; and an intense skepticism toward hyperrationality, a skepticism that usually leads to condemnation of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe. (*West Side 2*)

In line with these characteristics, the poets discussed in Bryson's publications undoubtedly complicate simplistic distinctions between nature and culture, human and nature, modernity and romanticism. Nevertheless, the overall tone mainly corresponds to an early ecocritical view that favoured accessible content matter over formal experiments and idealised close experiences of nature through language, made as transparent as possible. The field was changing, however, and rapidly continued to do so when a different group of poets and theorists ventured into the eco-framework, accompanied by an accelerating environmental crisis and events of a new millennium.

1.1.1 The Edge of the Field

In 2001, Jonathan Skinner's journal *ecopoetics 01* and its subsequent annual issues 02, 03, 04/05, and 06/07 launched a "new era" (Hume and Osborne 8) for ecopoetics. His widened concept, which he keeps expanding and exploring until today, is the foundation for my primary understanding of ecopoetics. Skinner points out that the environmental movement had been protecting "a fairly received notion of 'eco' from the proddings and complications, and enrichments, of an investigative poetics." (*ecopoetics 01 7*)¹¹ In an attempt to integrate the latter into the ecocritical field, he included poets and artists such as Juliana Spahr, Cecilia Vicuña, Peter Larkin, Lisa Jarnot, Marcella Durand, Kenneth Goldsmith, or Kevin Killian. Ecopoetics was not regarded as a specific literary subgenre but more widely interpreted as "an array of practices converging on the oikos, the planet earth that is the only home our species currently knows." (Skinner, 'What is Ecopoetics?')

Traced back to its etymological roots, *oikos* and *poiesis*, ecopoetics, a "house making" (*ecopoetics 01 7*) came to designate both the object of its studies and the concomitant inquiry,¹² ideally functioning "as an edge (as in edge of the meadow, or shore, rather than leading edge) where different disciplines can meet and complicate one other." (*ecopoetics 01 6*) Skinner's clarification regarding the word "edge", in conjunction with the analogy of the edge as an ecotone (cf. Arigo 2) programmatically reconciled linguistic concerns with an acknowledgement of the physical presence of ecosystems and initiated attention to the dynamic interrelations between the two. While

¹¹ Investigative poetry is a term indebted to Ed Sanders and an influential lecture he gave at the Naropa Institute in 1975, empowering poetry to "begin a voyage into the description of *historical reality*" (7 Sanders, emphasis in original), whilst being formally innovative, controversial, radical, and uncompromising.

¹² Lyn Hejinian's *The Language of Inquiry* offers further insights into the kind of open poetics insinuated here: Hejinian outlines poetics as a relational field in which poetry and poetics are "mutually constitutive" and "reciprocally transformative" (Hejinian 1). Outside of poetry as a language genre, the language of poetry is explored as "a language of inquiry" that resists hierarchies and is simultaneously able to reflect on itself while performing acts of "experiencing experience" in preservation of the unknowing (2-3).

ecopoetics still operated under ethical imperatives, it was no longer to be judged exclusively by its success in turning the reader to the world that was supposedly *outside*:

I strongly reject the perverse aim of an ecopoetry that would somehow turn us away from the tasks of poetry, to more important or urgent concerns. (Though I sympathize with the desire to get readers to look up from the page and pay attention to their surroundings) (Skinner, 'Statement on "New Nature Writing"' 127)

A more pronounced focus on the material aesthetics of ecopoetics was not placed in discord with an overarching ecopoetical desideratum, namely to politically intervene in omnipresent ecological crises and injustices. Language could not be regarded as a neutral or innocent tool, yet, the issue was not so much that language inevitably failed in competing “with the richer planet whose operations created and sustain us” (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 42). It was more that language, pragmatically, was acknowledged as complicit in the destruction of this very planet: in continuing to set up discriminating nature/human, natural/artificial, self/other dualisms, sustaining a financial system built on maximising profit, and underpinning ideological rhetoric veiling environmental degradation. Its imaginative properties were no longer regarded as readily accessible and straightforwardly connected with an actually legible change in action. In this sense, ecopoetics was meeting further gaps besides the one assumed between world and word. Discussing analogies and Charles Olson’s assertion that comparison fails to account for the “self-existence” of “any thing” that “impinges on us” (Allen and Friedlander 157), Skinner thus writes:

Of even more pressing concern is how *we* impinge on the ‘things’ around us. Though open to explorations from every possible angle, ecopoetics will insist that no comprehensive “green poetics” can ignore the gap between what we say and what we do. To talk about how a poem is “like a tree” or “like an ecosystem” (not to mention comparing language to a house or a city) barely begins to address the radical re-situating of poetics called for in the face of an ongoing disappearance of trees and ecosystems (and peoples, along with their houses and cities). How can poetics be reconfigured to encompass the kinds of making that intervene with the *institutions* of biocide? (*ecopoetics* 03 183)

Since there is “nothing inherently ecological about poets” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 182), the prefixed “eco-” relation ushered poetics into an ongoing challenge. It turned ecopoetics away from easy analogies and metaphorical allusions borrowing from ecological terminology to more daring projects that questioned the way language makes relations, inquires into human thoughts and actions, and functions in an interconnected world at large. The open fuzziness of an edge that consciously cuts across categories and hierarchies launched ecopoetics as an ongoing, unfixed endeavour, seeking less to be completed than to generate new insights, discover new connections, push boundaries, and embody ways of keeping alive “our” oikos, shared home of humans

and more-than-humans.¹³

Skinner's call to radically resituate poetics resonated with American critics such as Jed Rausula, Lynn Keller, and Angus Fletcher, and the works of an altogether different group of Anglo-American eco-practitioners with an altogether different genealogy. Instead of looking to the Romantics, the poetic influences of Juliana Spahr, Brenda Hillman, Harriet Tarlo, or Peter Larkin can be traced to the modernists, the objectivists, and the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E movement. In this perspective, poets such as Charles Bernstein, Robert Creeley, Emily Dickinson, Robert Dunkin, Larry Eigner, Lyn Hejinian, Lorine Niedecker, Charles Olson, George Oppen, and Muriel Rukeyser can be regarded as key figures. Olson's manifesto on projective verse and Duncan's related field composition in particular served as springboards into formally innovative ecopoetical practices that dissolved earlier contradictions between textual innovation and extra-textual referentiality through an embodied open field poetics taking breath as its metre (cf. Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes' para 20; Hume and Osborne 4). Able to *perform* an attention to physical-material things on the page, ecopoetics emerged in relation, in interaction with living objects, seeking connections instead of reinforcing distinctions.

The new strand of ecopoetics was thus less concerned with envisioning a presumed "return" to an attuned dwelling with nature and more interested in exploring and making sense of the intricate entanglements of a continuously changing global present. Acknowledging that the totality of so-called nature was partly a constructed concept and partly referring to the muddy endangered reality (cf. Skinner, 'Why Ecopoetics?' 105; Garrard 10), they set out to explore how poets could "participate in realizing the full implications of our position as language-using animals in a world composed of interconnection." (Reilly, 'Eco-Noise' 261) Writerly engagements with ecopoetics were no longer restricted to explicitly "green" themes and images. Instead, an emphasis on ecology signalled a rethinking of expressions and forms, an orientation towards connections between poetic structures placed within larger systems, a turn to poetic materiality and procedure. Marcella Durand suggests that ecological poetry "is much like ecological living":

[i]t recycles materials, functions with an intense awareness of space, seeks an equality of value between all living and unliving things, explores multiple perspectives as an attempt to subvert the dominant paradigms of mono-perception, consumption and hierarchy, and utilizes powers of concentration to increase lucidity and attain a more transparent, less anthropocentric mode of existence. ('The Ecology of Poetry' 59)

The favoured mode for such endeavours continues to lean towards linguistic and formal experimentation that pressures stable poetic voice and presence of the lyrical subject dominating classic nature writing. Joan Retallack's influential work suggests that descriptive languages "may need

¹³ As an alternative to "non-human" or "other-than-human", the more-than-human is more interested in unstable intersections between ecologies of all kinds and horizontal, posthuman ontologies. It will be tentatively considered and explored throughout this and the following chapter and more thoroughly discussed in chapter 3.

to change under pressure of new angles of inquiry into how complex interrelationships make sense.” (‘What Is Experimental Poetry’ para 6) Thus letting the multitude of entangled environmental and global socio-political concerns interact with content and form, ecopoetics is much more cautious of an assumed prioritisation of one over the other, or indeed, a separation of the two. Interested in things, discords, and relations, ecopoetics unfolds, as Durand suggests, “in the links between words and sentences, stanzas, paragraphs, and how these systems link with energy and matter”. It does so “in a way that animates and alters its own medium, that is language.” (‘The Ecology of Poetry’ 62)

In consequence, many poets engaging with such an ecopoetics were — and still are — highly critical, if not altogether dismissive of its alleged ancient roots in nature writing and its association with nature poetry.¹⁴ This is famously mirrored in Juliana Spahr’s statement that nature poetry too often tends “to show the beautiful bird but not the bulldozer off to the side” that is about to destroy the bird’s habitat. (*Well Then There Now* 69) This does not mean that the beautiful bird should never appear in an ecopoetically oriented poem, but it does move ecopoetics closer to Evelyn Reilly’s affirmation that ecopoetics has “nothing to do with nature poetry”, that the “separation into genre is a symptom of the disease” (‘Eco-Noise’ 255-56). By extension echoing a “categoryitis” (Fuller 31) addressed in the poem preceding this section (“Roaming (“Where are you from?”)”), discriminatory categorisation assumes, as Reilly notes (‘Eco-Noise’ 256-57), appropriation that contributes to legitimised exploitation. An ecopoetical distrust of genre consequently extends to a distrust of ecopoetics itself turning into genre, as expressed by Jane Sprague: “I resist ecopoetics. And definitions of ecopoetics. I resist it as a neat category into which one might insert my own work, like some car slipping into its slot on the freeway.” (unpaginated) This scepticism is one aspect among many that stops ecopoetics from becoming static and instead discloses it as an ongoing process not afraid to show itself as such.

Within a growing field of ecocriticism, the experimental reconfiguration of ecopoetics has been embedded in a surge of new theoretical writing. Shifts from bioregional to global concerns, from conservation to environmental justice politics brought a wider aesthetic range and critical scope into view. Timothy Morton’s *Ecology without Nature* and Donna Haraway’s exploration of “naturecultures” were key contributions in further propelling critical views on a pre-conceived notion of nature “over yonder” (Morton, *Ecological Thought* 3), firmly set against culture. Focusing on intersections between the two, advances into posthumanism also provided models for conceptualising the human in intimate interdependency with material processes on earth.¹⁵ In this vein, the so-called “material turn” (cf. Iovino; Iovino and Opperman, *Material Ecocriticism*) introduced yet again new ecocritical perspectives on subject-object ontologies, non-human agency,

¹⁴ Nevertheless, the anglophone nature writing scene has gained new popularity as well and is particularly pushed by scholars and writers such as Richard Kerridge, Kathleen Jamie, Karla Armbruster, Richard Mabey, Robert Macfarlane, and Alice Oswald (cf. Armbruster and Wallace).

¹⁵ I draw here on Cary Wolfe’s definition that “posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore.” (Wolfe xv)

and the mind-body dualism. These shape not only perspectives of reading texts but set in motion wide-ranging ethical implications concerning acting, being, and understanding the world.

In light of increasing global ecological catastrophes and a growing awareness of the gravity of global warming spiking an interest in environmental concerns across disciplines and sectors, ecocriticism has turned into one of the most rapidly growing and expanding fields of literary, cultural, and social studies (cf. Zapf, 'Introduction'). Becoming ever more international and interdisciplinary, it spreads over 150 countries today, shaped by theoretical traditions in its respective locations on the one and joint global trends on the other hand. In addition to ASLE based in the US, affiliates have been established in Canada (ALECC), in the UK and Ireland (ASLE-UKI), mainland Europe (EASLCE), Asia (ASLE-Korea; ASLE-Japan; ASLE-Pakistan), South America (ASLE-Brazil), Australia and New Zealand (ASLEC-ANZ). Animal Studies, Globalisation Studies, Ecolinguistics, Environmental History, Biosemiotics, Environmental Ethics, Queer Ecology, Postcolonialism, Ecofeminism, Cultural Ecology only make up some of the diverse strands sometimes loosely grouped under the overarching frame of the Environmental Humanities (cf. Emmett and Nye; Iovino and Opperman, *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*; U. K. Heise et al.; Emmanouilidou and Toska).

Albeit a niche topic in view of this larger field, ecopoetics has gained critical momentum as scholars, poets, and artists try to come to terms with the manifold problems and injustices posed by a complicated and precarious ongoing 21st century. New challenges revealed as well as conditioned by the proclamation of the Anthropocene urge poetry's "ability to communicate moments of emotional intensity and insight, building bridges between abstract scientific knowledge and individuals' subjective feelings" (Goodbody, 'German Ecopoetry' 276). From David Dunn's bioacoustic poetry to Christian Bök's biopoetic experiments with the bacterium *Deinococcus radiodurans*, contemporary engagements with ecopoetics are hard to unify with technophobic tendencies and restricted views on traditional lyricism that characterised early ecopoetry. Emerging strands such as gaiapoetics, zoopoetics, elemental poetics, biopoetry, pataphysics, transgenic poetry, indigenous ecopoetics, lithopoetics, hydro-poetics, visceral poetics, geopoetics, archeopoetics, or sensuous poetics pursue various trajectories in ecopoetics, investigating implications and interrelations with the remainders of nature that changed from a "perceptually exploitable Other — most easily compared to a book to be decoded by the (human) reader — to something intrinsically affected by humans." (Durand, 'The Elegy of Ecopoetics' 252)

At the border of failing to fully understand "our" role in being part of and "destroying the very systems of which we are a part" (252), ecopoetics is thus pressured by destructive relations, confronted with alterities, tasked with making connections. In attentiveness to changing circumstances, it is undergoing constant reconfiguration, seeking to navigate times of precarity and ecological loss. Arriving at this contemporary moment, scholars such as Lynn Keller, Scott Knickerbocker, Angela Hume, Sarah Nolan, and Harriet Tarlo continue to make an effort to refute Skinner's early statement that "ecopoetics is more used than discussed" ('What is Ecopoetics?'), and I set out to do the same.

1.1.2 Navigating the Edge

At this edge of an ecodiverse field, attempts to use ecopoetics as a reductive, self-explanatory label or to lay out taxonomic characteristics that categorise an “ecopoet” or an “ecopoem” must be viewed highly critically.¹⁶ As previously mentioned, ecopoetics has not been designed as a convenient tag, neither as a school nor as a genre; it could not be more critical of the need to neatly categorise, demarcate, and exclude. With a focus on the global present, ecopoetics has a transgressive and transhistorical capacity nonetheless. After all, if the “eco”-prefix is supposed to be more than a fashionable accessory, a radically opened ecopoetics needs to keep its various “frictional nodes as active as possible” (Skinner in Hume 759), which means that definitions seeking to limit its critical, practical, or aesthetic range for the sole sake of defining are not viable. Ecopoetics is ecopoetical, so to speak, and thus constantly critical of its own terminology and the conditions of its making (cf. Magi 238). Processes, overshadowed by profitability of the final product, tend to be hidden in an economic age; it is part of an ecological premise to make them visible again.

In my view, ecopoetics is therefore about attending to things that do not fit as much as it is about un-fitting things. It is about moving out of comfort zones, about unknowability, irreconcilable paradoxes, borders of human knowledge, perception, and language, which then again “entail acts of translation” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’). Opposing defining what may or may not be an ecopoem or ecopoet, it is much more transformative to consider what ecopoetics as reflection, contextualisation, ethical orientation, or inquisitive lens does to a poem; how a making of any kind can in turn contribute to ecopoetics as a mode of caring coexistence on and off page; what ecopoetic processes of all kinds bring forth, what they do, what they can do, what they fail to do. For as long as the term ecopoetics itself is needed to make present an overarching desideratum of greater ecological justice for all creatures sharing this earth, it ultimately can be seen as part of a larger failure in ending the conditions that instigate its need. At the same time and against a corollary of inherent insufficiency, ecopoetics can conversely be seen as articulating radical hope and embodying acts of resistance stirring up the status quo. Simply because literature is not cut off from the political realm, as the development of ecocriticism has once again shown, it has as good a chance of making an intervention as anything else, which is not much, but it is something. There cannot be enough room then to keep the radical fuzziness of ecopoetics alive, inquire into its boundary experiments, investigate its various forms, interrogate its explorative poethical “wagers”, in the knowledge that “we have nothing to lose except everything. So let us go ahead.” (Camus 174)¹⁷

In this spirit, my writings embrace the creative-critical edge of ecopoetics, perhaps above all, which also means coequally, “a passionate, a necessary interest” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 260; Durand,

¹⁶ Such attempts are for instance expressed in articles by McFarland or Shoptaw and further shape discussions about German ecopoetry, which will be explored in section 2.3.

¹⁷ For a nuanced discussion of the wagers and the potential for direct political acts enacted by contemporary innovative poetry, see *The Gift, the Wager, and Poethics* (Burnett 2017). Aspects of it are outlined in section 1.3.

‘Spatial Interpretations’ 201), shaped by contemporaneous, thus ever shifting concerns with the oikos. Just as poetry is only one particle in a wider notion of poetics, the human is only one among many earthlings. Against a continuous tendency to think nature with a capital “N”, “as a mirror for human narcissism” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 261), eco-poetics requires decentring. It is an attempt at dissolving the self “into the gene pool and the species into the ecosystem” (257), at pushing the human away from a distancing capital. Instead of seeking bio- or earth-centrism (cf. Bryson, *West Side*; Glotfelty and Fromm xviii), eco-poetics envisions “the abandonment of the idea of center for a position in an infinitely extensive net of relations” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 257). Such a position is inherently pervaded by alterity and boundaries of the self, affected by all the relations we cannot know, including those we cannot even know we cannot know. Connections are sought out through this unsettling unknowingness, connections with what emerges, from elsewhere, from nowhere, from here; “from the street crossing the forest”, “from the tiny blood seed”, “from the volcanic earth” (cf. “Roaming (“Where are you from?””).

In the interest of “conceptualizing the field”, Skinner introduces a compass rose to visualise themes as “compass points for an eco-poetics” (‘What is Eco-poetics?’).¹⁸ Loosely drawing on that, I will lay out the following three sections of this chapter as three coordinates that provide initial eco-poetic orientation and have proved indispensable for my practice, the fourth compass point in this regard. In interplay with reflections on my poetry, foundational assumptions in poetical engagements with the oikos are probed into and pushed towards an eco-poetical edge. The first coordinate is Harriet Tarlo’s concept of radical landscapes (section 1.2), which seeks to subvert persisting romantic ideas of pristine natural landscapes. Drawing on Peter Larkin’s ecological poetry in particular, John Kinsella’s radical pastoral further amplifies this section’s aim to co-ordinate a radical landscape eco-poetics and veer from the trope of walking to a concept of motion. The coordinate that follows (section 1.3) explores Joan Retallack’s poethics and the various possibilities for an eco-poetics to reach beyond the page. Exemplified by Cecilia Vicuña’s woven quipoems, a conceptualised “eco-poethics” emphasises an attentiveness to the more-than-human world and the vital interconnections between language, the self, and the world, constantly moving and meeting the unknown. The final coordinate (section 1.4) seeks to orient eco-poetics to a poethically aware concept of place shuttling along a conflicted global-local axis. Drawing on Juliana Spahr’s *Things of Each Possible Relation Hashing Against One Another* (2003), it reconfigures place as a knot weaving together different lines of view points, histories, experiences, encounters, and languages, which eventually orients eco-poetics towards an opening zone of translation.

Navigating by compass is based on perspective and adjustment; it requires attention to the surroundings and interaction with them. All following chapters can be seen as additions to as well as extensions of the compass points that will be outlined below, centring on and decentring concerns of (more-than-)human language entanglements in relation to their engagements

¹⁸ Skinner’s main compass points include sound as the “true North”, documentary and research poetics as the East, boundary practices as the South, and landscapes of the future in the “big picture” of the West (Skinner, ‘What is Eco-poetics?’).

with earthly matters. Though the envisioned directions may be straightforward, they also encompass declinations, and while moving towards a destination, obstacles necessitate expected or unexpected detours and excursions. Constant checking and adapting is required, sometimes an alteration of the angle or a shift in view that always implicates context in which the viewer is likewise implicated, yielding a *Mit-* rather than an *Umwelt*. As Rachel Carson points out so aptly, “the history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings” (5), and my work is inevitably embedded in this history of which we humans have been a part only for a blink.

Zusammenführung (with Dorothee Sölle)

Aus erde bin ich gemacht
 aus schlamm und dreck
 aus blut und wasser
 gern wär ich ein vogel
 aus federn papier und dünnen knochen
 From earth I am made
 from sludge and dirt I'd like to be a bird
 from blood and water from feathers paper and thin bones
 Aus erde sind wir gemacht
 doch sehr mobil und trennbar
 From earth we are made
 but very mobile and separable
 spending the days I'd like to be the bird
 in airports and cars I used to be
 der ich einst war
 leicht und vergeßlich
 God and the earth and forgetful
 have a memory
 they can't be separated
 Gott und die erde haben gedächtnis
 sie lassen sich nicht teilen
 rated randomly trans-
 ported to other countries I'd like to be that bird
 beliebig verbringen
 in andere länder
 gern wär ich der vogel
 From earth we are pain-free I fly into you
 from pain schmerzlos flog ich in dich
 mein immer dunklerer himmel
 my always darkening Himmel
 Aber aus erde sind wir
 aus schmerz

View from the N59 road

under right conditions

double ending colour phenomena form

coordinate-less non-minable

LGT Bridges between salt walls and plastic charm

Connemara Culture

Postcard with rain

resistant sheep dabs: lanoline, isopropyl, benzine

with sprayed on red squared fish, tree, soil

photogenic heather at the edge of asphalt scratch

Reiher im Sonnenbad

I'M LOVING IT

zigzagged bittern

Mc-wings

never

taking off

Leverkusen Chempark

carscapes Bayer towers hol
 low 11:17
 wind +0100
blows outflux mind
 clouds blue war
craned Schreber exit
 gärten right

Instagramability

island leaves

blur ashless moth-

light waves fishing boat

limbs †winkling between

Donegal ruins

It's always tempting to look for something beautiful

muddy map sealing open/close for too many
years crumbling away in coffee-coloured clay
as breath extends between chests and cells and Dublin Mountains.

oxygen, nitrogen, methane press down

classify / separate
beautify. things. ignore.

polymeric gravities. bleed
out all other parts; all other
through fissures, conceptualised homes. fit all mes in one frame

southwest, 5-6 Bft. soft, resilient, doesn't mould, keeps the warmth
inside. 90° tilt possible, giving the sun a direction.

molecules connect / repeat / repeat / transform
as breath extends between chests and cells and muddy tar

dinitrogen monoxide, CFCs, soot press down.

view

burnt

forwards

halved land and sea wrapping
hinged on Velux handles

1.2 Radical Landscapes of Eco-poetics

During one of his walks in the fields, Emerson ponders on the nature of landscape: “There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet.” (6) As a style of painting, presumably entering the English language from Dutch or via the Italian Renaissance (cf. Wylie 8, 21), the term “landscape” is a much discussed and, eco-poetically, a troubled one. This coordinate explores the implications of a Romantically indebted landscape concept, including its close association with the idea of walking. It seeks to orient eco-poetics towards notions of radical landscapes and a radical pastoral.

As sketched by Emerson in *Nature* (1836), one of the most popular documents of nature writing, landscape calls to mind scenic representations of rural nature, empty of humans. The paintings of William Turner and the verses of Coleridge alike rely on modes of the picturesque, pastoral, or sublime; that is, they produce nature as an idyllic rural space distinctly separate from its urban counterparts.¹⁹ In addition, Romantic depictions of the countryside produce the pastoral as the “city’s idea of the country” (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 5), thus reaffirming a nature/culture dichotomy that further serves to suppress issues of labour and class. Demarcating a portion of land or scenery which the — human — eye can view at once, the underlying anthropocentric perspective clashes with eco-poetical premises. As Raymond Williams points out, “the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation” (120), two notions that arguably run counter to an eco-poetical acknowledgement of omnipresent interconnections across observer and observed. Even though Emerson’s envisioned poet is tasked with what can be read as a form of connection-making, nature becomes looked at as an object that needs to be fitted into one harmonious whole. Its relation to the human eye remains one of separation, not one of mutual entanglement. In this way, landscape as a cultural aesthetic structures the way in which one *should* see the palpable world. It shapes the idea, the imagination, the perception of the land, traditionally in a beautified way.²⁰

Given its troubling connotation, landscape was a framework in which I had initially little interest as a poet. The concept of radical landscapes explored by British poet and scholar Harriet Tarlo, however, offers a reflective ecological counter-model that puts landscapes as “linguistic restraints” (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 139) of the natural under significant pressure. Tarlo’s anthology *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (2011) fuses her yearlong investment in linguistically innovative poetry with concerns about nature, the material earth,

¹⁹ Kate Soper notes that the notion of sublimity in relation to landscape coincided with the onset of modernisation, when machines and scientific insights started to significantly change the understanding and look of the natural world (222). Landscape thus emerged as an ideological aesthetic that served as a simulacrum for loss of both the real physical world and previous ideas of it. For further discussion of the pastoral, the picturesque, and the post-pastoral, see Gifford (*Pastoral*).

²⁰ It would be easy to dismiss the Romantic landscape paintings as historical artefacts outdated today, but the underlying concept of the pastoral is still very much alive, informing films, books, and travel brochures that more often show “the beautiful bird” rather than “the bulldozer off to the side”, to echo Juliana Spahr (*Well Then There Now* 69). In this sense, the panoramic landscapes of Turner are the beaches of Hawai’i, the idyllic destinations on Instagram, the pure nature adverts for Connemara; putatively eternal, free of toxicity and full of ideological rhetoric.

and Nature, the cultural construct (cf. Tarlo, ‘Radical Landscapes’).²¹ It emerged as a reaction to an active British landscape writing scene whose critical approach to the relationship between “human beings, their fellow creatures and the land we live in” (Tarlo, *Ground Aslant* 7) manifested in an open, free-verse, explorative poetic form. Here is a brief example by the poet Peter Larkin:

[...] How deep park references a landscape’s entirety. The human tree loathes by its bounds, loans out an open impress of the woods, typology of a sill it is all window to.

filigree patent, then neuro-
arboreal, a leaf bulk
fed urban flanges, tangents
enfilade the casuals
of woodland striving (Larkin, ‘from Open Woods’ 67)

This is probably not what Emerson had in mind: Instead of attempting to “integrate all the parts” (6), the landscape is shown in its fractality. In the absence of a unified view, fragments of poetry are pressed against prose, creating an unsettling foil between an indistinct arboreal outside and a writerly inside. Urban and rural intertwine, expressing ecopoetics as an ecotone whose liminality is encapsulated in a slow ambiguity that poses more questions than answers.

Tarlo’s gathering of sixteen contemporary poets appeared at a time when eco-critics were still eyeing post-structuralism with distrust. Providing an intersection for experimental and ecological poetries, not unlike Skinner’s *ecopoetics* journal, it was later dubbed the “UK ecopoetry avant-garde” (Gifford, *Green Voices* 9).²² *The Ground Aslant*, together with Tarlo’s earlier pioneering publication ‘Ecopoetics and Women’ (2007), thus provides a milestone in the development of ecopoetics in the UK in particular. In her initial essay on radical landscapes, Tarlo states:

When I began this line of research by looking at those poets I felt were “radical landscape” poets, I wanted to examine the complexity of this relationship between writer, land and language in such poetry. I quickly realised how much less likely such poetry was to be imbued with nostalgia for “pure nature” or indeed with the sentimentality so closely associated with “nature” in more traditional poetry of the pastoral tradition. (‘Radical Landscapes’ para 16)

²¹ Linguistically innovative poetry is a term that arose throughout the 1990s in England and is particularly indebted to Robert Sheppard. Influenced by language poetry in the US, it referred to an alternative poetics of “increased indeterminacy and discontinuity, the use of techniques of disruption and of creative linkage” (Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents, 1950-2000* 142). Poets associated with the term include Allen Fisher, Maggie O’Sullivan, Bob Cobbing, Roy Fisher, Ulli Freer, and Tom Raworth.

²² Nevertheless, Tarlo points out that the terms “landscape poet” and “ecopoet” are not interchangeable (*Ground Aslant* 11), since ecopoetics includes poetry that, formally or content-wise, hinges on ecological patterns without necessarily paying attention to a specific landscape. However, if one understands ecopoetics as previously outlined, every “landscape poet” can be critically examined for their ecopoetics, meaning for their way of engaging the oikos and pressuring their poetics with ecological concerns.

In this sense situated at the edge of the eco-poetic field outlined previously, Tarlo traces the influences of poets gathered in her anthology back to modernists such as Basil Bunting, Ian Hamilton Finley, Lorine Niedecker, and especially Charles Olson (Tarlo, *Ground Aslant* 7). Echoing Olson's open field poetics, many anthologised poems eschew linearity, traditional metre, verse, and layout to create poetic spaces that draw attention to the materiality of language, a "form in which landscape can come alive" (10). The notion of radical landscapes acknowledges that an idea of nature restricted to the rural, as well as to the unbuilt, untouched land, not only reinforces appropriate use of these spaces. It also virtually leaves nothing.²³ Aslant grounds – a gesture to Emily Dickinson's "telling it slant" – thus include not only "high resolution beauty" (Goodwin 148) but the "spraying" of "other coordinates" (Watts 111), the "Otter Dead in Water" (Simms 28), the "roots of madder & green alkanet / dried on my thighs, rolling / pearls of slug-slime & cuckoo spit" (Bletsoe 106). As already apparent in Larkin's brief excerpt above, a radical view on landscape is not shaped by distance but by shifting patterns in an infinite net of relations: It does not place the human observer outside the observed object but instead acknowledges the human body as part of the land, "through woods by crags every detail of me follicle bone-cell" (Goodwin 148). Challenging an object/subject dichotomy, the experience of material engagement with an expanded understanding of landscape translates into a spatiality and materiality of language on the page, as in Tarlo's own poem "Outcrops at Haverigg" from the sequence *Particles – Cumbrian Coast 2008*:

water or particle, some
colour stops it
into structure

yet still rushes - dry sea -
wind-run on
lying in reach

settling on letters, making texture
ridging paper
(Tarlo, *Ground Aslant* 144)

Coming out of a series of coastal walks, this poem carries the experience of motion onto the page. The registered landscape at Haveriggs is not one in pause but an animated one, conditioned by wind and sand, where sandscapes can be stopped by the force of colour alone, where the reader's eye has to move to follow the watery word-particles until the double "tt" settles to form letters. Instead of mapping a recreational stroll through a pre-constructed whole, the poem asks the

²³ With regard to the trajectory of landscape and ecologically-oriented poetry in Germany, which will be discussed later (2.3), Brigitte Wormbs notices that landscapes are pictures of an increasingly vanishing setting („lauter Bilder, von denen es inzwischen kaum noch Gegend gibt“ (Buch 53)).

reader to establish relations and trace coherences. Similarly, there is no straightforward unified perspective but a wavering attention to different things finding expressions and textures on the paper. Another part of Tarlo's sequence evokes the human entanglement with the landscape by weaving names of plants, shops, and train stations into the poem:

honeysuckle, daisy
twining through dogrose and bramble
comfrey heads flowering up

Bolton Chorley Preston

blazon

TESCOS

TOPPS TILES

MCDONALDS

HALFORDS

('Particles' 65-66)

This extract first presents close observations of local plants, spaced out as though sequentially spotted whilst looking around. In a post-pastoral vein, it is then interrupted by a flood of advertising signs the reader can link to an industrial area, towering in bold letters above the flowery pastoral remains. The poet's land is language, which they work to *make* a poetic landscape shaped by its connection to the physical land in turn. Creating an open-ended landscape on the page, the poem simultaneously moves the reader to the land. The poem is self-sufficient but not "all-sufficient" in that sense:²⁴ Language hovers between the land and the human, sitting sometimes more, sometimes less comfortably in what Tarlo refers to as the gap between "our language and our world" ('Radical Landscapes' para 5); a gap, however, that is continuously negotiated in its depth and width.

While Ian Davidson suggests that "language can only take you so far / sometimes you have to step out" (Tarlo, *Ground Aslant* 100), the process of stepping out seems to be already underway in the language on the page. In interaction with the gap, it is estranged, turned against itself, varying in its proximities to poet, reader, and physical land. The "root" of the radical (from Latin *radix* = root) landscape poem can be seen as being located in the land, knowingly so. Being given space to stretch into the poem, however, linguistic reflectiveness and innovative form leave fissures for the physical world to enter and expand through the reader's imagination. A radicalised view is therefore not one that claims to frame a portion of land into one definite, complete whole. Sometimes resembling a tentative brush stroke, it is more likely to present "the hint / of a touch / of colour / on a branch / the suggestion / of a breath" (T. A. Clark 44). Moving closer towards recognising the landscape as well as its viewer as embedded and entangled in an infinite ecological net, the poem does not close off its liminal encounter with the landscape but instead opens it to

²⁴ Mark Long explores this useful distinction in his illuminating study on William Carlos Williams' relation to eco-criticism and ecopoetics (69).

multiple meanings, readings, and perspectives.

Similarly oriented towards radical openness, my poem “View from the N59 road” came along. Using associative connections between “colour”, “postcard”, “red”, and “photogenic” as loose (L-GTB)ridges throughout, enjambling compounds free of punctuation open lines to more than one syntactic meaning, as in “postcard with rain / resistant sheep dabs”. Fleeting impressions of a rainbow knotted with the image of an (alphabetically slightly dishevelled) LGBT flag over the Connemara region in Ireland are intertwined with local ecological concerns. Resisting a pastoral mode, the poem does not present a pristine landscape but one crossed by streets, by an asphalt scratch; one that is polluted by plastic and endangered by gold mines. The enumeration “Fish, tree, soil” alludes to the hazard symbol on chemical paint used to mark sheep and seemingly forms the natural contrasting parallelism to “lanoline, isopropyl, benzine”, the latter two being ingredients of said paint. This draws attention to the fact that sheep, iconically Irish, such an integral component of the pastoral, are part of commercialised human production processes.

Acknowledging that the rural landscape has been shaped by humans for centuries, the poem negates a culture/nature division in which nature works as an untouched recreational playground for the cultivated human. Although commonly praised as Ireland’s “wild nature”, although experiencing it should be “non-minable” and economically unquantifiable, the region is turned into a profitable label: “Connemara Culture”, in the poem emphasised as one single line, evokes the slogan under which this landscape operates, is sold to tourists, printed in travel guides, beautified, made photogenic. From a radical landscape perspective, an awareness of the existing cultural aesthetic of this landscape is woven into reflections on the experience of it. Connemara pictures of sunny heather and fields of sheep are thus contrasted with a view from the street, the “asphalt scratch”. A sense of precariousness is encompassed by the heather that blooms in the rim between field and street, at an eco poetic edge. The “view on the N59” that made this poem possible in the first place is also part of the problem, part of what creates tension in an area so often perceived as wild, authentic, and truly natural. Prominent feature of nature writing, the lyrical I is pushed aside and no longer functions as an organising principle. Instead, the poem is driven by the potential of each word being imbued with meaning(s), with making connections across lines. The removal of I as a centre opens the field to a wider possibility of perspectives. To say it in Charles Olson’s words:

We now enter, actually, the large area of the whole poem, into the FIELD, if you like, where all the syllables and all the lines must be managed in their relations to each other. (Allen and Friedlander 243)

From an entangled position, this process of relation-making can be extended to the extra-textual: the internal dynamics of the poem mirror external landscapes that are equally dynamic, not static or in pause, but alive to the last isopropyl molecule that moves in them. Engagement with a pre-existing, tempting landscape aesthetic is compressed into a moment of experiencing it, noticing frictions pervading that encounter, shaping a landscape of contradictions.

1.2.1 Ecopoetics without Walking, Urban Landscapes, and a Radical Pastoral

Motion, on a perceptual, cognitive, imaginative, and physical level is a vital concept for eco-poetics. While my subversion of a photogenic view on a landscape arose from a moment of observation and attention, an eco-poetics of radical landscapes often involves direct physical engagement with them that shapes its forms when taken across the border onto the page. Tarlo's coastal walks discussed above are one of many examples that can be read in relation to Skinner's call to "put eco-poetics in your pocket, and lace up your walking shoes." (Editor's Statement 8) Walking has a particularly long tradition in poetry: Taking Thoreau's essay "Walking" as a preamble for modern walking poetry, it can be traced from the Romantics to the American objectivists William Carlos Williams, Frank O'Hara, Charles Olson, and Larry Eigner to more contemporary poetic walks of Robert Hass, Nancy Gaffield, or Carol Watts.²⁵ Walking offers an embodied way to experience landscapes, notice details from an ever-shifting microscopic perspective, let the body become one among many vibrant material bodies, let the rhythm of one's feet tact the walking poem: "let a moment explode as I climb / through woods by crags" (Goodwin 148) There can be something resistant in walking, too, an explicit political resistance (cf. 'Refugee Tales') or a resistant idleness as one is not necessarily walking towards a destination but for the sake, the process of walking itself, prepared to get lost, return, or walk back. In that sense, it is not an act of conquering land and dominating it, but being embedded in it, moving *through* and with the land. Mark Dickinson, also included in Tarlo's anthology, writes: "One of the ways in which poetry functions within this paradoxical environment is to return to the body and to simply walk out into the world." (M. Dickinson) However, it is quite often not as simple as that.

Critical voices have remarked on the ableist implication in collapsing walking with "compulsory able-bodiedness" (McRuer 89; Kafer, 'Compulsory Bodies' 138).²⁶ Moreover, walking for leisure requires time and being granted access to certain areas — evoking issues of class — and being able to walk there alone, safely — evoking issues of appearance and gender, among other things. While there are poets who make use of the notion of walking to specifically inquire into these power dynamics (Carol Watts, for instance), I have further reason to remain suspicious of an all too easily naturalised link between walking, in a strictly physical sense, and poetry. On a practical level, I often find that this type of walking runs the risk of turning into walking for the purpose of writing. This simply works less well as a practice for me; although I commonly stumble across words whilst walking, the consciousness of setting out to do so often feels coun-

²⁵ For a history of walking, see for instance Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*.

²⁶ Alison Kafer discusses how close-hand experiences and immersion in nature promoted by ecocritical movements in order to "understand it and one's relationship to it" ('Hiking Boots and Wheelchairs' 137) implies an unspoken presumption of able-bodiedness. George Hart analyses how the poet Larry Eigner integrates walking as a dialectic of disability and poetics into his eco-poetics. Hart's call for further explorations of an eco-poetics informed by disability studies can only be amplified here (165).

terproductive. It distracts me from attending to the surroundings and my entanglement with them. On an even more practical level, to literally write, manually, while walking seems virtually impossible, which means that a so-called “walking poem” more often records the echo of walking or assembles notes one has scribbled down during a break from walking, in which the attention is then more likely focused on the paper than on anything else. To an extent, a walking poem can be seen as assuming the metaphorisation of itself, which equates — a mere idea of — walking with a pre-conceived poetic pattern. In this sense, I find it difficult to link to a radical poetics shaped by unexpected interactions between body and land that can translate into an inventive, innovative language.

There is a related, more pressing concern: It is the notion of walking *out* into the world that seems to be at discord with eco-poetics. As ecocritics such as Timothy Morton have argued, to think ecologically, one must challenge a dichotomy between outside and inside (*Ecological Thought* 2, 4, 39). Such a distinction too often reinforces an idea of nature that continues to be exploited “over yonder” but not *here*, where “we” are, which is, from a decentred position in a net of infinite entanglement, of course also elsewhere.²⁷ It establishes distance to a landscape that yet again resembles a traditional still life emptied of humans. As a coordinate for an eco-poetics, a radical landscape mode needs to address this disconnection and move towards an ecological flux between inside and outside. Putting nature to one and culture to the other side, setting “out” to write has a slightly anachronistic, Thoreauvian touch to it. In order to uproot it, this ominous “world outside” needs to be reconfigured as a natural “wildness” that is “everywhere”, starting with ourselves and including:

ineradicable populations of fungi, moss, mold, yeasts, and such that surround and inhabit us. Deer mice on the back porch, deer bounding across the freeway, pigeons in the park, spiders in the corners. (Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* 15)

Taking into account the discriminatory tendencies as well as an apparently deepened gulf between the human on the one and nature on the other hand, I want to think less about walking and more about motion in general. Irrespective of any conceptual boundaries, the earth is constantly in motion; the universe is in motion; languages are in motion; bodies move with every heartbeat, every breath. Motion is inherently ecological; “[M]otion”, as Pierre Joris writes with reference to Gibson’s *The Ecological Approach to Vision Perception*, “is the natural mode of human and animal vision: ‘We must perceive in order to move but we must also move in order to perceive.’” (223) Eco-poetics began, after all “with the editor’s *restlessness*” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 5, my emphasis), a restlessness that can be read as a need to move and a need for movement in more than one sense. Encounters at eco-poetic edges require mutual movement; movement means change; movement generates friction; to speak sets the air into motion; to move in an interconnected net inevitably means to move something else. It can likewise mean to be moved, to be

²⁷ This is further explored through John Kinsella’s *Polysituatedness* in section 3.4.

put in motion or to experience emotion,²⁸ which often happens along a dissolving line between inside and outside.

Beyond the sensual plane, an *e*-prefix then again sets into motion an altogether different set of electronic connections, technical innovation, digital movements, the buzzing, hyperconnected, never-resting cyberspace, which brings into play a whole other vibrant sphere that interacts with other spheres in multiple ways. Motion is simply an omnipresent property of this world-ecology, as action, as reaction, as intervention, as interference. To be in motion means to not be fixed, clearly defined, always implying something precarious, at the edge between things, liminal. There are countless orientations for motion beyond physical movement of the human body, which it can of course still include, whether facilitated by legs, wheelchairs, cars, or trains. Moving on but not out in this sense, the latter turned out to be the vehicle for my poem “Leverkusen Chempark”.

This piece takes formal openness one step further than “View from the N59 road” and spaces out every splintered component. Making blank spaces an integral part of its arrangement, linear cohesiveness is exchanged for a visual cloud that prompts various reading directions and multiple connections across the poem. Within a traditional left top corner to bottom right corner reading direction, cross-relations and echoes can be found: “low” is mirrored in “blow” and creates a “low wind”; “clouds craned Schrebergärten” forms a small square of its own; “mind war” alludes to “mind the gap”. Together with “exit right”, the poem’s setting is implied, while the title and the inclusion of the time mark it as a site-specific piece. Yet the site is not standing still, and it is only viewed in pieces, indicative of occasional glimpses caught while travelling at high speed. The poem is a sparse suggestion of a complex landscape, offering a multifocal sketch free of syntax and punctuation. In the absence of a poetic I, it mingles interior (“exit right”) and exterior (“wind, Bayer towers”), sometimes merging them into new relations that blur this line: “gärten right” extends the latter to a view on the gardens (meaning „Gärten“ in German) on the right side outside, while the colour “blue” can similarly refer to an inner sentiment as well as to the perceived colour of the sky. The fragment “+0100” further opens a temporally fixed moment to a wider context: the landscape is not independent but belongs to a wider earthscape, humanly measured into different time zones, historically bruised by wars, cultivated by humans.

Leverkusen Chempark, formerly known as Bayerwerk, is an industrial site, a chemical plant, which could not be more different from 19th century Romantic ideas of natural landscape. In the heart of one of the busiest industrial areas in Germany, the name of the city “Leverkusen” is almost synonymous with either its football team or the pharmaceutical sector. Featuring a massive “Bayer” sign dominating the skyline, the city is home to “one of the largest chemical parks in Europe” that boasts, in their own words, “an impressive vertical and horizontal range of production.” (Berger) The economic rhetoric exemplifies how language is complicit in biocide, advertising “direct links with the petrochemical industry” (Berger), showing off the road density in Germany as “twice that of the EU average” (CHEManager), and framing pesticides equally

²⁸ I would like to thank Sonja Frenzel for inspiring me to make the connection between motion and emotion.

toxic as DDT as “crop protection agents” (Berger).²⁹ Amidst the yellow chemical smog also produced here, mixing with clouds, humans are designing their own little gardens, in German called Schrebergärten (allotments). The eponymous train station Leverkusen Chempark referenced in the title of my poem is an intermediary stop between the two biggest cities in North Rhine-Westphalia, which many commuters normally only ever pass by on the train, either without a second thought or perhaps with uttered displeasure at the sight of the concrete towers.

The poem challenges the station’s status as background scenery, and, by giving direct attention to the industrial elements, provides a counterpoint to an easy collapse of landscape with natural beauty and pastoral wilderness. Moving towards a wider eco-poetical notion of nature that includes the entire physical material realm also means reconsidering the notion of “unnatural” along distinctions of ugly and beautiful: This does not mean that it is necessary to find an industrial park beautiful; it means reflecting on what counts as beautiful and what is excluded from this judgement. It further means that a persisting idea of beautiful natural landscape *out there* is replaced by one that encompasses what is actually here, around us, in us, with us, entangling us, including us, made by us, humans. Uncoupling landscape from a dualistic framework which has cultural human technology at one and untouched wilderness at the other end offers space for nuanced criticism, which facilitates inquiries into the ways humans have concreted this earth. It thus also facilitates broader discussions related to social and economic structures, systemic exploitation, and working conditions, to name but a few. These issues are inseparable from an environmental discourse and urgently need to be addressed.

Questioning persisting aesthetic frameworks within which landscapes are encountered and understood, the notion of radical landscapes thus provides a lens to critically investigate and reinvent representations of them. Including an ongoing negotiation of what counts as “natural” into eco-poetics contests stable notions relying on essentialist approaches to “nature” or “wilderness”. As a result, many of my poems gathered in this chapter in particular (e.g. “View from the N59 road”, “Reiher im Sonnenbad”, “The view on (a) plastic can the Irish Sea”) seek to clash expectations of an aesthetically beautiful view with a plastic-wrapped reality: Landscapes are full of paradoxes, and a line between the warmth inside and the extending breath that moves outwards to mingle with “dinitrogen monoxide, CFCs, soot” (cf. “It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”) is often not easy to draw. After centuries of mediations of landscapes, from Chinese paintings to Instagram, subjectively varying responses to landscapes are often tainted by a particular idea of what counts as beautiful, or indeed, what contact with a landscape is supposed to feel like (cf. Soper 224).

For me, this was especially true for my experiences in Ireland, even more so in Dublin. Since the financial crisis in 2008, it has been hollowed out by external investors and economic boosts that are of little advantage to the society at large. The city centre seems to be disappearing under the weight of commercialised Irish narratives, hen do parties, and American Doughnut shops,

²⁹ See the ongoing legal dispute concerning the potentially carcinogenic herbicide glyphosate, manufactured by Bayer-Monsanto and sold under the trade name Roundup (Watts).

while living and rental costs are exploding. Bucket lists tell the mass of tourists which attractions not to miss – including the iconic, “truly Irish” quarter Temple Bar, where the only “Irish” often are, as I found out, the ones working behind the bar. City guides are unlikely to mention, however, that more than 700 000 people are living below the poverty line, that the number of homeless people has doubled since the housing crisis, and that one quarter of all homeless women became homeless because of domestic violence (Women’s Aid). Meanwhile, the expanding industrial sector causes an increasing loss of biodiversity, pollution of 50% of the freshwater, and a level of air pollution in Dublin that runs the risk of breaching EU limits (Environmental Protection Agency, ‘Water Quality’; ‘Air Quality’).

Persisting ideas of pristine landscapes and “back to nature” calls promoting first-hand experiences with them seem rarely motivated by non-anthropocentric concerns. Simultaneously, the constant temptation to “look for something beautiful” often implies an ignorance of the actual circumstances and environmental endangerment that landscapes are facing today. Under the conditions of global warming, a commodified nostalgic pastoral desire linked to a contemporary need for instagramability has turned Thoreau’s famous “Golden Pond”, epitome of solitary being-one with nature, into a demolished ecosystem polluted by urine (Stager et al. 1-2). As Soper fittingly points out:

The societies that have most abused nature have also perennially applauded its ways over those of “artifice”, have long valued its health and integrity over the decadence of human contrivance, and today employ pastoral imagery as the most successful of conventions to enhance the profits on everything from margarine to motor-cars.
(150)

With this in mind, a radical landscape orientation in eco-poetics can particularly challenge and reflect on modes of communication within which landscapes exist and are mediated in everyday life. Indeed, the contemporary poet and critic John Kinsella suggests it is nothing more or less than language’s “representational power” that is at stake here: in order to change an exploitative pastoral narrative, the fetishised version of a persisting idyllic idea of nature, so Kinsella, one has to change the “linguistic coordinates” (*Disclosed Poetics* 11). Deep, radical reinvention, poetic re-situating is needed – a “radical pastoral” that notices the historical roots of the pastoral as an instrument concealing the gap between those that farmed the food and those who were fed (120). Kinsella’s notion is particularly influenced by a critique of an Australian pastoral that veils the violent colonial history and contemporary ecological damage inflicted by the agricultural industry. His vision, however, is a global one that understands the pastoral as a perpetual “control mechanism that tames the natural” (121) and reproduces a division between urban and rural spaces. From a removed position of power and oppression, it serves to aestheticise places of labour, which are heterogeneous themselves.

Kinsella’s envisioned radical pastoral displays similarities to a radical landscape mode with an added awareness of socio-economic disparities. It further underlines an environmental agenda

that speaks to an eco-poetic interest. Stemming directly from experiences within the rural, a radical pastoral poem defies a view from distance, so Kinsella (11), thus further cautioning against tendencies to demarcate a natural world “out there”. It confronts, subverts, and ironises pastoral tropes and defies closure, since poems are always understood as part of something larger, intertextually as well as extra-textually. Language turns into a landscape on the page, but one that is in motion, in interaction, embodied and embedded, fluid, and unstable. It discloses a mode that Kinsella dubs “linguistic disobedience” (50, 127), which resists expectations of language pertaining to straightforward communication. Therefore thwarting (mis)uses of language for result-oriented purposes feeding exploitative systems, a radical pastoral seeks to demolish linguistic and thematic power structures. It challenges norms and conventions of pastoral telling and likewise its own production (10-11). The radical pastoral “doesn’t tell us what to do or think” (“Can There Be a Radical “Western” Pastoral...?” 127) but deflects the critical stance and attention it demands of the reader to processes in life, thus stretching to an eco-poetic vision of a changed attitude towards the Mitwelt.

Both radical pastoral and radical landscape provide lenses to question historicised, pre-determined aesthetic frameworks that inscribe our encounters with physical-material spaces to the extent they can be instrumentalised for ecologically damaging purposes. Reinforcing overlaps and interconnections between the two modes, one of the poet Kinsella draws on to exemplify the radical pastoral is the contemporary British poet Peter Larkin who is also included in Tarlo’s *Ground Aslant*. By way of concluding this radical landscape/radical pastoral coordinate, the remainder of this section is dedicated to his innovative, counter-anthropocentric poetics.³⁰

Theoretically informed by ecocriticism, postmodern theology, Romantic ecology, European phenomenology, American Language Poetry, and British botany, Larkin has published a substantial number of poetry collections. His intricate writing with specific woods, plantations, trees, and forests of the English Midlands generates landscape as a constant process, in which broader socio-political and economic issues are mediated by a projective opening of the field. Doing so, his “earth-sensitive” (M. Dickinson) poetics is largely resistant to being summed up or probed for communicative content. The beginning of his sequence “Sparse Reach Stretches The Field” (2011) reads as follows:

How to stretch the falling short of a tree? as fetches its
layering of unleashed decompression? true for the report
of its sheath-fire onto occupied ravage? to accelerate the
scarcity only as it beckons across (Sparse Reach 61)

Defying the attempt to use language as an appropriative tool to capture landscape, Larkin’s work has been outlined as more “loco-speculative” (Hardy and Larkin) than definitely descriptive. It is thus infinitely in motion. Each word becomes the site of readerly attention, desiring to stretch

³⁰ An extensive discussion of Larkin’s relation to eco-poetics has been published in the *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, see List of Publications in the Annex.

across the blank spaces towards that which cannot be fetched. The greater ecological implications of a single falling tree, echoing the Biblical fall, becomes part of the poetics: it stretches beyond the single question to be unleashed in a paratactic relational field powered by acceleration foreboding “post-extinction and quasi stationarity spectral absciss piercing (pins) any stance of threshold along a flat of branches rising into field” (Sparse Reach 64). Larkin’s fusion of registers, his neologisms, unusual compounds, alternative suggestions, and defiance of morphological categories disrupt habitual ways of reading and expectations of language. While sentences often seem to sound like they follow grammatical structures, it is perfectly possible to understand a phrase grammatically without grasping any of its meaning (cf. Baird).

What can be retrieved from Larkin’s poetic “thicket” (Milbank) is an engagement with and attention to tree-lives, their existence within a landscape of woods, fields, cities, their anatomy from the inflection point of branches “until a root is lens by surround” to the tips of praying firs (Sparse Reach 39). As “urban tendrils” (63) sprout across cities, forests, fields, and “urban woods”, they refute a prior production of landscape in any pastoral sense. Occasional free verses alternate with numbered blocks of prose that read more like investigative essayistic clusters, clearly defined as poetry by virtue of their inclusion in a collection with a respective cover only. The reader is moved through the intricate fragile root-network of a tree:

grow down the tree
 into long right root:
 at the end of any
 root it uncramps
 its vertical haul (39)

While the compression of the short-lined free-verse stanza reinforces the imperative’s prompt to become tree-root, the tree itself stops such a human identification as “it” gets in the way. Written into the absence of an appropriative pastoral is a poetics that subsumes all presumed familiarity with language into its speculative arboreality. Circling around notions of gift, horizon, and scarcity, Larkin fuses linguistic innovation as a way of attention to decentering techniques with a poetic procedure that funnels collected material from various sources into a radical pastoral: In Kinsella’s terms, an “active undoing of the tradition” instead of didactic imposition; “a challenge to language’s representational power”, a textual resistance to be but attention to life as ecological entanglements.

If one encounters a rarely used pronoun, it often evades attention as it gets dissolved in a net of new “linguistic coordinates” (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 11) that gain their shifting value only in relation to one another: As “we stand on the threshold of a post-scarcity remit as the city / expands faster than its own needlessness of site” (Sparse Reach 61), there is a sense of foreboding urgency referring back to ecological, spiritual, and economic ramifications of the introductory question of this sequence: “How to stretch the falling short of a tree?” (61) The writing seems to be organised by an opacity of language itself that like the tree can be seen as falling short in

some ways.³¹ Each word contains multiple buried meanings, each line stretches to resolve its inexplicability in the next one but never fully does, keeping the reader alert to its tentative touch on landscape only; every space, every “root wing” in relation to the cyclical potentiality of the tree as “every cast bud / taking its spare / tree-chance” (73). An awareness of the limitations as well as the potentiality of language, for better and for worse, is encompassed in its multilayeredness that opens the poetic thicket into various directions.

As a radical pastoral counterpoint against the ways language is complicit in commodified representations of nature, Larkin’s work resists an indulging consumption and emulation of a pastoral. His poetry requires re-reading, slow-reading, un-reading, and additional reading. The writing meditates on the difficulty of looking and representing land-, city-, forest-, leave-scapes, turning the reader into an active co-producer of the poem and thus of ideologically charged concepts of landscape. If, as Soper argues, aesthetic experience of landscapes and their cultural representations are mutually determining (225), then transforming cultural modes of representation can equally interfere with the politics surrounding both. In this perspective, the radical pastoral is able to disrupt perpetual pastoral fantasies that purposefully remove human’s responsibility for the immediate material endangered nature that is everywhere. It can highlight instrumentalised uses of “natural landscapes” that continue to inform exploitative distinctions and hierarchical interactions, ideally turning into a “machine for change” (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 122). This brings into view an emphasis on poetry’s action potential off the page, which will be further discussed in the section that follows.

As ecopoetic co-ordinates, radical landscapes and a radical pastoral offer insights into tangible encounters with landscapes. Acknowledging that pre-conceived notions and instrumentalised uses layer our perceptions of them, they provide reflective modes to investigate, work through and transform them through formal and linguistic innovation. Nature, cybernetically fused with the urban, is not viewed from distance but poetically opened to examine assumptions of beautiful landscapes and complicate a human/nature split. Rather than voicing nature or integrating its parts into one harmonious totality, they can be seen as attempts to respond to a more encompassing “wildness” and to translate landscapes into a poetics that is animate and “wild” insofar as it refuses closure and insists on motion. Open forms produce landscapes anew and subvert baggage of nature tropes that reproduce an idyllic pastoral.

Whether intimate or at distance, relations are formed at the edge of language, the land, and the body. A reflectiveness regarding the use and limitations of language becomes part of an experimental ecopoetics with landscapes that continuously pulls away from notions reproducing nature compartmentalised “out there”. It offers physical spaces that draw attention to the materiality and flexibility of language on the page, simultaneously conjuring up a relation to

³¹ Kate Rigby has explored the reflective falling-short capacity of poetry as a “negative ecopoetics”: “Only by insisting on the limits of the text, its inevitable falling-short as a mode of response no less than as an attempted mediation, can we affirm that there is, in the end, no substitute for our own embodied involvement with the more-than-human natural world in those places where we ourselves stray, tarry, and, if we are lucky, dwell.” (Rigby, ‘Earth, World, Text’ 440; also see Rigby, ‘Material Spirit as Negative Ecopoetics’)

physical spaces through “radical imaginings” (Tarlo, ‘Radical Landscapes’). Connections to the land emerge in shifting relation-making, incorporating static subject/object hierarchies into landscapes that articulate moving images of imagination and thinking, writing and living. Investigating and reinventing the representational power of language becomes part of a radical poetics that elicits critical attention to its complicity in ecocide and systemic inequalities. There is room to consider the possible transformation of this attention into action, effected by a “machine for change” (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 122) that is at once poetical and ethical.

**The view on a plastic can
the Irish Sea**

*Natural playgrounds of Dublin Bay, beautiful
scenery surprising by nature*

seagulls steal left-over fish and chips
there comes the tide, here the geological superpower:

“I didn’t really like the salmon, tasted too much like fish.”
Cans from bursting bin bounce off the peeling ground

green animal for recycling aer
waves widget & combed water wants

slowly white feathers unfold, brown liquid softly spills over
Converse shoes in the by-passing sunlight

Schienerersatzverkehr

zähl plastiktüten
verbleibende sterne
unter rot-grünen lichtschraken
und dieselverpackten wolken

nacht,
an den gelenken
ausgehakt

ein letztes wahlplakat
verwelletes schlaflager

„wir können nicht“
„es tut uns leid“
„kein kleingeld dabei“

diese fahrt
hat lange genug
gedauert
zähl unerwartete verspätungen
zwischen München und Kiel
und endgelagertes
schlechtes gewissen

bauzäune
schneiden die welt
in Rittersportquadrate -
hier muss jetzt

was neues entstehen

Rail replacement service / count plastic bags / remaining stars / under red-green light barriers / and dieselwrapped clouds / night, unhooked / at joints / last election poster / curled-up sleeping place / “we can’t” / “we’re sorry” / “we don’t have any change” / this journey has taken too long / count unexpected delays / between Munich and Kiel / and permanently disposed bad conscience / construction rails cut the world / into Ritter chocolate squares / something new has to / emerge here now

„Sage nicht mein. Es ist dir alles geliehen.“ (Mascha Kaléko)

Du hast

den flüssigen Kern nicht selbst
in Planetenform gegossen

den Himmel nicht aufgespannt
nicht den Mond zum Kreisen gebracht

Du hast diese Steine nicht gebaut
und nicht diese Bäume gepflanzt
die Vögel wurden nicht
aus deinen Händen geboren

Die Luft war vor dir da
und der Regen, das Moos
das Meer
 atmet weiter
 ohne dich

Du hast keinen Anspruch

Auf das was dir nie zustand

Ein Wort
breitet sich in dir aus
zu teilen
nicht zu besitzen

Der Fluss fließt ohne dich
über und durch
Grenzen die du auf kurz
lebige Karten gekratzt hast

Die Erde
noch sind wir da um zu spüren
wie sie sich dreht, unermüdlich,
gleichschnell unter Raube und Staatschef:in
ungerührt, zärtlich

unter ALLEM

was lebt

Don't say "my." Everything is borrowed. (Mascha Kaléko) You didn't / cast the molten core / into a planetary form yourself / You didn't put up the sky / pushed the moon into circles / You didn't build these stones and you didn't plant these trees / Birds weren't born from your hands / The air has been here before you / and the rain, moss, and sea / will continue to breathe / without you. / You have no right / to something that was never yours / A word / spreads within you / to share / not to possess / The river flows without you / beyond and across / borders you scratched into short / living maps / The earth / we're still here to feel / how they turn, relentlessly / with equal speed under caterpillar and president / impassively, gently, ben/ea(r)th everything / that is / alive

1.3 Ecopoet(h)ics On and Off the Page

“An ethics occurs / at the edge of what we know”, writes Brenda Hillman (4), calling to mind the element of uncertainty that pervades ecopoetical boundary work. Unsettling interactions with “unusually warm global warming day[s]” (5) continuously place ecopoetics in resistance to unambiguity and uncritical environmental engagements. Pressured at the edges it seeks, the overarching ecopoetic subject matter, including a desideratum for ecological justice, is of such manifoldness and such utopian vastness that an ecopoetic stretching towards one of its myriad of tendrils is necessarily informed by indeterminacy. Hence, Hillman’s subsequent call to “Go to the World” (6), is immediately followed by the unmarked question “Where is it” (6). Not only human knowledge of and about the world is limited, also the knowledge related to human actions is incomplete and particularly pushed to the edge by unprecedented events such as anthropogenic climate change.

From its inception, the ecocriticism movement has been haunted by the need to directly intervene in the ecological crisis and take more explicit actions, up to a point where it is expected to single-handedly “save the earth” (cf. Felstiner). In ecopoetics, this spectre has come to inform reflective techniques acknowledging an inevitable limitedness — both in terms of perceptive limits partly enclosed by human language and limits of its action scope. Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly, and Jonathan Skinner jointly state that “an ecopoetics on the page is never enough” (Hume 753). In this coordinate, I will explore how ecopoetics can move off the page, tangibly as well as intangibly. Since socio-political entanglements are ultimately far too complex for any absolute predictions, Joan Retallack’s poethical framework refutes a clear separation between art and activism.³² Weaving them into ecopoet(h)ic forms thus makes space for proceeding Hillman’s question “Where is it” (6) with a hopeful “Go there” (6), even though “there” rests on nothing but an uncertain “poethical wager” (*Poethical Wager* 13).

One practical way to consider ecopoetics off the page pertains to its multidisciplinary: “As an array of practices converging on the oikos” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’), its emphasis on poiesis invites a variety of makings, including those that do not have a defined form.³³ In the previous section, the framework of radical landscapes has been discussed with regard to page poems only, but it can be easily expanded and taken off the page, as affirmed by a radical landscapes exhibition in 2019 (Nelson). The concept inspired paintings, pictures, sound art, photography, and three-dimensional art installations that merged words with natural material or integrated the

³² Following a “double turn” (Eskin, ‘The Double “Turn” to Ethics and Literature’) of literature to ethics and moral philosophy to literature, the relation between poetics and ethics has been investigated in varying contexts (also see Eskin, *Ethics and Dialogue*). Joan Retallack coined the term “poethics” in the late 1980s (*Poethical Wager* 11). Outside of literature and poetry, it has been applied as a multifunctional term in art, law, science, and politics; see for instance Bruns, Ward, and Weisberg.

³³ Ecopoetics off the page can also be extended to more-than-human forms of making, as will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4 and section 3.2.

latter as a constraint into their work.³⁴

Another explicit way to take ecopoetics off the page is offered by poetry readings, spoken word, and performance poetry, which is a whole subject area in itself. Without aiming to discuss it in detail, John Kinsella, already mentioned in the previous section, and Sarah Clancy, a contemporary Irish poet, can be listed as two examples for poets that perform their work directly at environmental protests. Clancy's line "and yet we must live in these times" became a popular slogan during water protests in Galway in 2015 (Hunter, 'And Yet'), when people were marching against new charges on water usage. Poetry can be seen as a direct form of social action in this instance: As a response to political circumstances, it expressed, empowered, and opened spaces for the voices of a wider community. Kinsella, based in Australia, has extensively written about his involvement at various protests and drafted an encompassing pacifist, non-violent "activist poetics" that includes banners, letters, and personal consumption choices, in addition to poetry which for him always is "an act of resistance to the State, the myriad hierarchies of control, and the human urge to conquer our natural surroundings" (Kinsella, *Activist Poetics* 16). The line between poetry on the page and direct protest off the page is blurred already, giving rise to a more complicated symbiosis between the two. On this note, I want to reflect on two of my poems that were specifically generated and arguably informed by their instrumentalised purpose as literary activism.

The two German poems "Schienenersatzverkehr" and "Sage nicht mein" were both written in dialogue with a four-day youth climate conference in rural Germany (Oberhessen) in autumn 2019. In addition to performing them during the conference, I organised creative writing workshops and offered impulses on poetry and the role of language in human/nature and human/animal relationships. On the one hand, the poems can be seen as extensions of an educational agenda and therefore consciously aim for a somewhat more didactic message than other poems – thus the concluding call in "Schienenersatzverkehr". On the other hand, this didactic mission cannot be separated from their aesthetic forms; it *informs* them, and vice versa. In a sense, the "message" is the protest that seeks to galvanise the audience and inform further action.

The title indicating the setting, "Schienenersatzverkehr" uses an open free-verse form that links an actual train ride with an allegorical journey. Aiming to avoid an explicitly didactic tone, the poem combines imperatives for the reader with inner thoughts of the lyrical I that is pushed to the background. As a result, the invitation to "count remaining stars" or the observation that "this journey has taken too long already" can be read as part of an inner monologue as well as an implicit gesture to the current climate emergency. The contemplations, directed inwards and

³⁴ Related ways to work with the land would also include traditional gardening, environmental, land, and earth art which emphasise a variety of human relations to nature. In practices like these, the natural world is often invoked as a collaborator or co-producer of the work. Popular examples include Ian Finley's poetic garden *Little Sparta* or Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. To what extent these practices rest on anthropocentric anthropomorphism that continues, rather than disrupts, an unequal human/nature relation depends heavily on the individual artwork. As Elizabeth-Jane Burnett points out, there is still much work to do in the area of human/non-human collaboration (*The Gift, the Wager, and Poethics* 35), and a thorough exploration would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

outwards, alternate with direct snippets of everyday excuses and landscape observations, speeding up the poem in correlation with the train ride. While it moves in pieces not unlike “chocolate squares” mentioned in the final stanza, the poem contrasts romanticised ideas of nature with an industrial reality. Hence, the pastoral trope of a starry sky is partly covered by artificial lights and exhaust fumes.

Drawing attention to pollution, nuclear waste, and the inescapable anthropogenic influence on the earth, neologistic expressions such as „dieserverpackte wolken“ or „endgelagertes schlechtes gewissen“ further seek to soften a sharp boundary between the human and the perceived non-human realm. In orientation to a radical pastoral (cf. 1.2.1), they simultaneously intimate the interconnections between different environmental problems, bending to a wider understanding of environment as layered by the socio-political realm. The poem responds to a growth-oriented economy in Germany which results in a continuously growing gap between the rich and the poor and a concomitantly increasing number of homeless people. A constant desire for consumption is artificially produced by the advertising industry which manipulates people’s choices, needs, and perception of the world. Under this influence, the poem shows “the world” turning into a series of “Rittersportquadrate”. One problem is never arrested but investigated from an entangled, ecological view that exposes the impact it has on the entire ecosphere. Diesel fuel not only affects the human; it causes long-lasting, partially unknown environmental damage. The emerging fine particles and ozone invade human lungs, soil, plants, water, and have consequences that are not even properly researched yet. At “the edge of what we know” (Hillman 4), indeterminacy prevails. The poem’s explicit cultural references — Diesel fuel and its emissions scandals, Rittersport chocolate, the German train system and its notorious delays — locate it in a particular German landscape where it is directed at a particular audience.

The second poem extends its cultural embeddedness to the German literary tradition by invoking an intertextual reference to the poet Mascha Kaléko (1907-1975) in the title (borrowed from Kaléko’s poem „Rezept“ (“Recipe”)). It also uses a free, open form but presents its lines as a sequence of prosaic meditations that rely on repetitions and anaphora to create a liturgical tone. In line with the Christian context of the conference, the poem sets up a loose narrative framework that consciously draws on pastoral imagery of the creation story. However, its hortatory tale about stones, trees, and birds subverts the idea of the human as pinnacle of creation and instead emphasises the independence and vibrancy of natural elements. Contrasting an anthropocentric view with a planetary concept of deep time, the directly addressed listener is programmatically reminded of their own mortality. The earth, so the poem, is not to be possessed or divided into properties; the earth has been given to all beings, including non-human ones. The climate emergency will not cause the end of the earth but potentially the end of the human species: An apocalyptic note, conveyed by the pessimistic warning „noch“ in the final stanza reinforces this notion: The earth will continue to turn, only we humans will no longer be there to experience it.

While the poem relies on anthropomorphisms throughout, it does so not in order to use the natural world as a human projection zone but in order to emphasise the vibrancy of the natural

world. Notably, the activity of breathing, of crucial importance in Biblical terms since it marks the human as a person made in the image of God, is given to the sea in the prophesied absence of the human. The poem itself is also bounded by spaces of breath, especially when read aloud. In the final stanza, „ungerührt“ acts as a reflection on the use of an anthropomorphised earth, which simultaneously emphasises the subsequent „zärtlich“ as a hopeful vision for a less violently inscribed human/nature bond. Within the holistic vision enacted by the poem, the “word” itself, standing in for language, is not only participating in the biosphere but further imagined in its transformative function: it does not separate the human from the world but is unfolding from “within you”, propagating sharing instead of possessing; sharing as *co*-mmunion, as *co*-mmunication.

Developed specifically for the conference and amended in interaction with an audience, I refrained from providing English stand-alone translations for the poems. Given a predominantly anglophone ecocritical conversation, they can be read as situated German ecopoetic records, the footnotes providing glosses for understanding. I included them here as tangible expressions of a concrete ecopoetics practice off the page that still shaped versions on the page in particular ways. The poems can be regarded as literary activism intended to inspire other people to question some of the topics addressed and engage in environmentally-conscious forms of living.

Combining considerations related to tangible off-the-page practices with the restlessness of an ecopoetics on the page gives rise to a poetic notion that acknowledges an inherent stretching as part of its structure. Poetry as literary activism entails the potential for more direct intervention in its form. That is, an outward motion as political gesture is not a separate, external layer of ecopoetics but can be seen as part of its various textures, in various ways. Whether or not this gesture succeeds is an open question that in turn prises open the ecopoetic form. How would one measure this success anyway, against which other actions could it be compared? Is there any way of knowing whether any work has a long-lasting positive outcome? Life is indefinitely complex and strange, chaotically interconnected, vulnerably entangled, impossible to quantify, and far beyond human understanding. In the absence of any absolute certainty, what remains is unknowability into which ecopoetics swerves as a slanted chance, a poethical wager. Joan Retallack phrases it as follows:

If you're to embrace complex life on earth, if you can no longer pretend that all things are fundamentally simple, a poetics thickened by an *h* launches an exploration of art's significance as, not just about, a form of living in the real world. (*Poethical Wager* 26)

It is in the confrontation with, in the interaction with an infinitely extensive net of relations, in the change of linguistic coordinates (cf. Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 11) that poetry and activism begin a dialogue. Bringing together poetics, poiesis, politics, aesthetics, and ethics, Retallack's poethics is suspicious of genre separations, particularly of an aesthetic framework that promotes art for art's sake and regards it as a “luxury” separate from the political realm (*Poethical Wager* 44). Poethics is not an attempt at a normative value ethics but acknowledges the dynamic potential

of art to engender attentiveness to the political and ethical dimension of language. Its focus is on the possibilities to create an ethos (“model how we want to live” (44)), by inquiring into and reflecting on experiences in everyday life, their framing and their implications: “This is a question of poethics — what we make of events as we use language in the present, how we continuously create an ethos of the way in which events are understood.” (9)

Instead of an artificially produced, closed-off form, language is fundamentally regarded as an embedded act and active dynamic practice that “crisscrosses” (39) through disciplinary boundaries and enacts the “complex realism” (13) of a rapidly changing chaotic world.³⁵ Forever permeated by uncertainty, poetry becomes an “experiment” that connects, activates attention to, and generates courageous interaction with that world: “We can’t really know where we are going and that is precisely why we must experientially, experimentally make (poesis) our way by means of considered poethical wagers.” (‘Hard Days’ 234)

Cast in form of these wagers, art is not closed off from the everyday but finds itself in a “fractal relation” (*Poethical Wager* 15) to it. Words relate to the world in their attempts to build forms made of connections to each other in continuously transforming ways, siting an aesthetic of interaction. Instead of being in a mimetic relation, language can be seen as exposing different parts of an infinitely manifold structure of living that is non-linear and constantly shifting, encompassing an ecological continuum. The fractality emphasises a fragile fleetingness of both life and language as always in motion, forming new patterns of perception, bringing into view new insights and new limits of perception. Behaving differently in different situations, language generates words with infinite meanings, with infinite combination possibilities; words that bring forth other words, inherently unstable and never able to fully capture the complexity of life. In this sense, a work of words presents once more as “self-sufficient” but not “all-sufficient” (Long 69), always leaving room for more. Avoiding closure, it poses a “question of the relation between the structures of our language, our art, and our forms of life” (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 223) that is ecological and poethical. In the pragmatic view that words are speech-acts lies the potential, or rather, the chance for poesis not only to discover but to “compose the times in which we live” (‘Hard Days Nights in the Anthropocene’ 236, qua Gertrude Stein’s “Composition as Explanation”). This action-potential offers poethical experiments as wagers on an ecological understanding of the environment, on an embodied “poetics of responsibility with the courage of the swerve” (3) that seeks optimistic modes of coexistence.

I want to linger on poethics for a little longer here and specifically explore its relation to ecopoetics. Expressing a joint focus on ecological interrelations, imaginative agency, and exper-

³⁵ With regard to the early clash between poststructuralism and ecocriticism, Retallack’s work can be seen as seeking to combine the two. She links poststructural experimentalism with material embedment of words, material reflection on the making of the universe and interactions with its matter, forms, and processes.

imental language practices, it is no surprise that they have been enmeshed in an “ecopoethics”.³⁶ Since poethics is inherently charged with the question of social action, trying to negotiate matters of hope while “the whole world seems to be going to hell all around us” (44), I want to specifically orient it to ecopoetic connection-making with the oikos. In this vein, ecopoethics takes into account radical unknowability not as an impossible barrier but as a condition for increased ethical attention to the Mitwelt that composes artistic expressions wagering on the possibility of environmental awareness. Elizabeth-Jane Burnett puts it as follows: “Ethical decision-making in this context links poetic and ecological discourse through a shared concern for establishing human relationships to the natural world that remain vigilant, urgent, and subject to, even welcoming, change arising through contact with indeterminacy.” (“The Incognito Body as Ecopoethics”)

Driven by the need to keep in touch, stay connected through unknowingness, keep in (e)-motion in an infinitely entangled net, ecopoethics move us right into the middle of the incomprehensible mess of a chaotic present. It generates attention to the interplay between human and natural processes, crisscrossing this dualistic perception through poiesis as an innovative swerving. Continuously propelled by uncertainty, ecopoethics resists fixation into categories and attempts at unified meaning. Instead, it opens itself to radical alterity, disclosing reflectiveness and situated attentiveness to more-than-human entanglements as a starting point for an ethics that decentres the human as one among many participants of an interdependent, vibrant ecosphere. After all, it is arguably a lack of understanding, if not a denial or suppression of these interconnections and interdependencies, that lies at the heart of the current climate emergency and further informs the disconnection between “what we say and what we do” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 183). The artist Cecilia Vicuña sums it up as follows: “The earth is dying because people don’t see the connection (between a hamburger and the death of the rain forest, air conditioning and the death of the atmosphere.)” (‘Five Notebooks’ 793) The following subsection will explore Vicuña’s quipoems as ecopoethical makings and further reflect on them in dialogue with “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14”, a poem I partly wrote in response to contemporary art exhibitions featuring Vicuña’s work.

³⁶ To my knowledge, this term was first used by Jane Sprague in the context of an “ecopoethical reading” (unpaginated). While there are several mentions of the term, it is rarely explored to greater length. An exception is the poet and practitioner a. rawlings, who uses it with regard to her own practice with landscape and a “reduce, reuse, recycle” framework (‘Gibber: Eco-poiesis’). My own conceptualisation of the term is informed by Elizabeth-Jane Burnett’s analysis of (eco)poethics and the notion of gift in contemporary innovative poetry communities (*The Gift, the Wager, and Poethics*).

The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14

Being safe is scary

Ignorance is bliss

it must be so nice

Follow the intersections of arrows, get lost

to critique capitalism etc.

Between the sugary-damp alleys

where espresso mixes with body salt and
fake leather, a cinematic waft marries
living dying

want to be European

Garlic and fried pitta. Blazing whiteness. No wind but
water, protected by law, and surprisingly little
wine, Udo.

I am the hunter

I am the prey.

The length of strand of your hair, of the width
of your arms, unfolding

in me you(r)

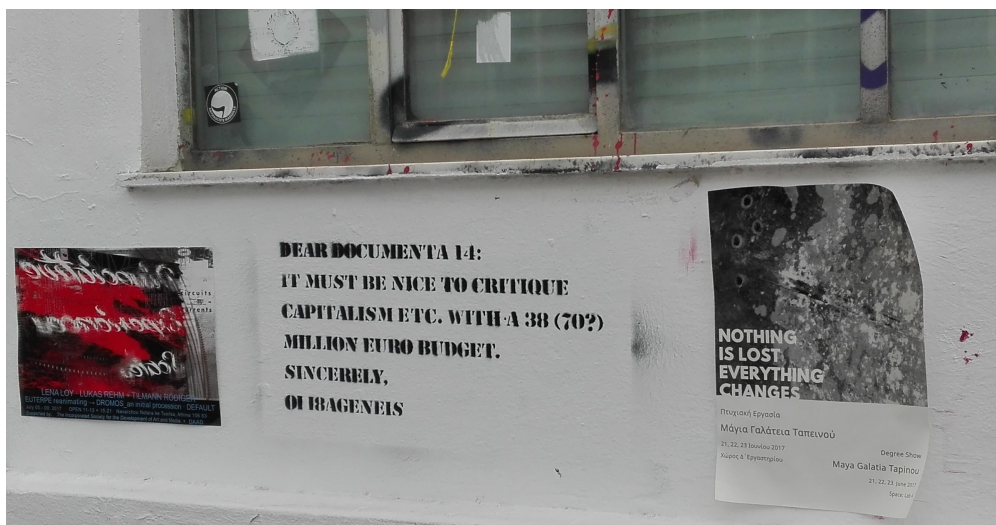
absence

is no excuse for longing.

Hurt

Organs move through limbs move through bodies
move through organs

Things have been broken intentionally.



Kalinowski, Katharina Maria "Dear Documenta" 2017 *photograph*

Along the lines of the minds
Unlearning from

Wondering.
Organ-ising

what shouldn't be looked at.
Standing

In for the parliament, waiting
until someone says you're not beautiful enough.
Open me not.

If you do stitch me back together
with the sandy hair of a mermaid
and keep the remains.

Decorated with a sign.

Do not touch.

Along the lines of the brains
Learning from

the norths

wondering.
Looking with the strange eye
not of a stranger

Representing

In blindness we're equal

Beauvoir.
Rowling.
Nabokov.
Brecht.
Frank.
Miller.
Mann.
Eco.
Freud.
Marx.

(Noch immer nicht)

Cologne to Milano, Milano to Athens, Athens to Frankfurt, Frankfurt to Kassel, Kassel to Münster, Münster to Cologne: > 10t CO₂ per person. The average emission in Germany is 8,4 t per person year. The average emission in South Sudan is 0,14 t per person per year. The suggested budget in line with the official 2°C climate goal is 2t CO₂ per person per year (Schneidewind 161).

1.3.1 Weaving Ecoethical Connections

The artwork of Chilean-born practitioner Cecilia Vicuña moves off the page in many senses. A multidisciplinary artist who defies categories, she has been making paintings, poetry, films, theatre, performances, installations, collaborative activist pieces, and earth art since the 60s. Although indigenous culture was banned in her home, Vicuña started to discover and reclaim the knowledge of Andean people that have been silenced and tabooed since the Spanish colonialisation. Her innovative work often uses a mixture of languages, including Spanish and English as well as indigenous ones such as Quechua, Mapundungun, and made-up ones. During the military dictatorship in Chile she lived in exile in London, Bogotá, and New York, where she co-founded *Artists for Democracy*, engaged in activist groups, and advocated ideas of feminism, human rights, and indigeneity through her art. Consequently, many of her works were censored in Chile; some remain unpublished to this day. Vicuña's life and her work can be seen as a continuously shifting act of political resistance, permeated by an awareness of contemporary issues such as ecological destruction, dominant systems of suppression, or cultural homogenisation. A deep sense of interconnectedness and plurality of life, a radical undoing of hegemonic power discourses, and an attentiveness to the silenced, marginalised, precarious, and invisible can be found in all her makings. Characteristic for this is her work with quipus, "talking knots" (D. Domenici and V. Domenici).

Quipus (sometimes also spelled khipus) are ancient textile artefacts for record-keeping, composed of knitted and interwoven cords traditionally made from the wool of alpacas, llamas, or vicuñas. In pre-Columbian times they were used by Inca people and other communities in the Andean regions to record and transmit information. In Quechua, quipu means "knot" (Urton et al.), and the meaning of the quipu differs depending on the number of knots in the thread, its form, length, and colour. Much of the specific usages and structures of quipus is unknown today. However, more recent research suggests that they not only served as numeric or mnemonic devices but formed an intricate writing system used by the Incas to store ancient knowledge of landscape, philosophy, scientific observations, and even poetry (cf. Quilter and Urton). As a physical poesis off the page, quipu communication thus weaves across disciplinary boundaries in place today, and, in a poethical sense, makes use of language's infinite possibilities by shaping — that is, spinning, plying, braiding, knotting, or wrapping — it differently for different purposes. Vicuña continues this line of thought when she states that "[L]anguage can be completely physical, can be completely tactile . . . because it is completely tactile when it becomes, for example, a thread — a thread is language. This is not a metaphor. This is so." (J. P. Brown 216)

Tracing writing back to an inherent bond with weaving, language-making becomes a versatile material three-dimensional activity, a textile textual practice that incorporates interconnections of the land with the people; of the earth with the celestial sphere. According to Vicuña, the quipu is not only a tactile instrument but also a conceptual "intangible, virtual construct, a weaving of us: all humans, as connected to each other and the cosmos" (Kan 107). It thus corresponds to the

radial thinking and the ceque system of the Inca Empire. In relation to the lunar-stellar calendar, ceques were ritual pathways, conceptual lines “running from Cuzco [the capital of the Inca Empire] all the way to the mountain’s summit, to the origin of water.” (107, my comment) The water flowing on earth was believed to be identical with the water flowing in the celestial rivers on the night sky, which would come down during the rainy season (cf. Magli). A deep vitalist connection to the universe as a more-than-human home seems to underpin this idea: contrary to a subject/object split, everything was perceived to be in an interconnected flow of life. As part of a tangible eco-poetical memory-making, quipus thus close a gap between the human and the natural world, weaving together c(h)ords connecting water, language, earth, and sky, whilst crossing temporal boundaries between contemporary times and suppressed pre-colonial cultures. With the beginning of colonialisation, the quipu system was completely wiped out by Spanish invaders and replaced by a modern writing system. Although quipus might still be used ritually by some Andean communities today, they no longer exist as an official communication system. Creating them from different materials, in different colours, sizes, and formations, Vicuña retrieves and gives new-old, different lives to them, drawing not only global attention to the suppressed culture of indigenous people but also to the invisible practice of weaving, a predominantly female practice.³⁷

At documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens (2017), the art exhibition that inspired my poem “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14.”, Vicuña’s contribution included two spacious, roughly 8m x 6m long textile quipus named *Quipu Womb* and *Quipu Gut*. Made from unspun wool by local manufacturers, their ferociously red colour symbolised menstruation blood, which implies a cyclic process intrinsic to life. Sometimes also called the “wise wound” (cf. Shuttle and Redgrove), menstruation remains a tabooed topic and is one of the reminders of the long way feminism still has to go.³⁸ Fusing the word “quipu” with “poem”, Vicuña calls her installations *quipuems*. The quipu is not only representing a poem, it *is* a poem; it is a connection that invites further, infinite connection. Swinging from the ceiling to the floor like a giant waterfall, the three-dimensional poem invited spectators to touch and interact with it. It further became part of a number of public performances. In Athens, audience members were invited to join a ritual sacrifice by the seaside.³⁹ Vicuña connected the participants with the same red threads she used for her installation piece, thus creating one collective eco-poetical quipu weaving together humans, language, and earthly material. Forming independent knots of relations, the quipu extended its embrace to link thread, blood, body, and water. The red wool was sacrificed to the Mediterranean Sea as a reminder of the refugees that continue to drown on their way to Europe.

Recalling the Inca ceque system, the idea of poetry as a corporeal, material experience is entangled with an awareness of a vibrant, interconnected more-than-human universe. Vicuña

³⁷ For further discussions of Vicuña’s quipus and her weaving practice on and off the page, see Lippard, Lynd, and M. G. Clark.

³⁸ The art world is no exception in that regard. At documenta 14, only 30,6% of the artists were female (Belouali-Dejean).

³⁹ Another performance took place at documenta Halle and by the river Fulda; for details see Roelstraete.

generally accompanies her performances with spontaneous sung and spoken words in a mixture of languages that, according to American poet and founder of Bowery Poetry Club NYC Bob Holman, “no one knows but everyone can understand” (Kan 105). She thus resists the power dynamics of one dominating language and instead creates a shared imaginative space for linguistic creation, which is, to an extent, what my own poetry seeks to do as well. This space includes unexpected threads too: Vicuña weaves in the cry of a baby as well as the song of a bird, thereby extending her resistance against hierarchies to the conviction that language is exclusively human. Her view implies a decentred position of infinite entanglement, echoing a biosemiotic perspective in that “the universe is itself language; everything is speaking to everything else, in particular chemical, sonic, and territorial languages. ... Everything participates.”⁴⁰ (104)

Vicuña’s performances confront the participants with a humble view on the limits of human knowledge and invite them to be physically in touch with the greater forces of the universe. As both an imaginative and a palpable space, explicitly invited interactions with the thread (interactions not encouraged by all exhibited pieces, as implied by my documenta 14 poem), elicit responses and generate tangible attention to more-than-human relations. In addition, the site-specific ritual re-conceptualised the place of the performance as a shared site, a coming-together of perceptions and insights. By connecting the global context of the exhibition with ancient knowledge of a suppressed culture, it disclosed a synthetic perspective anchored in an expanded notion of time and history. Particularly taking into account political events at the time, among them the flow of refugees and the aftermath of the financial crisis in Greece that were reinforced by the North/South dialogue between the two exhibition sites of documenta 14, the sacrifice ritual of the quipoem retrieved links between past and present systems of violence. Entangled in greater relations, the audience was reminded that they were and are partaking in a continuum, dissolved in an “infinitely extensive net of relations” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 257), which entails accepting the unknown spaces and possibilities of that net.

By responding to unexpected things like the weather or the participants’ reactions, Vicuña embraces the unplanned as part of her philosophy of interconnecting and weaving everything in. No two performances are the same. Her work remains open to potentialities of the moment, thus attending to the indeterminacy of a chaotic reality with a swerving courage: “My work dwells in the not yet, the future potential of the unformed where sound, weaving, and language interact to create new meanings.” (‘Cecilia Vicuña / Introduction’) Vicuña points out that the word quipu morphed into an interrogative “Quipu? — What do you mean?” question when she confronted Chileans on the street with it (Vicuña, *kNot a QUIPU*). Consequently, her fused term quipoem also echoes the question “Qué poem?/What poem?” (*kNot a QUIPU*), leaving it open for further interrogation and transformation. The self-reflexive (k)not-knowing forms part of the process and leaves the word exposed to a vital flux of constant transformation and unknowingness. Generating eco-poetical attentiveness, it acts as a humble reminder of the limitations of human-ness

⁴⁰ Such a notion will be explored further in section 2.4

in view of a complex entangled more-than-human infinity with its many unclosed “wounders” (cf. Vicuña, ‘Language Is Migrant’).

Vicuña’s neologism “wondering”, allegedly borrowed from her friend who mixed up wondering and wounding (‘Language Is Migrant’), found its way into my poem “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14”. “Found” is the keyword here, since this poem uses found material collected during an itinerant Summer School that took me to the documenta 14 and Venice Biennale exhibition in 2017. Overlapping memories, in-situ notes, and scribbles from Venice, Athens, and Kassel are intertwined with texts gathered from talks, art catalogues, or exhibited pieces. Harriet Tarlo suggests that the encounter of textual material from various sources produces a particular dynamism and energy (‘Eco-Ethical Poetics’ 114). As an ecopoet(h)ical recycling technique, it “destabilises single perspectives in favour of multiple ones” (125). This inclusion of multiple voices inspired a visual simultaneity in my poem. The different poetic strands can be visually perceived yet never synchronically absorbed in one individual reading. Linearity is challenged, since each ambiguous line break continuously requires the reader to make a choice which causes them to swerve off into different directions. Instead of resulting in a single unified meaning, the process of creating different poetic versions can be regarded as the result.

Resonating the “intersection of arrows” — an allusion to the documenta 14 sign with its crossed lines — the poem thus maps an ongoing active process shared between poet and reader. This echoes Retallack’s poethics of collaborative responsibility, which emphasises that the artist does not have to do — and in fact should not do — the work of meaning(s)-making alone but is met by the reader half-way (*Poethical Wager* 41). In that spirit, the poem unfolds “along the lines of the minds / along the lines of the brains”, accompanied by snippets from Pope.L.L.’s “Whispering Campaign” at documenta 14, audible only to those who were sufficiently patient and attentive. In addition to the active participation by the reader, blurred distinctions between my words and other words situates poetry within the complex realism of life. It is not sealed off from the world and from other uses of language but “exists in a sea of other textual, material language” (Tarlo, ‘Eco-Ethical Poetics’ 122). Poetry is relational, it cannot exist in isolation (cf. ‘Eco-Ethical Poetics’ 126); it ecopoethically acknowledges its interdependencies with other processes and echoes them on the page.⁴¹ The juxtaposition of various material allows for a friction between the autonomy of abstract claims such as “Being safe is scary” and synaesthetic descriptions of “sugar-damp alleys / where espresso mixes / with body salt and fake leather”.⁴² This Venice coloured memory is joined by a lighter side note to the popular German singer’s Udo Jürge’n’s song about Greek wine. Immediately after, the register changes and presents the found text “I am the hunter” that chases its counterpart “I am the prey.” Reinforced by the two-column layout, the disruptiveness of the places-inspired assemblage partially re-creates the erratic process of remembering as such

⁴¹ This will be further discussed in section 3.4

⁴² The line “Being safe is scary” is a reference to the inscription BEINGSAFEISSCARY at Friedericianum in Kassel. It was a contribution of artist Banu Cennetoğlu, dedicated to Gurbetelli Ersöz, a Kurdish journalist and Guerilla fighter killed in 1997.

— “Things have been broken intentionally.” Lines compliment, resound, or oppose one another in a tribute to the plasticity of poetic form that is able to hold contradictory notions.

Directing attention to the particular in its connection to the wider textual environment, the poem as an open, indeterminate organism contains multiple variants of itself. While visitors of documenta 14 are bound to recognise slogans or references, the poem can be approached without any prior knowledge as well, offering its title as guidance for the curious reader. The final section refers to the most iconic art installation in Kassel, “The Parthenon of Books” by Marta Minujín. A replica of the Acropolis, it was composed of plastic-wrapped books that used to be banned and in some places of the world still are. Beyond a global meaning of the final line in its ambiguous “Do not touch. / Do not touch. Marx.” lies a concrete frustration concerning the prohibited interaction with exhibition pieces, some of which were specifically designed to be interactive. Perhaps because it is the smaller city, traditional host of documenta since 1955, Kassel was significantly more dominated by the art exhibition than Athens and sometimes radiated an air of museal exclusiveness that lost its political resistance to highbrow mystique and vigilant don’t-touch-anything reminders. An intensification of this sensation and a reaction to it could be witnessed in Athens, where several street artists saw nothing but pretentious cultural imperialism in documenta 14. The slogan referenced in my poem and depicted in the picture had been sprayed on the walls of the Athens School of Fine Arts, one of the exhibition sites: “DEAR DOCUMENTA 14: IT MUST BE NICE TO CRITIQUE CAPITALISM ETC. WITH A 38 (70?) MILLION EURO BUDGET. SINCERELY, OI 18AGENEIS.” Despite its premise to “learn from Athens”, thus taking economic, political, social, and cultural dilemmas as a departure point for imagining a more inclusive Europe, voices of criticism noted the absence of any in-depth reflections, both structurally and aesthetically. Subsumed by the very system it sought to criticise, many felt that documenta 14 turned into a neo-colonial project instead (cf. Tulke; Demos).

Tarlo notes that “the idea of owning words is as absurd as the idea of owning natural resources, and yet both ideas are taken as real.” (*Eco-Ethical Poetics* 127) The soil, waters, and even the air surrounding the earth have long been appropriated by borders, fences, and legal provisions. Although documenta 14 sought to include the wider public, particularly in Athens, many spaces could only be entered in exchange for money. Similarly, brands or logos get copyrighted, pressuring even language with issues of ownership. The inclusion of found material can be read as resistance in that regard. Open to various meanings, it creates poetic manifoldness by speaking through all types of material, including street graffiti and bits of conversation. To that end, the recycling method sets up a counterpoint against a constant demand for novelty and originality which is omnipresent in affluent profit-oriented economies simultaneously relying on a veiling of the wounds, of that “what shouldn’t be looked at”. Opened to the complexity of life, the poem practices an *ecopoet(h)ics* that seeks to elicit attentiveness both through itself and through its embedment in a wider context, which it not only represents but weaves into its composition. It is thus both turned inwards and outwards, threading an *ecopoethics* on and off the page. As a marker of its entanglement in capitalist wounds, the footnote highlights the implications of

human actions that are intertwined with the more-than-human. In this way, the poem enacts a self-reflectiveness of its own practice and provides material that orient it further towards an off-page desideratum. From a precarious stance of motion, it envisions the future possibility of a “touch”, a connection, embracing the eco-poetical wager as an ephemeral gesture of hope.

Ecopoetics oriented to an eco-poethics coordinate offers a framework for an investigation into an interdependent fractal relation between a separation of art and politics with an emphasis on even broader more-than-human systems. While there are many tangible ways in which eco-poetics can move off the page as three-dimensional art or spoken word, the notion of poethics acknowledges the potential for activism as a poetic form, or rather as a potential that can be expressed in a variety of poetic forms, including the page poem. All of these forms rely, however, on the inclusion of indeterminacy, on a resistance against pre-made patterns, closure, and hierarchical interaction. The radical approach to language discussed in the previous section speaks directly to these components, emphasising Kinsella’s notion of the poem as a “machine for change” (*Disclosed Poetics* 122). Poems are not judged on the direct environmental actions they might encourage; instead, this potential is part of their interactive aesthetics. Charged with an ecological view, eco-poethics in particular seeks to incorporate and shift attentiveness to our entanglements with the Mitwelt, recognising that the “true performance is that of our species on Earth: the way we cause suffering to others, the way we warm the atmosphere or cause other species to disappear” (Vicuña, *Spit Temple* 98).

Vicuña’s holistic approach to poesis offers a starting point for an inclusive vibrant activity in which the entire universe participates. To disclose connections, give room to the “true performance”, and make visible implications of every single action in interdependence with an-other turns into the challenge for eco-poethics whose “ethics occurs / at the edge of what we know”. (Hillman 4) Coming up against this threshold again, the poet Rachel Blau DuPlessis asks:

Will anything teach us? A poem with both affect and information has as much chance as anything to give rise to understanding, via an incantation of words that turns the mind, detours our thinking, makes us face our world, and, perhaps, even motivates us to political action. (unpaginated)

An eco-poetics is never enough on the page, because it never just remains there: it relates; it hinges on connections opening up in, during, and after the engagement with it; it reflects on its boundaries that call upon other forces as additional material. As Retallack and Burnett argue, to set these “conditions for the cultivation of [this] change can itself be a marker of a project’s ‘poetical’ success,” (*Poetical Wager* 41; *The Gift, the Wager, and Poethics* 173) one that is necessarily permeated by an oscillating indeterminacy. Without giving up or resting on easy solutions, poethics thus paves a way through the impossibility of having to save the world single-handedly. The courageous eco-poetical swerve in that sense means upholding radical hope for art to *move*, in spite of uncertainty, non-linearly, unexpectedly, to evoke an embodied responsibility that encompasses an awareness of the entire, interconnected cosmic net of infinite relations. From a

decentred position, this responsibility pertains not just to a current, human-centred instant but leaps across time and space, each wager a possibility.

Set in motion, driven by that hope, ecopoethics happens, stretches through the disclosure of imaginative spaces towards a desideratum for ecological justice. Expanding from encounters with landscapes, ecopoethics orients us to the edge of the world, the edge of extending our knowledge and our limitations of knowledge of the world. In order to navigate unsettling positions in the woven knot of connections that include language, makings, communication at and across boundaries, eco-practices compose the places through which we move; places such as Kassel and Athens that turn out to be full of tension. Perceptions vary, immediacy meets cosmological embeddedness as ecopoet(h)ics turns to the coordinate of place, a perpetual cornerstone of eco-criticism.

Poplar Row

remains of the day
fall into place
leaves
 childhood spots illuminated
woods, consisting only
of wind and movement. Leaves.
leaves you collect, year
after year, inconvenient copies of days, in
comprehensible negatives what
sways, what wagers, what piles
up who are we not
to distinguish leaves
trembling through us by night that
every night the same leaves
blurred fading layers covering
the world entirely
with/in it self

Widerstrand

unnatural smell, is it
rotten plait of snake-shaped
kelp, one strand less soft on parabenic layers

tabooed legs in ebbbed ponds, wading, awash, and urgh
bins filled with coronary surplus

#

Giants built this pathway once
underneath erosion feeding back into
twitterable tortoise tombs

Zweite Haut

bei ebbe ist alles ganz dumpf.
wolken injiziert mit diazepam
die plastikadern fast am platzen.

zwischen glitzerperlen schaukeln ätzen
lila wellen haare von den wimpernspitzen

presse die zunge gegen den gaumen du
weißt schon warum

vermeerte hautschicht, klebe
schuppen mit bauschaum zusammen

weniger kaffee und migräne
seit ich hier bin

Canterbury Night

dreamscapes X-
rayed

birthsongs
dialysed

drained
from naval c(h)ords

earthgrains meeting bony head
notes
grounds sus
taining

LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine's Lebensfahrt)

Drowned metaphors.

Liquid Laughter
ignorance of physics

plugged in stars

far-heavy pulsing
moving-beyond
one home

1.4 Making Ecopoethical Places

Partially echoing Vicuña's holistic vision of intricate connections across the earth, the "poet laureate' of deep ecology" (Garrard 20) Gary Snyder writes:

Two conditions — gravity and a liveable temperature range between freezing and boiling — have given us fluids and flesh. The trees we climb and the ground we walk on have given us five fingers and toes. The "place" (from the root *plat*, broad, spreading, flat) gave us far-seeing eyes, the streams and breezes gave us versatile tongues and whorly ears. The land gave us a stride, and the lake a dive. The amazement gave us our kind of mind. (*The Practice of the Wild* 31)

From Aldo Leopold's land ethics and Snyder's bioregionalism to a renewed interest in place and space since the spatial turn of the 1980s, the dedication of environmental literature to its surroundings remains one of its foundational features. The section on radical landscape has already implied a close connection between poetry and experiences of the land, which gains more urgency as environmental destruction is accelerated by a global climate emergency. Place-specific knowledge, emotional attachment, spatial closeness, and phenomenological dwelling with the earth are traditionally conceived as sine qua non conditions for a renewed human/nature bond alienated by modernisation. As propagated by deep ecology, a small-scale ethics of proximity is generally equated with an ethics of care and ecological responsibility and forms the backbone of first-wave ecocriticism (cf. U. K. Heise, *Sense of Place* 28-31). The North American environmental discourse in particular has initially been a story of restoring a local sense of place as resistance against global destructive forces of homogenisation and modernisation. Robert Hass allegedly expressed his dismay over his students' lack of local botanical knowledge during an environmental literature course. Noticing that the majority of students "can't tell a pine from a fir", even though they could "converse knowledgeably about chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone hole", he proclaimed: "I don't think we have a chance of changing our relationship to the natural world if you don't know what's around you." (Hamilton 45)

So-called "green" literature, and poetry in particular, has thus been charged with rectifying this. The very root of ecopoetics as a house-making implies an intrinsic connection to living spaces, propelling a "writing practice that is part of the process of making the habitable." (Russo unpaginated) In line with this, J. Scott Bryson asserts that ecopoets "encourage us to discover and nurture a topophilic devotion to the places we inhabit." (*West Side* 12) All ecopoets, in his view, are therefore essentially "place-makers" (16), seeking to create place-worlds, "attempting to move their audience out of existence in an abstract postmodernized space, where we are simply visitors in an unknown neighborhood, and into a recognition of our present surroundings as place and

thus as home” (11).⁴³

Responding to an omnipresence of scholarly and writerly engagements with place, my project was also envisioned as a collection of what I considered to be place-based poetry. However, this concept underwent drastic changes when I explored it in more depth and reflected on my own experience with place(s), possibly beginning with the travels registered in the poem “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14”. In the final coordinate of this chapter, I want to orient eco-poetics towards an ecopoethic notion of place that begins to address the layers of its ecological interrelations that include global dynamics, political implications, and linguistic tensions. These notions will be further unpacked and thickened throughout the chapters that follow.

From a conceptual point of view, place is anything else but straightforward, and in an accompanying convolution with essentialist ideas of home and, by extension identity, not unproblematic either. The literary places discussed in the wake of first-wave ecocriticism were predominantly rural locations, often harbouring Romantic ideas of wilderness or the pastoral, whose tensions have already been outlined (see section 1.2). Snyder’s vision of place might have been one of plurality, yet celebrations of local attachment are also prone to nationalist tendencies, not to mention their general negligence of imperial violence, displacement, and disparities across class, race, age, and gender. Moreover, even Snyder’s inclusive tale of earthly belonging is effectively restricted to an able body with functional ears, eyes, and limbs.

As scholars such as Doreen Massey and Ursula Heise have shown, a naturalised link between belonging, rootedness, and long-term residence in one place commonly assumes a position of privilege (‘A Global Sense of Place’ 24; *Sense of Place* 31). From such a position, place is more likely seen through the eyes of a middle-class leisure hut-owner or a businessman than a homeless person or a Syrian refugee. Underpinned by a popular space/place dualism (cf. Tuan, ‘Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective’; *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*), place is often framed as a unified, closed off, stable and homogenous entity. This, however, neglects the multilayeredness of place in its social and cultural multiplicity, its embeddedness in a larger network, and its connection to digital communication systems, flows of energy, air, viruses, and money. In short, such a view is irreconcilable with an ecological awareness of interconnections informed by an account of the globality of our current age, here understood to mean “that from now on nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world, and we must reorient and reorganize our live and actions, our organizations and institutions, along a ‘local–global’ axis.” (Beck, *What Is Globalization?* 11)

Various scholars have offered frameworks of place that acknowledge the dynamics of such an axis. Massey’s global sense of place (‘A Global Sense of Place’), Heise’s sense of planet and

⁴³ Bryson draws heavily on the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, his distinction of place and space, and his notion of topophilia, “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* 4; also see Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*). The notion of home will be explored in more detail in section 3.4

her influential eco-cosmopolitanism (*Sense of Place*), Michael Cronin's "microcosmopolitanism" (*Translation and Identity* 14), or John Kinsella's international regionalism (*Disclosed Poetics* 137; *Polysituatedness* 18), among others, take into account the tension of local and global forces that intensify place as a heterogeneous mosaic. Massey emphasises the subjectiveness of a sense of place, which results in multiple identities of place that are often in conflict with one another. The experience of place, Massey argues, is different for different people, depending on their gender, ethnicity, and age; their social, economical, and cultural context ('A Global Sense of Place' 24). In this vein, Massey demands a differentiation of the popular concept of time-space compression characterising the "fast-living" times "we" now live in (24-25). Arguing that this perception is predominantly informed by a "Western, coloniser's view" (24), she points out that people are placed at various positions within an asymmetrical compression that rests on a politics of mobility and access. A view on place as a multiplicity thus has to acknowledge the fragmentation of a "we", which is not only shuttling along a global-local axis but also along one of inequalities, power, and violence. Even though it is perfectly possible to stream a conference in Sydney whilst eating Chinese food in Paris before getting on a plane to Dublin, it is only possible for some. Or, as Massey phrases it, in-between all the movements of e-mails, financial flows, satellites, planes, ships and trains, lorries, cars and buses, "somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, there's a woman — amongst many women — on foot, who still spends hours a day collecting water." (25)

This woman's experience, too, needs to be accounted for in a global sense of a place, entangled in an infinitely extensive net of connections. A subjective experience of one's location does not have to be coupled with a self-enclosing inward look but can be turned outwards (24) to transboundary relationality. Places are tangibly relational; "there are real relations with real content — economic, political, cultural — between any local place and the wider world in which it is set." (28) Hence, the perception of place becomes a challenge of scale and, as Vicuña so aptly phrases it, of becoming attuned to the implications "between a hamburger and the death of the rain forest. The earth is dying because people don't see the connection." ('Five Notebooks' 793) An eco-poethics as place-making entangled in a wider complex reality is thus facing the task of exposing the connectivity of place in tandem with the implications of actions embedded in structural power imbalances. Encountering place at an increasingly fluid border between global and local, eco-poethic practices need to acknowledge the fact that "every time someone uses a car, and thereby increases their personal mobility, they reduce both the social rationale and the financial viability of the public transport system — and thereby also potentially reduce the mobility of those who rely on that system" (Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place' 26).

To draw on Massey's previous example, the woman collecting water in sub-Saharan Africa is not necessarily doing so by choice, but because someone else — in this case a whole set of globally and locally intertwined forces — is controlling her access to other forms of activities and mobility. This set is nevertheless collectively driven by repeated individual choices commonly operating under the pretence of their ineffectiveness when it comes to making a collective impact. Local decisions cannot be set apart from the global because the local is always infused with the

global and the global is always localised. Therefore, an ecoethics of place moves towards an understanding of place as an intersection of relations (28). In line with this, Massey conceptualises place as follows:

It is, indeed, a *meeting* place. Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a larger proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent. (28)

This dynamic notion of place is one I find hard to reconcile with my initial notion of “place-based” poetry. The omnipresence of motion is emphasised above all else, propelling conceptual, imaginative, and perceptual movement. Even if we are in one place, it is never just one and we are not rooted to the spot but inhabit the variety of different places by moving “through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere.” (Ingold, *Being Alive* 148; also see Ingold, *Lines* 75-84)

Comprehending a multilayered, plural, versatile notion of place had a very tangible dimension for me. Over three years, I moved from Cologne to Canterbury to Dublin to Duisburg to Düsseldorf, making relations, trying to stay connected, and gathering poetry in between. While many of my poems carry the title of a specific place, they seek to acknowledge the multiplicity of that place, taking an outward look to the paths and lines that connect it across the earth. The poem “It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”, for instance, highlights the movements of molecules and the motion of the breath that connects the body to all other breathing organisms. The poems “View from the N59 road”, “The view on (a) plastic can the Irish Sea”, “Leverkusen Chempark”, and “Schienenersatzverkehr” focus on transport routes of cars, planes, and trains. In addition, they are rarely based in the one place that inspired them, since they were written, re-written, and edited in varying locations, bringing along experiences and memories of other places.

The poem “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14” discussed in the last chapter is an example of this: Drawing heavily on notes and found material collected in situ, scribbled on programmes, receipts, or plane tickets, it was not composed and “finalised” in its current form until roughly nine months after the Summer School.⁴⁴ With its intertwined memories and found text from Athens, Kassel, and Venice stimulating its movement on the page, it is not so much an attempt at place-making but at places-making. To the many actual places it echoes, one can add the various places and mediums through which it has travelled during the drafting process — from an exhibition catalogue to a digital laptop to an A5 anthology whose page size necessitated changes that made me once again reflect on the position of certain words and spaces. Moving through

⁴⁴ Insofar as a poem can ever be finalised; all my texts are generally merely “abandoned”. I will explore layers of my writing practice further in section 2.2 and section 3.4.

many encounters, many places, the poems seem to defy any notion of being based anywhere. They express human existence not as “fundamentally place-bound, but place-binding”, as Tim Ingold (*Being Alive* 148) argues via Christopher Tilley (25). He goes on to re-place the notion of inhabiting a place as a whole, contending that human existence “unfolds not in places but along paths.” (Ingold, *Being Alive* 148) In this concept, every path-maker is inevitably in motion:

Proceeding along a path, every inhabitant lays a trail. Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot. Places, then, are like knots [...] (148-149)

Reminiscent of Vicuña’s weaving eco-poethics, her quipoems have been previously discussed as examples of practical knot-making, disclosing the knot as the thread of life that entangles word, body, and place. These threads of life weave across locations and across times, connecting the local with the global, the planetary with the tangible vicinity. Moving towards an acknowledgement of the more-than-human Mitwelt, it seems to be in line with Vicuña’s thinking to argue for an expanded eco-poethical notion of inhabitants laying their trails. Not only human existence should be accounted for, all participants in the earthly oikos unfold through motion in a net of relations: “Our bodies are migrants; cells and bacteria are migrants too. Even galaxies migrate.” (‘Language Is Migrant’) Vicuña’s image of omnipresent flux visualises a planetary scale, makes a connection between the microscopic cell and the movements in space, and emphasises a shared element of constant change.⁴⁵

Stillness and pause have already been subverted by an orientation towards radical landscapes, which focused on translating a dynamically open interconnected oikos into an equally open poetic form. A wider, beyond-the-page investigation of eco-poet(h)ics furthered the significance of motion, underpinned by a framework of poethics that took into account the complexity of more-than-human life and language itself as restlessly on the move; swerving, shifting, criss-crossing boundaries, coming up against indeterminacy and unknowingness all the time. To transfer these insights into eco-poethic encounters with place, they need to disclose place as knotted heterogeneous multiplicities spreading not only vertically and horizontally but also virtually, across the mess of a complex reality encompassing intersections of airstreams, raindrops, toxins, invisible money flows, Wi-Fi, power lines, sub-terrestrial pipelines, and earthlings of all kinds. Oriented towards place, in plural by default, the challenge of a poethic eco-poiesis as a house-making needs to move towards a making of place “without a fixation on the local” (Hume 764). It needs to make intimate connections with the house without envisioning it as a place of pause. Instead, it turns into a nexus of conduits,⁴⁶ a node where one lives by moving through, by encountering the life-

⁴⁵ This is not to claim that Ingold exclusively adopts an anthropocentric point of view; in fact, he does account for non-human animals. Elsewhere he writes: “Animals are lines too: The life of every being, like the rhizome of a plant, issues forth into the world as it proceeds. These lifelines are not traced, as we might trace lines on a cartographic map, across a world already laid out, but through a world in perpetual formation.” (*Being Alive* 168)

⁴⁶ I take this idea of the house as a nexus of conduits from Henri Lefebvre (93).

lines of others, by relating, by making conflicting knots, enabled and sustained by the most global motion there is, the circling of the earthly globe.

Such an unfolding ecopoethics of places as creative knots has become integral to almost all my poems. One poet who has particularly influenced my writing and thinking of an ecopoethic sense of place turned outwards to contemporary local-global interconnectedness is the American poet, critic, editor, and activist Juliana Spahr. The following subsection will relate to her poem *Things of Each Possible Relation Hashing Against One Another* (originally published in 2003 and included in the collection *Well Then There Now* (2011), which I will be referring to) and open up the discussion to the unfolding movements of language as it encounters other languages, as it forms knots with them, as it moves through translations, which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

1.4.1 “things of any relation differently transformed”

As indicated by the coordinates on the title page, Spahr’s long poem shifts between Honolulu in Hawai’i (21° 18' 28" N 157° 48' 28" W) and Brooklyn, New York (40° 41'05.0"N 73°58'08.0"W). In line with a heightened awareness for a local-global axis, I should point out that I acquired this knowledge thanks to Google Maps and a functioning internet connection that connects my place-knots (51° 17'45.1" N 6° 44'13."E) to the myriads of knots in the world wide web. Spahr, raised and educated in the US, spent six years (1997-2003) living and teaching in Hawai’i, an experience which inspired a number of poems and a prose-poetic memoir (*The Transformation* (2007)) that display a particular attentiveness to the conflicts of place. “Things of Each Possible Relation Hashing Against One Another” reflects on the attentiveness to “the arrival to someplace else / the arrival to someplace differently” (*Well Then There Now* 55), mixing strangeness, beauty, and ecological destruction with an increased awareness of the poet’s own involuntarily implication in a history of colonialism.⁴⁷

the constant movement to claim, to gather, to change, and to
 consider sea
 the arrival to someplace differently
 constant motion
 the green of the soil which increases the freshness of things
 then calmness and the sail
 the requirement on meeting to modify and to regard
 the inbound of this someplace differently
 the constant movement
 the green of the ground that magnifies the coolness of the things
 the calmness and the sail

⁴⁷ In the wake of Hawai’i’s annexation by the US in 1898, their language and culture was largely repressed. Indigenous people became a minority.

the cause, the modifies, and the sea stops considering
(55)

The repetitive enumeration creates a meditative mode, while the slightly distorted, often incomplete syntax evokes a feeling of linguistic strangeness. It can be read as an enactment of the emotional confusion, the out-of-placeness one is likely to encounter in a new, foreign environment. It can be further extended into a reflection on colonial conquests in the Pacific, which brought with them “the introduction of exotic, alien plants and animals”, “occidental concepts of government, trade, cash” (56-57), and the imposition of the English language which displaced indigenous languages on the Polynesian archipelagos. In Spahr’s included reflection on her writing practice, she notes her emotional confusion upon encountering things that appeared to be local but did not really seem to belong:

I knew that when I looked around anywhere on the islands that most of what I was seeing had come from somewhere else but I didn’t know where or when. I was not yet seeing how the deeper history of contact was shaping the things I saw around me. (70)

The subsequent attempt to understand and unearth the interconnections, the stories of intersecting paths and lines that form a knot in Honolulu turns into an eco-poethic endeavour for Spahr. In order to “be a better poet” (69), she enrolled in an ethnobotany course to gain a deeper understanding of her encounters with unfamiliar Hawaiian lines. Spahr writes: “I was trying to learn more about the world and the world around me was so rich with plants and animals and birds and yet so many of them were dying at such unprecedented rates.” (69)

On the page, this manifests in the inclusion and tracing of “local” plant names, such as the invasive species *koa haole* (57), and in stanzas dedicated to making connections with lifelines expanding to the more-than-human:

caterpillar of the moth
ant of the dragonfly
grub of the grasshopper
connection from connection
pinworm of the fly
connection of the connection
egg of the bird
link of the link
life from life
connection of connection (58)

Every line seems to add to the overall thread of connection that composes a vibrant ecosystem. Reminiscent of Gertrude Stein’s writing, repetitions are used to emphasise and re-emphasise.

They shift between close-up observations and macroscopic reflections on the connectivity of things. The reading turns into a process of seeking out connections and similarities, imbuing repeated words with new meaning, and trying to identify subtle differences between “connection from connection” and “connection of connection” (58). Spahr’s interweaving of lives includes the human, and, under the premise of an “opening of the things sewn together” (59), begins to draw analogies between different other animals:

as newt the wing under the amphibians and the lizard under the
reptiles has taste of the eyes of the lizard and the eyes of
the human (60)

Lines like this inquire into unknown and slightly uncanny relations between the sensory capacities of humans and reptiles. They move the reader out of their linguistic comfort zone into an eco-poethic realm where they can imagine what they may have in common or how the taste can be compared to the eyes. The ecosphere is invoked as vibrant, multifaceted, and full of animate things communicating in ways that can be compared to human language:

like language of human and hummingbird the language
as a hummingbird of suction and suction of butterfly
like wings of the butterfly and the bird
like piece of the end of the bird and piece of the end of the
dolphin
like sonar of the dolphin and sonar of the blow
like cells in the wings of the blow and cells in the veins of the
pages (61)

Attesting to Spahr’s poethic mode, Retallack suggests that this poem “constitutes a wager that it matters to find new ways of being among one and others in the world via poetic forms.” (“What Is Experimental Poetry” para 40) The “house” Spahr makes, her poethic eco-poiesis of place is one that includes all beings. Spahr’s desire to acquire new knowledge and learn about the richness of the place/s she currently moves through approaches, in Retallack’s terms, “what is radically unknowable prior to the poetic project, acting in an interrogative mode that attempts to invite extra-textual experience into the poetics somehow on its terms, terms other than those dictated by egoistic desires.” (para 39) To that end, Spahr’s desire to be a “better poet” (*Well Then There Now* 69) can be read as an ethically more aware poet, respectful of the wounds of a place and one’s own implication in it. It further interlocks a distinct sense of place, created by specific proximity, a “witnessing” the place’s openness towards elsewhere, spatially and temporally.

Across the new, unfamiliar connections and strange syntax, the poem juxtaposes a view from the land — from the colonised — and a view from the sea — from the coloniser.⁴⁸ In her explanatory notes, Spahr writes: “Greg Denning argues that there are two views that define the Pacific:

⁴⁸ As Lynn Keller points out, this corresponds to the anecdote that opens Doreen Massey’s *For Space* (2005) (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 190), thickening this connection.

a view from the sea (the view of those who arrived from elsewhere) and the view from the land (those who were already there). These poems open with the view from the sea and end with the view from the land and are about the hashing that happens as these two views meet.” (71) Integral to this hashing is the “movement toward things from somewhere else”(65), the act of gathering things “of each possible relation” and the transformation that happens during this interactive process. Letting the radically unknown in inevitably means change, but the trajectory of that change is not at all determined, articulating a wager with an indeterminate outcome. It necessitates motion, consideration, and modification on both sides. The poem acknowledges that neither view can independently grasp the multiple layers of place and that interacting with it encompasses experiencing it in close proximity as well as understanding it in relation to wider external forces. Spahr’s endeavour to move closer to the initially foreign view from the land whilst reflecting on the issues of the view from the sea identifies what she calls the “problems of analogy” that conflict the intersection of the lines of the two views forming the knot of the place:

what we know is like and unlike
 as it is kept in different shaped containers
 it is as the problems of analogy
 it as the view from the sea
 it is as the introduction of plants and animals, others, exotically
 yet it is also as the way of the wood borer
 and the opinion of the sea
 as it is as the occidental concepts of government, commerce,
 money and imposing
 what we know is like and unlike
 one stays diverse with formed packages
 that is what the problems of the analogy are (56)

This stanza seems to be straightforward and yet incomprehensible. Drawing analogies is not simple and partially relies on appropriation, that is, it includes imposing notions onto things that are actually unlike. The very pronoun “we” can be regarded as an example, one that I will keep coming back to, creatively and critically.⁴⁹ As Spahr writes in her poetic, fictional autobiography, which also engages with analogies, “we” is a “contested word” (*The Transformation* 22). It homogenises what is in most cases a heterogeneous group, subsuming differences and expressing opinions that sometimes only a dominating part of the “we” can identify with. Therefore, it can be just as exclusive as it pretends to be inclusive — and even if it seeks to create inclusivity among its participants, this is commonly achieved by drawing a boundary to those “outside” that are not allowed to be part of the “we”. Moreover, drawing on Massey’s global critique, “we” is too often inhabited from a point of privilege that consequently ignores the concerns of less privileged

⁴⁹ See chapter 3 as a whole and section 3.1 in particular.

inhabitants. “We” itself is a meeting place of lines running danger to be instrumentalised by hegemonic structures. Resisting an easily assembled, naturalised static “we”, the poem thus explores its different threads:

we are consequently
 so we are
 alaaaha, ‘e‘ea, alawi, crow, apapane, mudhen
 we are so
 bird, egg, fly, pinworm, grasshopper, grub
 we are thus
 fly-catcher, turnstone, a‘u, a‘o, plover, snipe
 therefore we are (*Well Then There Now* 63)

Being is highlighted as being *with* and being more-than-one, coexisting in community and communication with others, making a “we” that is manifold, multispecies, and multilinguistic. This is also part of inhabiting a new environment ecopoethically: it means understanding the dynamics of “wes” that already exist, the ones which one is, perhaps unwillingly, already included in, and the ones to which one likes to belong. Making early assumptions, harbouring prejudices, obsessing over categories and “where are you from” questions can all be seen as falling under the problems of analogy and ultimately put a strain on encounters with the unknown. As Lynn Keller notes, the problem of analogy “suggests the inability to see something for what it is when one insists on seeing it in terms of likeness to something else one already knows.” (*Recomposing Ecopoetics* 189)

With regard to moving to a new place, it is difficult to be completely free of assumptions or expectations. I experienced this myself, as I have pointed out earlier, when I moved to Dublin, a place of plurality also shaped by a long history of colonialism, where I found it difficult to disentangle my own experiences from tales of Irish life and comparisons to other UK places — or indeed, from the temptation to “look for something beautiful” only. By analogy, which in this case is hopefully more useful than it is problematic, Hawai‘i is commonly advertised — from the view of the sea — as a touristic paradise where nature is lush and pure, while the environmental destruction is largely ignored. Spahr notes that “[T]here is a lot of nature poetry about Hawai‘i. Much of it is written by those who vacation here and it is often full of errors. [...] These poems often show up in the *New Yorker* or various other establishment journals.” (*Well Then There Now* 69) In this context, seeing something in terms of its likeness to an abstract idea turns into seeing what one likes to see, or what one sees at first glance, simultaneously implicating a violent ignorance of unpleasant problems and conflicts. Spahr, in her attempt to inquire into analogies, to not merely trace lines that appear to run parallel to the ones making up the knot Honolulu, sought to move beyond a comforting experience of a Hawai‘ian paradise:

The juxtaposition between the great beauty of Hawai‘i and how it is also a huge ecological catastrophe with the highest rates of species extinction and endangerment

in the United States was always emotionally confusing to me. I couldn't reconcile the coolness of the breeze and the sweet smells from the flowers and the beauty of cliffs and sea with the large amount of death that was happening. (70)

An ecopoethic interest in place unsettles a predetermined view, opening up to (e)motional change. From Spahr's encounter with the discord between beauty and destruction arose her deep distrust of nature poetry, which famously tends "to show the beautiful bird but not so often the bulldozer off to the side" (69), and her subsequent engagement with ecopoetics, in which she found a "poetics full of systemic analysis that questions the divisions between nature and culture — instead of a nature poetry." (71)

1.4.2 Location, Lines, Language(s)

Spahr's poem asserts the crucial link between ecopoetics and place, in a way that poetically discloses, *makes* place a dynamic multiplicity, where lines meet, conflict, and interact with each other. Her writing acknowledges the tensions of relations across a local-global axis that runs through every vein of her new surroundings, from the plants to the languages. Her willingness to dis/place herself at an edge and engage with the unknown, to "make herself uncomfortable", allows an intertwining of her own life-line coming from the view of the sea with the view from the land. This willingness to welcome change and let the place change her perception in turn composes an ecopoethical wager. In the absence of the poet as persona, "the investigative passion of the poet informs every syllable" (Retallack, 'What Is Experimental Poetry' para 39), articulating an experimental place-making practice. Partially outlined in her attached notes, Spahr's poetic procedure reinforces the explorative ecology of her poem. Noting that she composed many drafts during her ethnobotany classes, Spahr explains her further poetic process:

I put the drafts through the altavista translation machine (world.altavista.com) and translated my English between the languages that came to the Pacific from somewhere else: French, Spanish, German, and Portuguese. The translation machine is of course full of flaws and offers back some sort of language that only alludes to sense because it is so connected with another language. [...] Then, after I had a number of different versions of the same poem, I sat down and wove them together. I wanted to weave them into complicated, unrecognizable patterns. I took the patterns from the math that shows up in plants. Or I tried to approximate the shapes of things I saw around me. (*Well Then There Now* 71)

Outlining the compositional method does not mitigate the effect of the poem's syntactical strangeness but imbues it with a different sense of relationality seeking to stay connected beyond a surface level. In a way, it makes it appear even stranger, for what exactly does Spahr mean by "the patterns from the math that shows up in plants"?⁵⁰ Can it be seen as a form of involving nature

⁵⁰ A suggestion of what this could mean is offered by the Fibonacci form of my poem "I actually wanted to be a singer/writer/actor/painter/journalist, but I thought it was too insecure - OR: Fears First".

as a co-author? Is it a translation of botanical patterns into human language? Without knowing any details of this procedure, it emphasises yet again the entanglement of the poem with a complex reality, its interaction with extra-textual materials that become part of the intratextual form: embedded in an interrelated net, the poem stretches off the page. There is a further poethical statement here, which removes the poet farther from the event of the poem and emphasises the chancing experimental swerve of an open form eco-poethics that dictates its own terms. Through engagement with the larger world, Spahr's poem enacts, rather than mimics, the interactions between global and local, turning the poem outwards to global motions of technology, communication, and languages.

Writing a place in the language of its colonising nation does not come without problems. It reinforces the fact that language is not innocent but deeply entangled with political affairs. The dominance of English as the current lingua franca arguably comes with particular baggage in that regard, as "the poet opens herself to the complicity with the hegemonic spread of the language through military occupation, scientific research, publishing, and commerce" (Hunter, *Forms of a World* 120). The English language itself is inseparable from the violence that is increasingly associated with growing disparities caused by processes of globalisation within and across countries. With less than 1000 native speakers, the Hawaiian language, similar to about 43% of languages world-wide, is endangered today (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). While the usage of a minoritised language in her procedure might have caused more problems of appropriation, Spahr filters her English through French, Spanish, German, and Portuguese – in other words, languages of past colonial powers. As noted earlier, the resulting, partially odd, agrammatical syntax creates a reflective layer. De-familiarising the English language can be seen as a disruption that prompts the reader to think about the effects of imposing English onto places and people who have been forced to exchange their own languages for one global English "we". It exposes a linguistic layer of the problems of analogy, one that can condition violent sameness enforced by cultural hegemony. Pushing linguistic conventions in this context therefore also reflects on the uses and abuses of language more broadly and resists the extent to which it can subsume and domesticate differences. It adds to the plurality and tensions of eco-poethical place-knots composed in a planetary net.

Languages are inevitably entangled with places, and they also need to be considered against the backdrop of an accelerated globalisation, which not only relies on but is facilitated by processes of translation. Places are crossing points for languages. Moving through a city, one is almost guaranteed to hear and see multiple tongues, ranging from car brands to advertising slogans. Since they are contextualised and embodied, languages, too, are physically in motion; just as galaxies and bacteria, they are "migrant": "Words move from language to language, from culture to culture, from mouth to mouth." (Vicuña, 'Language Is Migrant') Most of my poems have not only travelled through places but also through languages, most often through English and German, depending on my surroundings and my state of mind: some of them in subtle ways ("Leverkusen Chempark"), some more explicitly ("The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14"); some

were originally written in one language, then re-written in another (“Second Skin”), some never left their initial language (“It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”). Some were translated (“Schienenersatzverkehr”); some were written in two languages (“View from the N59 road”). Some changed languages during the editing process (“Reiher im Sonnenbad”), occasionally taking from their encounter slight oddnesses (“Roaming (“Where are you from?”)”), and some touched other poems in the process.⁵¹ The poem preceding this subchapter for instance moved through a poem by Heinrich Heine (*Gedichte* 72-73), by way of linking a loose translation of a few selected lines with an ironic comment on his lyrical nature poetry, which itself already suggests a slightly ironic subtext. In my version, Heine’s four adjacently rhymed quatrains are replaced by playful intertextual connections and subsequently emerging reflections in free verse. Resembling poetics in this regard, translation involves a reflective and inquisitive function in relation to language.

Composed in and composing motion, linguistic translation is perhaps the most overt, but also the most radical method of moving, dis- and re-placing language. Movement is actually one of its etymological lifelines: In the Middle Ages, translation (*trans* meaning across, beyond; *latus* meaning borne, carried) referred to the relocation of a saint’s relics from one place to “someplace else” (Spahr, *Well Then There Now* 55). Before it was narrowed down to a primarily linguistic context, translation denoted a multitude of activities that fundamentally anchored wider notions of physical displacement, motion, and change (cf. Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 8-9; Guldin 18). In German, linguistic translation is usually called „übersetzen“, which literally means “crossing over”, in the sense of crossing a sea by boat, as I did when moving to England, when moving to Ireland, when moving “back”, returning, which is also arriving, when no longer based in a place, but moving towards an entangled ecoethics of roaming.

Taking up the problems of analogy once more, translation can also be regarded as a process of bringing together what is both alike and unlike, making connections across language boundaries by trying to find something that is seemingly analogous. This can be based on presumptions or more openly negotiated, making translation waver between proximities to language, between foreignisation and domestication (cf. Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 19-20). Translation can be – and some would argue that it always is (18-20) – a process of appropriation, particularly if it happens across great power imbalances or if it is driven by ideological interests. However, it also offers a way of contact-making and contributing to plurality by turning the view outwards to the indeterminacy of possibilities beyond one’s own linguistic habitat. What translation necessitates in both cases is transformation: Words are moved into a completely new cultural, linguistic, historical, social context, while keeping a relation to elsewhere. They are never in one place alone but opened to an infinite ecology of connections, emphasising their interdependency with context and the manifoldness of meaning as a “plural and contingent relation” (18). This will be further explored in the chapter that follows.

⁵¹ I will explore this further in section 2.2 and section 3.4.

Swerving away from a place-based notion to place as an intersections of dynamic exchanges makes the ecopoietic challenge all the more complex. It requires inhabiting, making (sense of) places as ecopoetical knots within a field of global-local tensions criss-crossed by lines that come from elsewhere and go someplace else. Spahr, driven by her suspicion of Hawaiian nature poetry, suggests not only that the bulldozer next to the bird should be tended to, but also that the bird itself deserves closer investigation, for it is “often a bird which [has] arrived recently from somewhere else, interacted with and changed the larger system of this small part of the world we live in and on.” (*Well Then There Now* 69) While her negation of nature poetry does not imply that ecopoetics should never appreciate the beautiful bird, it does point to the necessity not to fully give in to an indulging temptation to look for something beautiful only: Ecopoetics requires more than admiring what is comfortably in reach. In interaction with place relations, it must be poethical, it must reconfigure and produce languages to question hierarchies, inquire into the interdependency of all “things of any relation differently transformed” (66). An ecopoetical place-making encompasses then, once again, an edge, where various lines can “meet and complicate one another” (cf. Skinner, *ecopoetics* 016).

Guided by the coordinates of this chapter, ecopoetics has been explored as dynamic interdisciplinary relation-making that is coming up against edges of all kinds and that is restless in the various forms it takes. From its early association with nature poetry imbued with a political message to reworked ideas of place-making in the face of accelerated destruction, poetry with an ecological interest finds itself keeping “one foot on the ground at all times” (Russo unpaginated), in one way or another seeking to ensure the sustenance of the very same beyond its own life span. Motion is inscribed into this sometimes precarious balance, as is a growing indeterminacy at the recognition of enmeshments between nature and culture, human and nature, urban and rural, global and local. Diverging from a naturalised gap between world and word, ecopoetics encompasses a reflectiveness on language, simultaneously propelling its radical reinvention, as it relates to thing- and thought-making while roaming a net of infinite entanglement.

That this net concurrently entwines ecopoetics with economic, socio-historical, and political implications has become apparent since its formation within Environmental Studies, discussed in section 1.1. Early attempts in this regard sought for poeties that would ventriloquise or imitate the voice of nature as an independent other in order to turn the reader’s eye outward to the extra-textual. Re-oriented ecopoetics as an expanded praxis of making with the oikos furthered an interest in the forms and layers facilitating this glance in interdependency with different ecologies. Wary of genres and subsumption of an eco-connection, a new generation of poets was increasingly suspicious of linguistic representations altogether and opened ecopoetics to the experimental tradition of poetry. In Tarlo’s opinion, this tradition can be “particularly powerful in its contribution to the necessary mental and emotional shifts to the environment that we need, urgently, to make.” (*Ground Aslant* 10)

In its encounters with landscapes that can no longer be praised as pristine, innovative, self-reflective, open forms have thus been explored as shaping radical landscape poems on the page

in response to physical spaces interconnected with humans (section 1.2). Larkin's decentred, defamiliarised poetics suggests a radical pastoral, which disrupts expectations of language to behave in ways that can be aligned with an instrumentalised use of the pastoral. In times of microplastics, pacific garbage patches, fine dust, space rubbish, the idea of pure nature not only smacks of ignorance but of ideology that contributes to relentless economic growth and sustains oppressive categories operating within nature/culture, wild/civilised, self/other male/female binaries. Eco-poetics oriented towards the shifts envisioned by Tarlo needs to continuously reflect on its assumptions and adopted views, pushing against exclusions and static, "naturalised" presumptions.

Further complicating a readily assumed gap between language and the "world" in this regard, Retallack's work provided poethic co-ordination (section 1.3). Art, as a wager on the possibility for change, not only represents but poethically questions, challenges, and enacts contemporary conditions and is therefore able to intervene into their trajectories and imagine them differently. In addition to its tangible multi-artistic range, eco-poetics as *ecopoethics* commits to an eco-conscious vision of a different state of the world that crosses the border of the page. Vicuña's holistic egalitarian approach woven into her quipoems above all emphasised the vitality and creativity of the universe as a whole, whose many languages are far beyond human understanding. Her inclusive, affective performances embrace interaction with the indeterminacies accompanying an expanded interconnectedness. Lives, all matter, are in an interdependent flux, in Vicuña's view, and the human has a responsibility to attend to and act upon this knowledge.

In line with this, poetry's traditional interest in place has been oriented towards an eco-poethic place-making coordinate (section 1.4). Along places as knots of global-local threads, the eco-poethical capacity to cross boundaries, push conventions, seek out connections beyond what is immediately visible or what one likes to see, and explore new intersections has been disclosed once more. In attentiveness to extra-textual processes, it not only observes but eco-poethically weaves them into its own processes, offering a space where "things of each possible relation" can be transformed differently (Spahr, *Well Then There Now* 66). Amidst a climate crisis that encompasses the entire globe, the task for poems "to claim a place between critical thought and action, renewing the conditions under which their readers might be moved to remake the global present" (Hunter, *Forms of a World* 127) is perhaps more urgent than ever.

Within this globally intensified present, I find myself, and my poetry, in motion, as it were, encountering the need to change perspective at every newly emerging edge. Places and temporalities, lands and languages, always in plural, in entwinement with other ecosystems, pose re-occurring challenges of how to navigate through them, poetically, *poethically*. Rediscovering place, Spahr wrote that her poetry tried to be an approximation of the shapes around her: *ecopoethics*, thickened by an "h", expresses the necessity to engage with what can be understood and what cannot, carrying over the unfamiliar into language, drawing relations across what is near and what is far. Among the problems of analogy, eco-poetics meets translation, showing further possibilities to reflect on, pressure, expose, transform, move and newly connect language(s).

Shouldering the many linguistic, economic, cultural exchanges of a globally connected world, for better and for worse, how can translation be critically and creatively unpacked, how does it function in the wider field of eco-poetics? What connections arise in the process? What does an eco-poet(h)ical lens bring to translation in turn, which always had an exceptional relationship with poetry? Eco-poetics, newly oriented, leads the way into an emerging zone where the relationship between eco-poetics and processes of translation will be examined.

Chapter 2

Expanding Translation: Co-ordinating an Ecological Translation Zone

Roaming

eARTh

Language

language-baggage, cannot crack open from the outside, circulate & circumnavigate, take the cake and eat it too, is there music under your tongue, residue of agglutinated ash, i want to live beyond my borders, beyond my lines, mine for e-marks to cool down the earth, under your lexical mask drill a hole into verses then morph back into stone throw back what others throw at me, between leaf cells and brain cells, put an abecederian graft over it, this is a linguistic fact; this is a possibility, oh the words the sounds the breaths we stole / we borrowed / expanded / dream-walked from semantic fields / of a fifth season / passed, water your syllables, nouns are out, no lyric without dialogue, “you will be shown the reduced version only”, yet-to-be forgotten roots always stick out, is that blood between your quotation marks, just cling on to a sentence, lick the rain as long as you can; but *what*, each phrase a parliament, the other half always concealed, say “mammoth” and listen to the absence of spears, spare verb-grains, misreading is neglect, cannot crack open from the inside a poem a conversation, assemblage of little shining crystals, present both sides, wunde/r, deep down in your mouth, scratch at the plosive, march for q-marks, means the word to me, never felt the draught of a missing stand-in, make letter realms as wide as the great pacific garbage patch, trod on softer feet, compass is compassion language, Sprache, lingua, logos, langue be-become translate/d, traduire, traduttore, traditore, translatalogues

See-See (Reflections on Richter's Seestück)

How departing from the main road feels

How expectations turn into tangible feelings

How roads break apart leave no more than a destination

How light breaks up when it all falls upon us

How I break apart when light falls upon me

How scribbling falls apart when confronted with thought

How it falls apart when confronted with autonomy

How it crumbles under a much too stern gaze

How it dissolves under the thought of a gaze not stern enough

The ABC creates strands of dates and days a watering heart falling down on me

Did you leave handprints in there / in the seas

Did you leave sand grains of translation

In the wind only their whistles

Über setz / über für mich

2.1 Turning to Translation. Terms and Conditions

Translation operates by exceeding the narrow meaning of language. A novel is translated into a film, just as a political idea can be translated into action. A human being's creative capacity can be translated into capital, their desires translated into dreams, their aspirations translated into seats in parliament. Translation passes through and circulates in the intervals of different instances of meaning, threading together discontinuous contexts. — Naoki Sakai (1)

In fascination with her surroundings, the German poet Sarah Kirsch (1935 – 2013) expresses the wish to absorb and write every detail of them, suggesting an immersive ecopoetics: „Ich sehe etwas und will haargenau bedenken können, wie es aussah. Wie der Eindruck war. Was ich empfunden habe. Wie der Klang des Windes war. Wie diese Farbe.“ (Kirsch in Radisch) Anne Stokes, one of the translators of Kirsch's poetry, moved this quote into English: “I see something and I want to capture exactly what it looked like. What effect it had. What I felt. How the wind sounded. What the colour was.” (Stokes xvii)

The choice to use “capture” is interesting here and opens room for discussion. As has been shown, an ecopoet(h)ic relationship between writers and locations is permeated by interconnection, dynamic openness, and reflectiveness regarding the politics and use of language. To capture, to keep hold of something, to fix in language, arguably paints an appropriative and totalising picture of Kirsch's endeavour, one that seems to be closer to the traditional concept of landscape as a distant portion of land enclosed by the human eye.¹ Kirsch, also a painter, was indeed very visually-oriented. Nevertheless, her poetry scarcely suggests any sense of capturing. On the contrary: Particularly her late poems are full of recurring motifs and titles (i.e. “Mudflat I” and “Mudflat II” (185, 187), “Trees” and “Trees” (97, 151)) and do not shy away from exploring the same landscapes again and again, in different seasons, daytimes, and weather. A biologist by training, Kirsch in fact strictly negated the idea of being a detached observer of nature and refuted being labelled a nature poet (Radisch). Considering the label in more depth, she says: “Perhaps nature poetry [is an appropriate term] if it means seeing yourself as part of nature. [...] It is all interconnected.”² (Stokes xix) Leaning towards an ecological perspective, Kirsch stresses the infinite plurality of the natural world of which poems are only ever able to register one particular aspect: “Remarkably, I can describe the same thing again and again from different angles. [...] Even my daily notes are essentially the same, but they always take different turns. It's just like life, the same and yet not the same. You need to have humility and modesty.”³ (xviii)

Emphasising mutual connectedness between humans and all kinds of other earthlings, Kirsch

¹ A different sense of capturing is developed in section 3.3

² „Vielleicht ist Naturlyrik, wenn man sich selber als ein Stück Natur betrachtet. [...] Das hängt doch alles sehr eng zusammen.“ (Radisch)

³ „Merkwürdigerweise kann ich dasselbe immer wieder von einem anderen Punkt aus beschreiben. [...] Auch meine täglichen Notizen sind eigentlich immer dasselbe, aber es kommt immer zu anderen Wendungen. Das ist wie das Leben, es ist dasselbe und ist doch nicht dasselbe. Man muss dazu ganz demütig und ganz einfach sein.“ (Radisch)

envisioned living as modelled by her writing, living like the poems she made (Radisch), echoing an eco-poethic practice that moves off the page and enacts complex realism (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 13). The German verb Kirsch uses to describe her poetic approach is „bedenken“, a rather unusual and, one could perhaps even say, slightly old-fashioned word. It suggests tentative remembering, taking into consideration, noting, reflecting on, thinking about something (again) (denken = to think). In line with Kirsch’s emphasis on a writing practice encompassing humility, I propose another translation that I see more in line with her emerging eco-poethics: “I look at something and I want to be able to figure out exactly what it looked like. What the sensation was. What I felt. What sound the wind made. What its colour was.”

I decided to translate „bedenken“ with “figuring out”, since I read Kirsch’s statement in tandem with her practical attempts to explore a mode of coexisting with a place through writing. Deviating from Stokes, I decided to use “look” instead of “see” in order to be able to recreate its echo in “what it looked like” (in German „sehen“ and „aussehen“), which connects the observer with the observed. This choice implies an intensified, prolonged act of looking but takes away the meaning of incidental seeing as noticing. Where Stokes uses the pronoun “it”, Kirsch’s German version does not specify who is experiencing or effecting the mentioned „Eindruck“. I wanted to keep that ambivalence, and I wanted to include sensory dimension, which is why I chose “sensation” from other options including impression or experience. Instead of translating „wie“ as “how”, like Stokes, I took the liberty to emphasise the wind as an eco-poietical actant who actively makes a sound. The four anaphora further add a poetical note, which in German is generated by the assonating [v] and [i:] (in „wie diese“) sounds. My final sentence reads Kirsch’s German use of „diese“ in connection with the aforementioned „etwas“ (“something”) rather than as a general reference to the environment and thus directly refers the question regarding the “colour” to it: “What *its* colour was.”

This brief example demonstrates that one text, even as short as the one above, can inspire more than one translation. Emerging as a creative process of decision-making, transformation, and negotiating, each translation has its own flaws and strengths. Based on different individual readings and interpretations, each translation presents a different angle of the source without fully grasping it in its entirety – “the same and yet not the same.” (Stokes xviii) Reminiscent of Juliana Spahr’s compositions of what is both “like and unlike” (*Well Then There Now* 56) (see section 1.4), a translation can be seen as presenting different constellations of dis/connections. As “beginnings” rather than closures (Becker 18), they call forth more translations with which they coexist and interact.

In that sense, Kirsch’s numerous poetic attempts at reaching the depth of the multi-sensory *oikos* can themselves be read as open-ended translations. They seek to figure out, approximate the shapes and colours and expressions of things around and in interdependency with her, attentive to constant shifts and (e)motions. To follow this line, it is necessary to add a deeper insight into the dynamics of translation to the developed insights into eco-poet(h)ics. Reflecting on Stokes’ choice to use the controversial verb “capture” has been crucial for my translation and

further thought process, since it sharpened my attentiveness to the ecoethics of writing the environment, or rather, the more-than-human oikos. From this encounter between translation and ecoethical considerations thus emerges an orientation towards what I call the *ecological translation zone*, which explores ways of thinking about writing and reading engagements with a vibrant Mitwelt at linguistic, species, and other borders. Establishing a link to Translation Studies, it invokes Emily Apter's interstitial, cultural-political "translation zone" (*Translation Zone* 3-11).⁴ As a transdisciplinary zone of "critical engagement" (5), it points to the cultural expansion of interlingual translation, which will be further examined in the pages that follow. Denoting a variety of things, including a discipline, practice, and product, translation is initially understood as a nodal word related to processes of movement, relation-making, and transformation. Throughout this and the following chapter, these directions will activate translation as an embodied writing practice, lens, and concept that intertwines with ecoethics to shape an expanded eco-conscious, trans-boundary creative-critical connection-making, eventually culminating in an ecotranslation.

In order to ground an ecological translation zone amidst the manifoldness of the term "translation", my theoretical framework begins with interlingual translation and takes a radial expansion from there. As Chesterman and Arrojo phrase it, "there is no such thing as a totally objective definition of 'translation' [and] there will never be any definition that will be all-inclusive" (152). Working with it thus necessitates a wagering openness and a reflective acknowledgement of its always-approximating character. Translation itself conditions translational processes across disciplinary, linguistic, cultural, cognitive, medial, and physical boundaries. Translation, from Latin *translatio*, translated from the Greek *metaphorá*, *metaphero*, to carry across, is itself a spatial metaphor for the very process of translation (Guldin 20). Precisely in its trans-itional becoming state escaping ontological fixation, translation, like ecoethics, shimmers in the realm of paradoxes, disrupts the status quo, and demands trans-formative process thinking that can move words from the place where they belong to "another vacant place where there is no literal term available" (7). In line with Guldin's vision to map translation as a cross-disciplinary travelling concept (cf. Bal), this statement can be expanded to refer not only to words: translation can involve actions; it initiates movement — perceptual, imaginative, or physical — from a familiar place to another vacant place previously unknown. In that sense, translation is a poethical wager, swerving courageously into radical indeterminacy.

Loosely resounding existing projects under the umbrella of expanded translation and echo-

⁴ In Translation Studies, a "translation zone" has also been defined as an "area of intense interaction across language" (Simon, 'The Translation Zone' 181). Translation is regarded as a key aspect of physical "contact zones", understood as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." (Pratt 4) Border areas of multilingual cities have for example been conceptualised as translation zones (cf. Cronin and Simon). In that sense, a translation zone is particularly attentive to conflict, intense movement across languages, and translation as social interaction in global space.

ing Rosalind Krauss's expansion of the field,⁵⁶ the term "expanded" propels translation beyond a persisting linguistic fixation on a Jakobsonian "translation proper".⁷ Channelled by an ecological perspective that insists on interdependency and process, the expansion of translation to an ecological zone anchors an enlarged interconnected, more-than-human globalised political, socio-cultural realm. A zone can refer to a geographical, temporal, or a politically charged area; to war zones, occupational zones, neutral zones, danger zones, currency zones, tariff zones, or time zones; to clearly delineated territory or to anthropogenically constructed climate zones without steadfast borders. As a topological metaphor, one can move in and out of comfort zones, zone in on something, zone something, or be in the zone. The term translation itself may be described as a zone of transition, a zone of contact between the foreign and the familiar (cf. Venuti, 'Translation, Community, Utopia' 477). Translation is given room to shuttle along a creative axis, where it can not only be perceived as "the governing principle for culture at large, but also the very basis of life on earth" (Guldin 118), acknowledging omnipresent motion and flux.⁸ In this perspective, language in translation comes not only up against a linguistic border, but meets fundamental underlying concepts of coexistence, attitudes towards poetry and life that shape our "position as language-using animals in a world composed of interconnection" (Reilly, 'Eco-Noise' 261).

Within an envisioned ecological translation zone at the nexus of translation ecology and literary ecology, translation can therefore be looked at ecopoetically and ecopoet(h)ics can be looked at in translation perspective. The mutually constitutive relation will add to the coordinates sketched in the first chapter and thus further disclose the ecopoethic potential to make connections on and off the page and across borders, unleash transversal, sometimes unexpected movements as wagers on change, give attention to the unknown and stage encounters with the Mitwelt through potentially conflicted knots of places and languages. In line with this, the majority of poems gathered in this chapter channel their ecopoethical concerns through explor-

⁵ See for example the AHRC network Poetry and Expanded Translation, which included sound, art, performance, and creative writing practices.

⁶ Krauss's landmark essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1979) pertains to a shift in sculptural practices in the late 1970s. Amidst blurring boundaries between art, landscape, interiors, and architecture, Krauss identifies a structuralist need to locate them historically and discursively in a logical expansion of the foundational binary landscape and architecture. The emergent expanded field "both mirrors the original opposition and at the same time opens it" (Krauss 37), thus "provid[ing] both for an expanded but finite set of related positions" (42) around which novel practices can be organised, including for example the works of Joel Shapiro, Mary Miss, and Robert Smithson. Notably, Smithson's "boxing the compass" of his *Spiral Jetty* (1970) was the inspiration for Skinner's compass points for ecopoetics ('What is Ecopoetics?'). *Spiral Jetty*, a 460m x 4.6m spiral entirely built of mud, salt crystals, and basalt rocks, is a site-specific earthwork located on the shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah that changes and disintegrates over time.

⁷ The Russian structuralist Roman Jakobson famously suggested a triadic division of translation into 1. intralingual translation or rewording (translation of verbal signs into other signs within one language system), 2. intersemiotic translation or transmutation (translation of verbal signs into nonverbal sign systems), and 3. interlingual translation or translation proper (translation of verbals signs from one language into a different one) (Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects' 233). The linguistic bias of this view has strongly influenced Translation Studies. Poetry translation is notably excluded from translation proper and only possible as "transmutation" in Jakobson's perspective.

⁸ This will be further discussed in section 2.4.1.

ations of different modes of translation, interlingual or else.⁹ The emerging symbiosis between translating and writing will be the subject of the next section (2.2). It will be followed by an eco-poetical inquiry into the trajectory of environmental poetry („Ökolyrik“) in the country of my (m)other tongue (2.3.) Finally, the interplay between translation and ecopoetics will culminate in the framework of an ecotranslation (2.4), a term that builds on but moves away from currently existing research (cf. Xu; Scott, *Literary Translation*; ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’; Cronin, *Eco-Translation*). The aim is not only to conceptualise creative moments of transformational otherness, distance, and proximity in ecopoetics but also to make them productive in an expansion of a narrow understanding of interlingual translation with an emphasis of poetry, the traditional crux of translation.

2.1.1 Translation in Expanded Context

Most commonly understood as the “process or activity of changing the words of one language into the words in another language that have the same meaning” (Oxford Dictionary), translation seeks to compensate for the seemingly obvious yet far-reaching circumstance that people use different languages. As one of the fastest growing industries today (cf. Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 13-14; *Translation, Ecology and Food* 247; Cabrera), translation enables cross-cultural communication, intellectual exchange between countries, commercial and political relations – in other words, the running of today’s global informational economy (cf. Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 11-12). With regard to a global ecological crisis, it is therefore also integral to climate change communication, international summits, and agreements on climate action. Translation “is all about making connections, linking one culture and language to another, setting up the conditions for an open-ended exchange of goods, technologies and ideas.” (41) A parallel to ecopoetics as a boundary, relation-making practice becomes already apparent here. Practically and in view of a scholarly discourse reaching back for over 2000 years however, the split between source and target culture remains a clash of divergent power politics, the double binding of the translator an unsolved dichotomy, the actual feasibility of translation an ontological inquiry. The writer and translator Umberto Eco phrases it as follows:

It is curious to remark that, while so many philosophical discussions have cast doubt on the very possibility of translation, since each language represents an incommensurable structure, it is precisely the empirical evidence of translation that challenges the philosophical assertions about the dependence of world views on language. Thus translation re-proposes to philosophy its everlasting question, namely, whether there is a way in which things go, independently of the way our languages make them go.
(182)

⁹ The ekphrastic poem preceding this section, for example, loosely connects to, “translates”, a painting by Gerhard Richter.

Considered in this way, translation is inextricably linked to language and, echoing a potential gap between “world and word”, points to still unresolved questions regarding the essence, mechanics, and origins of language. Whether consciously or unconsciously assuming a theory and concept of it, both the investigation into translation and the practice of translation therefore necessarily entail a study of language (Steiner 45; Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 35). Depending on the assumed model of language, practical translation problems will be approached differently, while examinations of translation practices in turn offer insights into theoretical language models. Over time, two extreme poles can be observed as still shaping translation queries in that regard: untranslatability on the one and translatability on the other hand. These two seemingly opposites are often reiterated in conversations surrounding translation in various realms, academic and non-academic, including ecocritical conversations regarding the un/translatability of “nature”.¹⁰ In this subsection, I will therefore investigate the peculiar friction between these two poles and explore the enlarged field of translation co-ordinated by the cultural turn. This will pave the way for an organic perspective and considerations on translation processes pertaining to ecopoethics and more-than-human languages.

The position of untranslatability commonly draws on a concept of linguistic relativity linked to the names of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. From their point of view, language is regarded as inseparably intertwined with cognition. It consequently forms thought, cultural identity, and apprehension of reality to such an extent that any attempt to translate between languages, equated with world views, is deemed impossible. The opposite pole can be traced to an underlying belief in universalism, most commonly connected to Noam Chomsky’s concept of transformational-generative grammar. Since the ability to think is assumed to be universal in this view, languages merely use different surface structures to express underlying ideas but are connected by shared deep structures that make translation possible. Between the extreme monadist position refuting translation and the universal position encouraging it, key translation questions concerning the relationship between source and target text and the task of the translator can be situated.

Leaning towards an overarching assumption of untranslatability despite practical feasibility, the practice of translating religious texts gave rise to the notion of a stable, holy original, which has influenced the Western translation landscape in the long term (cf. Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures* 25). Faced with the naturally impossible task to neither change the sense nor the word order in translation, the translator arose as the perennial *traitor* who, imprisoned in the dilemma to remain faithful to both of the involved languages, is doomed to fail. Leaning towards a generally assumed principle of translatability, the introduction of modern linguistics, advances in cognitive and psycho-linguistics, and the development of machine translation put the relationship between source text (ST) and target text (TT) in focus. To that end, standardisation of translation processes, categorisation of language-pair specific problems, and the search for

¹⁰ This is further explored in section 2.4.1.

equivalents in particular emerged as central questions (cf. Catford 21; Nida). Interestingly, many translation models in this vein continue to revolve around untranslatability as a form of non-equivalence between two languages — or between two cultures.¹¹ That means, untranslatability does not necessarily exclude translatability but is incorporated into it, turning un/translatability into a question of method and degree. It is worth keeping this in mind for ecopoetic encounters taking place at the edge of the human language border. Part of the paradoxical nature of translation seems to be that it is not only able to continuously hold the two apparently diverging poles, but that it even derives its dynamics from them, as they offer to be entered from a philosophical, cultural, historical, or practical perspective, and, as will be demonstrated, an ecological one.

As pointed out earlier, the running of the 21st century today relies on interlingual translation. Translatability is perpetuated by a growing translation industry, multilingual corporations, instructions accompanying products, international literary bestsellers, and Google Translate. At the same time, however, so-called “untranslatable words” from around the world are in high demand, protectively resisting the idea of being translatable, thus not so unique after all.¹² Usually followed by an explanation or suggested expressions in the target language, popular clichés such as *Saudade* and *Gemütlichkeit* arguably already defeat their own absolute untranslatability. The fact that they are dubbed untranslatable nevertheless seems to purport a view on translation as the impossible act of changing everything without changing anything.

At the basis of this notion is an illusive idea of sameness where there is actually more difference: Translation lives on differences, on the existence of a plurality of languages. Regarded as a positive self-sustaining force, it can contribute to cultural exchanges, introduce other voices, and expand the linguistic horizon. Translation would defeat itself if its aim were the erasure of all differences (cf. Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 130). Instances where nothing is changed are not so much instances of translation but of a lack of translation — for example in favour of language imperialism, as Spahr experienced it in Hawai’i (cf. 1.4). Apter goes as far as to claim that non-translation or “severe mistranslation” between nations can constitute a form of war (*Translation Zone* 16).¹³ In that sense, untranslatability, meaning difficulties or language-pair specific problems within a principle of general translatability, points to the need of “more translation not less” (Cronin, *Eco-Translation* 17). As the quote by Sarah Kirsch at the beginning of this chapter showed, words that seem closely tied to an individual, to a specific situation, a place, and a time in one language suggest more than one possible translation to fathom their potential meanings.

¹¹ Catford, for instance, discusses linguistic and cultural untranslatability in relative rather than in absolute terms, and also points to their imbrication (94-103). In his view, linguistic untranslatability of specific textual units can be circumnavigated by shifting to a different “rank” (morpheme, word, group, clause, or sentence) if it is not possible to find an equivalent at the desired rank (8), which refutes the idea of specific untranslatable words.

¹² National and economic interests may also be at play here: Apter discusses how untranslatable words function as national tropes, touristic cliché and cultural capital (*Against World Literature* 138).

¹³ Apter approaches this notion from a cultural-political perspective and draws on 9/11. The lack of translation does not always mean that no communication takes place, it can also mean that people are multilingual and converse across more than one language. The sheer manifoldness of languages on the globe, however, makes it necessary to rely on modes of translation.

This is particularly the case in view of language in interconnectedness with an equivocal, continuously changing oikos, an infinitely entangled net of potential relations at the edge of what we know and can know. Translation here poses again the question how language is expected to behave and what it means to build a common ground of understanding in the first place. It envisions to establish connections *through* differences and indeterminacies, as it is moving in the world, building fractal relationships with it.

Such an emerging organic perspective of language embedded in a political, economic, socio-historical context is at the heart of the cultural turn in Translation Studies (cf. Bassnett and Lefevere, 'The Cultural Turn').¹⁴ It not only extends untranslatability to cultural untranslatability in a wider sense, but further emphasises that translation as an unmediated, neutral, and transparent linguistic activity is no longer tenable, since "translation always takes place in a continuum, never in a void" (Bassnett, 'The Translation Turn' 123). Inhabiting the middle ground between linguistic relativity claiming that language shapes the social reality and universalism emphasising universal linguistic structures, Susan Bassnett specifically draws attention to the reciprocal relation between language and culture:

Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his or her peril. (*Translation Studies* 39)

Against this backdrop, the study of translation as well as the task of the translator are enmeshed with political, cultural, ideological, economical, and ethical concerns that highlight the relativity of equivalence and sameness. With an emphasis on the generative function of translation, it is inextricably bound to motion and change, since nothing stays the same in translation but is newly constructed in a different linguistic, and thus also historical, cultural, and economic context (cf. Pym 29). This widened perspective is crucial for an expanded translation encompassing generative processes of relation-making of all kinds. Translation is made visible as a creative intervention; it necessitates transformation, or, as Cronin contends, "[T]ranslation without change is not translation but mere citation" (*Translation and Globalization* 38).

Emerging as a cross-cultural mediator (cf. Bassnett, 'Culture and Translation' 14), this view simultaneously allows the translator to transcend the negative image as a traitor who, imprisoned between faithfulness to either source text or target text, is inevitably doomed to fail. Instead, they fulfil a vital task in "ensuring the survival of literary works" (Lefevere, *Translating Poetry* 119). An advocated synergy between study and praxis of translation (cf. Bassnett and Bush) further

¹⁴ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere ('The Cultural Turn'; *Constructing Cultures*) are widely acknowledged as the advocates of the so-called cultural turn in anglophone Translation Studies. Other important figures include Itamar Even-Zohar, Edwin Gentzler, Mary Snell-Hornby, Gayatri Spivak, Gideon Toury, and more recently Emily Apter, Mona Baker, Esperança Bielsa, Michael Cronin, Moira Inghilleri, Sherry Simon, Maria Tymoczko, and Lawrence Venuti. A historical overview is for example provided by Annie Brisset, 'Cultural Perspectives on Translation' (2010).

highlights the translation process as an ultimately creative writing process based on a series of readings, negotiations, and decisions. That these are naturally also embedded in a cultural context and include their own problematic constraints, including copyright issues, publisher's decisions, literary trends, social hierarchies, political interests, and global market dynamics (cf. Bassnett, 'The Translation Turn' 123) is a founding pillar of Lawrence Venuti's influential work in Translation Studies. The resistant force he accredits to emancipated translation feeds into its eco-poetical reinvention and therefore deserves further discussion.

Critic and literary translator himself, Venuti's critique of oppressive translation practices and the marginality of translations in the Anglo-American world in particular is a forceful manifesto for linguistic plurality and cultural difference promoted by empowered translators. Drawing on Friedrich Schleiermacher's two proposed methods of translation whilst disclosing the historic specificity of the latter's nationalistic agenda to enrich the German language (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 20-21, 95-106), he emphasises the inevitable power relation between source and target culture. Between leaving "the author in peace, as much as possible, and moving the reader towards him (foreignization, my comment) or leaving the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moving the author towards him (domestication, my comment)" (Schleiermacher, translated by Lefevere, *Translating Literature* 74), foreignization remains the favoured mode for Venuti. Within an ecological translation zone, this speaks to an unfixed position embracing motion whilst discovering unsettling lines of connections, opening up to potentially uncomfortable encounters with the foreign behind the familiar one likes to see. Ideally then, the translator opposes techniques of fluency that veil the origin of the foreign text for the purpose of integrating it into the literary target canon. Looking beyond surface analogies, they thus consciously construct and mark the translation in its foreignness and deviation from market expectations.

Imbued with an instrumental purpose, translations prepared in this vein can reflect on existing translation practices, challenge them, and resist the cultural dominant of the target culture. They simultaneously cancel the "invisibility" (cf. Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*) of the translator whose role is often only commented on when associated with apparently faulty translations, commonly meaning texts deviating from fluency expectations and presenting cultural and literary unfamiliarity. Pursuing a hermeneutic approach, Venuti's view pushes against untranslatability, since it is based on the premise that translation necessitates radical transformation:

Translating is an interpretive act of ethnocentric violence whereby a source text is rewritten—that is to say, its linguistic constituents are dismantled, rearranged, and ultimately displaced—according to intelligibilities and interests that are fundamentally those of the receiving culture. ('Translating Power' 1)

This notion is notably underpinned by insights into the rise of the — linguistic and thus simultaneously cultural — hegemony of the English language concomitant with an overall lacking interest in foreign language learning and a rather passive translation culture promoting transparency and fluency. Venuti points to the extremely low figure of translated literature within the print culture

of the UK and the US (at the time less than 3%) (*Translator's Invisibility* 12-15), opposed to the vast amount that is translated from English into other languages.¹⁵ Based on an imbalanced power relationship, translation no longer functions to disclose difference but facilitates a “problem-based monocultural aesthetic agenda” (Apter, *Translation Zone* 99), or, in ecopoetic terms, a “monocrop” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’) that wipes out biocultural diversity. The foreignisation model can be seen as opposing this development by extending the emerging violence in translation to the target culture (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 19, 147), where translated texts can fulfil their role as a positive force that disrupts the status quo. Enclosed in the inherent violence of translation is thus always an “exorbitant gain of other possibilities” (18).

Venuti's project pioneers a political investigation of the power dynamics inevitably involved in translation production, beginning from underpaid translators, translation rights, publishing industries, literary canons, and under-represented minority languages in translation. An empowered translator and an educated reader have been central to his agenda (cf. Venuti, ‘How to Read a Translation’), as has his paedagogical vision for a translation culture

where translated texts are knowledgeably written and read, taught and studied, recognized as works that are not simply distinct from the source texts they translate but also vital to the receiving culture and to its ongoing exchanges with various foreign cultures. (‘Translating Power’ 247-48)

Venuti's relentless emphasis on translation as an interpretive act, later formulated as a “hermeneutic model” (*Translation Changes Everything* 4, 179; *Contra Instrumentalism* 1-40) further refutes the treacherous status of the translator and highlights translations as versions in their own right springing from a source text as a site of plurality, as it has been initially shown in relation to the ecopoetics of Sarah Kirsch.

The theoretical advances initiated by the cultural turn in Translation Studies opened translation to a wider interdisciplinary field where it propelled concerns relating to motion, travel, migration, communication, cultural otherness, attention, or creativity. In the wake of what Bassnett and Doris Bachmann-Medick thus respectively anticipated as the onset of a “translation turn in culture studies” (Bassnett, ‘The Translation Turn’ 136) and a wider “translational turn” in the Humanities at large (Bachmann-Medick, ‘Translational Turn’ 2), translation has been (re)claimed by various disciplines, including postcolonial studies, anthropology and ethnography, gender studies, history, media studies, sociology, comparative literature, biosemiotics, and also ecology. As a loose metaphor for transboundary mediation, (re)combination, change, and shape-shifting relating to a variety of phenomena (cf. Guldin; Bal; Alfer), translation has also been (re)discovered

¹⁵ According to a survey commissioned by the Booker International Prize, the numbers of translated fiction have risen in the UK, coming up to 5.64% in 2019 (The Booker Prizes).

in psychoanalysis, genetics, medicine, and computer science.¹⁶ In the course of an increased interest in translation, both its negative and positive capacities have received attention; its abilities to disclose asymmetrical power relations as well as reinforce them, to resist homogenisation as well as become absorbed by it, to reside in the shadow of an original as well as innovatively create “sites of collaboration, and contestation” (Bhabha 2).

The diverse lines of research falling under such an expanded use of translation often leave constitutive blocks of linguistic translation theory, including premises of language proficiency, equivalence, and the notion of an original altogether and operate under much freer, or rather, different assumptions. In ethnography for example, the ethnographer is conceptualised as a cultural translator without pre-existing text. By recording oral accounts, encounters, and experiences in the field, they create an original translation of the Other. In this context, the filter of translation can help to reflect on the ethical and political implications, as well as on the methodological assumptions underlying modes of writing and representation (cf. Clifford and Marcus; Bachmann-Medick, ‘Meanings of Translation’; Hermans). The emerging notion of the translator as original inventor of text deriving from or inspired by other, not necessarily written sources, bolsters a generative principle of translating as a creative writing process embracing connection-making in attentiveness to an expressive, plurivocal *Mitwelt*.

Naturally, this generative principle also applies to translation approaches in the field of Creative Writing itself, whose focus on writerly subjectivity and creativity unleashed in translational processes has contributed to what is sometimes referred to as a “creative turn” (Rossi 382; Perteghella; Loffredo and Perteghella). Following in the footsteps of Ezra Pound’s deliberately appropriative translations of Chinese poetry, composed with little knowledge of Chinese and no aspiration to claim any type of traditional faithfulness, the “poet’s version, clearly an amalgam of what we understand today as translation and adaptation, close rendering and free re-writing” (Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything* 179) has established its own mode of literary translation and writing. A number of my own poems, including “Staying connected”, “Far-House”, and “LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine’s *Lebensfahrt*)” are bent towards this mode, embracing its creative force and radically subverting existing ideas pertaining to the translator as a producer of subordinated texts.

More than a hundred years ago, a groundbreaking psychoanalytic theory also ventured an unrestrained expanded notion of translation, whose incomparable “scope, extension, and depth” (Mahony 65) have only been retrieved fairly recently (cf. Mahony; A. Benjamin; Parker and Mathews). Sigmund Freud’s *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) pays close attention to processes of verbalisation, interpretation, transposition, transference, and translation.

¹⁶ A comprehensive overview of the various uses of translation as a cross-disciplinary metaphor is provided by *Translation as Metaphor* (Guldin 2015). Early landmark texts advancing a broadened concept of cultural translation include for instance *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (Cheyfitz 1991), *Siting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context* (Niranjana 1992), *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha 1994), *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (Simon 1996), and *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999).

His conceptualised process of psychic translation from the language of latent dream thoughts („Traumgedanken“) into the language of manifest dream content („Trauminhalt“), which then needs to be further translated by the dream analyst (Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* 280-81), leaves a narrow translation axiom behind and emphasises the plurality, transformative, and not least revelatory force of translation.

While a detailed discussion of all these approaches lies beyond the scope of this thesis, these impulses attest to the manifoldness and versatility of an expanded translation that operates across layers and can be productively oriented within various frameworks. Amidst the popularity of translation as “one of the essential metaphors, if not *the metaphor*, of our globalized world” (Guldin 1) its ubiquity nevertheless poses a number of challenges. Critics have voiced their fear of a non-theoretical dilution of the concept translation (Bachmann-Medick, ‘Translational Turn’ 2; Alfer 8-9; Trivedi 285), which would eventually render it altogether meaningless. On the one hand, existing insights into traditional language translation are often not taken into consideration in cultural accounts (Trivedi 281-82). On the other hand, the multiple approaches accompanying an expanded cultural notion do not always feed back into interlingual translation. As is often the case, a lacking cross-disciplinary interaction, a lacking translation as cross-disciplinary communication itself, so to speak, divides the various fields of studies that have emerged around the term translation. An ambiguous dynamics seems to pervade it, once again pulling at different extreme ends, where translation can mean everything between describing, reformulating, and creating at one end while it remains reserved for the one successful, correct interlingual transfer as a “shooting” from one source to “kill” the target (Rabassa 5) at the other end.

Given its many appearances “in this brave new dystopian world of cultural translation” (Trivedi 287), it seems undoubtedly necessary to continuously ground specific uses of translation in context, as I will proceed to do in the pages that follow. Given the intrinsic metaphoricity of the word translation itself, it seems simultaneously undoubtedly necessary to move beyond a linguistic bias implied by this so-called “dystopian world”, which appears to continuously anchor *translation proper* as the original non-metaphorical modus operandi of translation. Expanded translation thus attempts to further conversations between linguistic translation and other areas in translation, releasing “translation from its disciplinary home into an interdisciplinary questioning” (Parker and Mathews 17). Set in motion, an ecological translation zone above all emphasises a poietic element potentially shared by all forms of translation as generative, creative *making*. When I explore translation in tandem with ecopoet(h)ics, I therefore seek to measure a shared zone for encounters between language-specific interlingual translation concerns and a wider “interdisciplinary questioning”, which ideally acts upon both sides. With this in mind, the emerging encounters need to work through issues of poetry translation, the traditional crux of an un/translatability debate. Turned outwards to an interconnected more-than-human net, the following interlude suggests some of the forms encounters between ecopoethics and translation can take at a creative-critical edge.

Brave New World

[after Brigitte Röttgers]

normed solar radiation
clouds punched into the sky
clickable trees and bushes
grasses and flowers like real
 scents
individually adjustable
rain and thunder
naturally
saved on request

Translatalogues

coal guts of the Rhein-Rhur-Becken
 wear no wind jacket,
 Duisburg
 biggest Schrottplatz Europas right, look

substance of Pushkin's fairytale

cat liked Tchaikovsky best
brushing against ebony keys
smoking Vermicelli
angel hair bus from Herne Bay

to Kiel Earth on

feet, Howth Dublin else
 where searching for pieces sorting
 people / animals
 carrying
 ghostsmells
 over
 river
 partly singing

lyrical
scenes

2.1.2 The Eco-poet(h)ics of It

Within ongoing avid translation debates, poetry has received a special place, which is all the more surprising given its rather marginal position in the literary publishing landscape as a whole. Often regarded even separate from literary prose translation (Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures* 57), the ecology of poetic language, “[w]oven of echoes, reflections, and the interaction of sound with meaning” (Paz 155) escapes functional translation models and formalising attempts. Innovative and experimental poetry discussed in chapter 1 particularly twists language and generates it precisely in resistance to linguistic norms, communicative expectations, and grammatical rules, inventing new words, including the material page, wagering on ambiguity and multilinearity. The preceding poem in the interlude exemplifies this once more, condensing sentences, flouting syntax, and omitting punctuation to weave together memories from place-knots in a breathless extended more-than-human line: “Howth Dublin else / where searching for pieces sorting / people / animals” (“Translatalogues”). At the interface between eco-poethics and translation, it is necessary to disentangle poetry translation from its underlying presumptions and emphasise the plurality of the source text in line with an organic interconnectedness of language. Thus taking a step back, Sarah Kirsch’s poetry offers again a point of reference to inquire into a few selected peculiarities of poetry, viewed in an ecological translation zone:

Tag Tag aller
 Schönster Tag wie
 Dunkelheit aus dem
 Kasten steigt ein rotes
 Stück Mond aufgeht
 Kupferglucken Silber
 Mönche Zimtbären
 Achateulen durchs
 Fenster (493)¹⁷

Deviating from grammatical norms, a sentence like this would probably be met with refusal if it appeared in a factual text or conversation. The use of the dense, ungrammatical enumeration

¹⁷ Here is an English translation of this extract, prepared in collaboration with Google Translate:

Day day all
 most beautiful day like
 darkness out of
 the box rises a red
 piece of moon rises
 copper chucking silver
 monks cinnamon bears
 Achateulen through
 the window

„Kupferglucken Silber / Mönche Zimtbären / Achateulen“ can be seen as creating an extended, multisensory image of nightfall. Conceptualised as an expanded translation, it also moves a specific intangible subjective impression and an interspecies encounter with moths into a reproducible form, namely human language (cf. Conley 177). The names might have been chosen due to their connecting phonemic and visual qualities: „Kupfer“ (copper) forms a cohesive link with „Silber“ (silver), and „Zimtbär“ (lit. cinnamon bear) works on an olfactory dimension with the connotation of “cinnamon” to complement the title “November” in its reference to Christmas. Knowing the denotative meaning of „Zimtbär“ here is not necessarily relevant to take something away from the poem, as it can be seen as doing more than educating the reader about moths’ names.

Perceived as the “most complex of all linguistic structures” (Holmes 9), poetry cannot be reduced to informational or communicative content (cf. Kloepfer, *Poetik und Linguistik* 28; Collom 12; Venuti, ‘Introduction’ 128). It seeks movement beyond that, connection and (e)motion on and off the page. It therefore explodes general language models relying on message and receiver or structural separations between signifier and signified. As words, pauses, clauses, lines, and verses are in organic interaction with one another and generate overlapping associative spaces, it is hard to break down a poem into designated translatable units, since even the question as to what constitutes the smallest unit in a poem has not resulted in a universal answer. Poetry is unquantifiable in that sense and, given its intentionally ambiguous and inexplicable nature, often regarded as untranslatable. Despite the long tradition and vast number of translated poems throughout history – or perhaps for this very reason – communication about poetry translation is shaped by aphorisms, metaphorical images, and polemical arguments. It once more calls to mind Eco’s comment about the practice of translation pressuring its ontological possibility (182), as well as echoing a persisting gulf between theoretical and practical approaches.

Again, it is possible to retrieve a few extreme positions from a wide spectrum of ideas. The infamously popular and often falsely cited quote ascribed to Robert Frost, namely that “poetry is what gets lost in translation” can be seen as marking one end of it.¹⁸ At the other end is the idea that poetry could also be what is *found* or *gained* in translation, for example voiced by Joseph Brodsky and Octavio Paz. Between those two simplified ends, there is also evidence for the notion that I have already touched upon and will further explore throughout this and the following chapter, namely, that poetry can be regarded as a form of translation (cf. Kloepfer, *Theorie einer Literarischen Übersetzung* 123; Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 157) from intangible into tangible expressions. Whatever view one takes, it becomes apparent that experimentally oriented poetry tends to push language to the edge of what we know, pressing again questions of what it means to comprehend, think, communicate, use language and translate altogether. These questions add

¹⁸ According to Frost’s friend Louis Untermeyer, he used this expression in a conversation, during which he simultaneously claimed that poetry “is also what is lost in interpretation” (Untermeyer 18). In a later interview recorded on tape, the transcription records Frost suggesting a much more vague statement: “I could define poetry this way: it is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation. That means something in the way words are curved and all that – the way the words are taken, the way you take the words.” (Brooks and Warren 7)

to and are vital for ecopoet(h)ics and its attempts to make connections, make places, reach across boundaries, and translate into more-than-human care.

In light of the diverse uses of translation outlined in the previous section, its metaphoricity, and the observation that it inevitably includes change, the claim that poetry essentially involves absolute untranslatability already seems untenable. Given the persistence of such a view, it seems nevertheless necessary to work through this prejudice by drawing on selected approaches to poetry translation. Staying with Kirsch's poetry and her translations into English, I will therefore review selected assumptions underlying Frost's reiterated quote in particular. Further propelling translating as an independent creative mode acting within a greater organic continuum of languages in interdependency with the world, I will subsequently draw on Walter Benjamin's 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', before exemplifying an ecopoethically informed investigation of poetry translation.

Conceived as an interpretive act that "inscribes its interpretation at every stage in the writing process, starting from the very choice of the source text and including every verbal choice" (Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything* 179), a translation can be seen as continuing one particular colouring of the poem, relating to one of its infinite facets without "capturing" it in full. I suggested above that the associative colouring in Kirsch's "November" (493) potentially outweighed the significance of the extra-textual reference. The translator seems to agree, for her translation of the final four lines reads:

Copper lappet silver
 Scarce prominent ruby tiger
 Angle shade moths
 Through the window. (Stokes 247)

Potentially in an attempt to create the colours, she adds "Copper" to "lappet silver", the denotative equivalent of „Kupferglucke“ and includes "silver / Scarce prominent" instead of "green silver-spangled shark", the English name for the moth species mentioned in the German text.

However, it is also possible to assume that Kirsch, biologist and passionate observer of her environment, placed extraordinary emphasis on the correct species names – particularly considering their endangerment. A translation built on this assumption would have to be more attentive to the species names used in the respective translation, perhaps even change them to endangered species endemic to the target culture. It would activate an ecopoethics in this sense: As shown in chapter 1, ecopoethics works through interconnections on and off the page, driven by inquiries into previously unknown relations. In this regard, the translator Sam Hamill visualises the potentiality of multiple translations of one text: "what is any poem in translation except another blade of grass in the field – not a conclusion but a provisional entryway into the vast ecology of the poem ~~within its greater tradition?~~" (Balaban et al. 87) Particularly imagined without the last four words and thus steered out of a primarily literary context, the poem is infused with ecopoethical concerns regarding its placing in and interaction with the more-than-human world.

Through translation, it reaches beyond the edge of the self towards the vibrant, manifold oikos, seeking to multiply its points of contact from a position in motion.

Following this ecopoethical line, I have not only close-read Kirsch's poem multiple times while investigating her translation, giving attention to every potential interplay between words and sounds and lines, but also consulted an entomology encyclopedia and researched habitats of moths in Northern Germany and Great Britain. As Retallack contends, poetry is not detached from everyday life; it is embedded in it, entwined with its constant motions, and it expresses language as an active dynamic practice. Stylistic properties and connotations shaping a poem are not exclusive to poetry but can be observed in everyday language and speech patterns as well (Kloepfer 1975: 11-15), showing language in what Jakobson called the "poetic function" ('Linguistics and Poetics' 6). If poetry can be seen as the most complex of all linguistic structures (Holmes 9), then it is still *a linguistic structure*. Generating its energy from internal synergies, ambiguities, and the materiality of language, poetry uses the entire spectrum of possibilities in language. Instead of taking it as a given, it pushes against attempts to define or restrain language; it bends rules and deautomises expectations, tests the criss-crossing dynamics of language in and from all directions, and makes room for self-reflection.

In that sense, poetry behaves not so differently from translating itself, which also embraces a form of poiesis. Both of them can be seen as presenting an "art of the impossible." (cf. Robinson); both of them happen irrespective of that, facing paradoxes and insurmountable borders on all sides. In an ecological view that understands language in constant flux, translation can be seen as the twin of language; translation and language work together like poetry and poetics. Understanding poetry as organically embedded in language moves the insistence on its untranslatability to the "barbed edge of the general assertion that no language can be translated without fundamental loss" (Steiner 242). Poetry translation thus accentuates all latently apparent problems in prose translation and "can reveal what is unique about translation as a linguistic and cultural practice" (Venuti, 'Introduction' 127). The elusiveness of poetry reveals the need for translation to be conceived as a generative form of transformation, which then again challenges assumptions overlooking this need in favour of persisting ideas of sameness and loss.

How exactly can anything be *lost in translation*?¹⁹ Nothing is taken away from the already existing source text – it continues to exist as it were. The target text on the other hand is completely newly created. It did not exist previously, but it was made, in a new, different language, which means it is very likely that source and target text share not a single word.²⁰ If poetry is "what is lost in translation", then the target poem is presumably not even created in the first place, since it allegedly disappeared, got "lost" during the translation process (cf. Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism* 109-10). Frost's aphorism is often reiterated as self-explanatory, when it really

¹⁹ Outside the literary realm, this aphorism has inspired the eponymous film *Lost in Translation* (2003), written and directed by Sofia Coppola.

²⁰ Even if certain words from the source text are "retained" as calques, they will have a different, foreignising effect in the target text. I will come back to this in the next section (2.2.).

requires further examination.

The diffuse metaphorical use of “lost” obscures that it is virtually a statement against translation altogether, underpinned by a particular concept of language. As stated in the interview between him, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren, Frost understood poetry as a formal feature of both prose and verse (Brooks and Warren 7). He considered poetry also as that “what is lost in interpretation” (7), thus even refuting the possibility of an interpretive act. As Venuti argues, Frost understood poetry as a “container of invariants, whether formal, semantic or effective, which a reader can perceive without interpretation” (Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism* 113). Frost apparently assumed rigid borders between national languages and took a linguistically essentialist view that clashes with an ecological translation zone. For him, the defining feature, “the raw material of poetry”, was prosody, “pure sound—pure form”, the “sound of sense” (Sheehy et al. 123; also see Robinson 23-26). While in Frost’s view words could be potentially translated (Braithwaite 10), the poetry, thus the sound, could essentially not, since every language comes with a specific, evolutionary governed different sound of sense (Sheehy et al. 233-34). A perfect reading and understanding of the classics, Homer and Virgil for example, who were Frost’s reference points (Braithwaite 4, 10), could not be achieved, since the Romans and the Greeks took the innate sounds of their language at that time to the grave. Drawing on a metaphysical framework, poets, in Frost’s words, “summon” their cultural human-specific sentence-sounds “from Heaven knows where” (Sheehy et al. 234), and they can thus not be “brought over” (Braithwaite 10) to another language.

Frost’s specific definition of poetry and rather static view on language exposes the problems of generically relating his alleged aphorism to other approaches to language. Moreover, critics have pointed to the internal flaws in Frost’s argument, including for instance the fact that he generously judged and commented on other translations measured against his own poetics even though the translations in question were explicitly drawing on the significance of the interpretive act (Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism* 109-18; Robinson 23-26). Regardless of how one judges Frost’s metaphysical view, what needs to be pointed out here is that it did not stop Frost from reading, engaging with, and enjoying translations, even if he might not have conceived of them as such. In addition, if poetry as pure sound is a present feature of *every* language, then it is also possible to approach the matter again from a position starting with the universality of sound — or even with the potentially universal mysterious source from where poets conjure their “sentence-sounds.”

Poetry — not in Frost’s terms but as that what happens through poesis and work, through discords and accords, shifts, slippings, and synergies of the accumulated im/possibilities of language(s) poethically embedded — is potentially universal. As Bassnett and Lefevere phrase it, “[P]oetry has greater homelands” (*Constructing Cultures* 58). Poetic traditions and forms, from haiku to sonnet have been travelling around the world; “the history of Western poetry is the history of poetry in translation” (Bellos 126). The poem, as a never fully finished entity in an eco-

logical continuum, is on the move, as a translation of the allegedly “untranslatable”,²¹ frequently translated Paul Celan discloses („Das Gedicht ist unterwegs“) (*Der Meridian* 9). Precisely because poetry can be seen as characterised by fluidity, ambiguity, density, and inexplicability, it not only refutes to be changed through translation, but also invites it. It lives through motion that is likewise *emotion*, seeking to make connections between thought and sensations, sensations and words, words and people. “Woven of echoes, reflections, and the interaction of sound with meaning” (155), to invoke Paz once more, in the poem also dwells the capacity to be translated, moved, continued in another language (W. Benjamin 10, 14).

Walter Benjamin’s (1892-1940) seminal text „Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers“ (“The Task of the Translator”, translated by Hynd and Valk, Underwood, and Zohn, among others), the last theoretical coordinate for my ecological zone, was published in 1923 as a preface to his own translations of Baudelaire’s poems. It therefore not only presents a philosophical reflection on the essence and nature of language influenced by Benjamin’s cabbalism and eschatology but also outlines his own insights and intentions as a translator. These notably differed from the dominating idea of staying “faithful” to the source text in order to produce an accurate translation. Drawing on a deeper essence beyond the communicative content of a text, Benjamin understood the translator’s task as a gesture towards a “beyond”, where the true nature of language could be revealed, namely the innermost kinship between languages themselves:

„Alle zweckmäßigen Lebenserscheinungen wie ihre Zweckmäßigkeit überhaupt sind letzten Endes zweckmäßig nicht für das Leben, sondern für den *Ausdruck seines Wesens* (my emphasis), für die Darstellung seiner Bedeutung. So ist die Übersetzung zuletzt zweckmäßig für den Ausdruck des innersten Verhältnisses der Sprachen zueinander. [...] Jenes gedachte, innerste Verhältnis der Sprachen ist aber das einer eigentümlichen Konvergenz. Es besteht darin, daß die Sprachen einander nicht fremd, sondern a priori und von allen historischen Beziehungen abgesehen einander in dem verwandt sind, was sie sagen wollen.“²² (12)

Consequently, a translation paradigm based on equivalence and ideally faithfulness in relation to the original constitutes no useful measure point. Rather, translation is an independent “form” (9). It begins to free the „wahre Sprache“ (13, 18-19) (“pure, universal language” (Hynd and Valk 301)), which is the coming together of all languages in the “totality of their mutually supplementary intentions” (301) („Allheit ihrer einander ergänzenden Intentionen“ (W. Benjamin 13)), from the necessarily deficient „Art des Meinens“ (17) (“manner of meaning” (Hynd and Valk 301)) specific to each language. Although languages are akin in *what* they want to say, that is, to fully express „das Gemeinte“ (W. Benjamin 14) (“what it means” (Hynd and Valk 301)), they can never completely do so on their own. They are therefore seen as deeply relational; their true nature being

²¹ For a discussion of this notion, repeated for example by Michael André Bernstein, Robert Pinsky, Jacques Derrida, and J.M. Coetzee, see for instance Kurt Beals.

²² An English version of Benjamin’s essay can be found here: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/59325864.pdf>

infinite connectedness. The manner of meaning of one language can thus be regarded as the mere expression of a longing for the mutual completion and harmony of languages in their „Allheit“ (W. Benjamin 13) (“totality” (Hynd and Valk 301), also: allness, unison) that would finally allow them to fully grasp what is meant. To that end, the translator’s task is to reveal the text’s desire to harmonise all languages into one universal language, which nevertheless remains an unattainable goal (W. Benjamin 16). Creating a meta-textual plane in the ecological translation zone that reflects on the kinship of languages, the translator finally has to write a translation that is able to evoke the echo of the original (16):

Die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend, sie verdeckt nicht das Original, steht ihm nicht im Licht, sondern läßt die reine Sprache, wie verstärkt durch ihr eigenes Medium, nur um so voller aufs Original fallen. (18)

The translation thus acts as a form of filter for the foreignness inherent in any language, native or not, while stretching towards a realm of indeterminacy. Tasked with connection-making to the original, translation in this perspective speaks to an ecopoethic interest in relations, in a dialogic process revealing relationality through the impossibility to fully know and understand it.

Benjamin’s text has been an important cornerstone for my thought process, not least because his idea of the mutual supplementary potential of languages seemed to reveal itself to me through the reading of different translations of his rich, metaphorical essay. Whether the difference between “[T]ranslation is a mode” (Zohn 17) and “[T]ranslation is a form” (Hynd and Valk 298), or “[A] real translation is transparent” (Zohn 21) “[A] proper translation is transparent” (Underwood 41) and “Genuine translation is translucid” (Hynd and Valk 305) — the various readings are teaching me not so much that one language is per se insufficient but that texts cannot be grasped in the totality of their meanings: they always leave space for more conversations, more interpretations, more points of connections. Benjamin’s view entwines a literary and a translation ecology, emphasising connectivity, constant transformation, and ungraspability in both. He implies the shortcomings of translation concepts built on equivalence, entrapped between fidelity or faithfulness on the one and so-called freedom on the other hand. In contrast to translation as an external, violent operation on text, it emerges in an intrinsic bond with language.

Benjamin’s organic perspective further takes into account the ever-changing nature of language and the consequent shifting, unstable, incompleteness of texts over the course of their lives (12-13), which echoes their poethical relation to the world. This includes the fact that they age over time:

Denn in seinem Fortleben, das so nicht heißen dürfte, wenn es nicht Wandlung und Erneuerung des Lebendigen wäre, ändert sich das Original. Es gibt eine Nachreifung auch der festgelegten Worte. (12)

Both text and translation can therefore be seen as somewhat provisional (14), in motion, never completed but in a state of becoming — one among many singular blades of grass in the field, in

the wider ecology, to recall Hamill (Balaban et al. 87). This not only grants space for the existence of multiple and further translations but also makes it possible for translations to fulfil the vital task of enacting a work's continued existence, survival, and literary fame (W. Benjamin 10-11, 14).

What I find perhaps most striking in Benjamin's concept is that it discloses the paradoxical nature of translation without enclosing it – the infinite obscurity of the text itself appears to enact a longing towards something incomprehensible and inexpressible. Benjamin seems to assume no contradiction between relieving translation from its derivative status and conceptualising its creative task as an independent form or mode on the one hand (cf. 9, 19), while putting it in the service of a continuation of the original and a reflection on the kinship of languages (12, 13) on the other hand. It seems to be part of its dialectical nature that translation is both a work of art in its own right and an approximation to the original:

Wie die Tangente den Kreis flüchtig und nur in einem Punkte berührt und wie ihr wohl diese Berührung, nicht aber der Punkt, das Gesetz vorschreibt, nach dem sie weiter ins Unendliche ihre gerade Bahn zieht, so berührt die Übersetzung flüchtig und nur in dem unendlich kleinen Punkte des Sinnes das Original, um nach dem Gesetze der Treue in der Freiheit der Sprachbewegung ihre eigenste Bahn zu verfolgen. (19-20)

While translation and original are fleetingly in touch, they ultimately follow different trajectories and have autonomous life-lines. Translation is not only enhancing the target language but in its overarching relationality contributes to insights into the polyphonous connections among all languages. In an expanded sense, an ecopoet(h)ics embracing this trajectory has already been implied by Spahr's translation machine procedure, which complemented her approximation technique seeking out "shapes of things" (*Well Then There Now* 71) around her. In translation lies the encounter, the zone of contact for different, potentially not only human, languages, which are ultimately foreign in relation to the universal language, the innermost relation between languages able to reveal the true nature („Wesen“) of things (W. Benjamin 14). Even the language we "know" is then partial in what it can express, and foreign to us, insofar as it initially reveals this foreignness through the form of translation.²³ In this perspective, translation does not act as the commonly employed bridge metaphor but activates its revelatory, generative force (cf. Weigel 240). It shows the human confronted with the limits of their understanding, with the indeterminacy of knowing and fixing and defining things ever "coming closer moving away" (Breinig and Power 197, l.17), from a shifting position of infinite relations.

Taking all these considerations into account, I want to return to Sarah Kirsch to look what happens when interlingual translation happens in relation to a poetically activated ecological zone that involves transformation, interrelation, movement, fluidity, and attentiveness to the more-than-human realm beyond the page. Kirsch's poem „Der Meropsvogel“ from her collection

²³ I will explore this further in the following section 2.2.

Rückenwind (written between 1974 and 1976) describes an encounter with a bee-eater, a conspicuously colourful bird in the family Meropidae (cf. Fry). They have elongated tail feathers and a long curved bill, primarily feed on flying insects, and are a migrating bird:

Der große
 Sehr schöne Meropsvogel
 Fliegt schon im Frühjahr kaum zeigt sich ein Blatt
 Davon in den Süden wo Schatten
 Höchst senkrecht fallen der Stein
 Warm wie meine Augen-Blicke auf ihn (Kirsch 146, ll. 1-6)

Referred to in the very first line, the „Meropsvogel“ unfolds as the main figure of the poem. Concepts of time, seasons, and days are organ-ised around them. As Kirsch mingles visual impressions, animate and inanimate objects, actions, sensations, and emotions, her idiosyncratic loose syntax and lack of punctuation blur clear boundaries and the chronological order between events: „wo Schatten / höchst senkrecht fallen der Stein / Warm wie meine Augen-Blicke auf ihn“. Here, the shade, the implied warmth of the sunlight materialised in the tangible stone, and the glances, merged to temporal moments („Augen-Blicke“, moments, blink of an eye, lit: eyes-glances) yet kept at distance by means of a hyphen, are all intertwined in one extended breath. The corporeal experience of the passing of this moment refuses to separate space and time, intangible and tangible things that are ecologically connected.

The bird continues to create movements throughout the second stanza. They fly away whilst coming closer, jump from stone to stone, and are longingly awaited across a realm of hope and desire. The bird, in its size, beauty, and strength is compared to a human:

So hab ich gelernt: groß ist er stark schön wie
 Ein Mensch und weiß man von ihm
 Hört die Sehnsucht nicht auf. Er fliegt doch er sieht
 Fliegend zurück, er entfernt sich, nähert sich trotzdem (146, ll. 7-10)

The placing of „Ein Mensch“ (a human) at the beginning of the line, in connection with longing, emphasises a brief shimmering moment between human and animal,²⁴ echoed by the transitional feeling between closeness and distance, which is repeated later. The paradoxical movement between approximation and distance eventually exposes the most inner and vulnerable organ: “Through the eyes. The blood. To the heart. O beautiful / tale!” (Lehbert, *Winter Music* 54) Since it could relate to both poetic I and bird, it entangles them in a more-than-human embodiment, while the pounding paratactical rhythm creates the beating rhythm of a heart. Moving towards the human end of the heartbeat, “O beautiful tale!” implies intertextual references to the

²⁴ Roland Barthes refers to shimmer as “the relation between two moments, two spaces or objects” (146-47) that lies beyond structural yes/no binaries and is “of nuances, of states, of changes” (77) instead. Drawing on his idea, shimmer has also been explored in film theory and new feminist materialism as a nonbinary onto-epistemology relating to gender, aesthetics, and affect (Steinbock).

appearance of Merops and bee-eater in Greek mythology, Hinduism, and Ancient Egypt (Irving 108, 236; Cocker 322-23). Metaphorically and fabulously conceptualised along an ancient heaven / hell, Up / Down axis (cf. Paul), the imagined mythical creature of the skies is said to fly backwards. Moving up to the heavens, their eyes remain fixed on earthly grounds which may have inspired the lines „Er fliegt doch er sieht / Fliegend zurück, er entfernt sich, nähert sich trotzdem.“ (“They fly yet they look back flying, moving away, coming closer still”, my translation)

In-between the uncertain state of closeness and distance slips a vitalised spatio-temporal hopeful encounter with the always pressing question whether the bird will come: „Wo Raum und Zeit sich / Zwischen uns legen. Und kommt er wieder?“ (Kirsch 146, ll. 13-14) Although the bird indeed comes again („Er kommt.“ (l. 14)), they remain in a transitional state, as closeness and distance run into one another without any punctuation in the last two lines: „So blickt er fliegend zurück, mich nicht an. / Er naht er entfernt sich.“ (146, ll. 16-17) The friction between closeness and distance as the bird follows the line of flight can be conceptualised as a translational moment activated by the ecological zone: the edge of what we know, a not fully in/comprehensible eco-poethical longing for connectedness with an-other, at a distance that is never fully bridged. It is this tension that continuously moves the poem and opens it to the wider ecology.

A number of different interlingual translations have added further layers to the eco-poethical moment of participation in the Mitwelt that emerges in my reading of Kirsch. At the language border likewise situated at the edge of the self immersed in a landscape, the English translations by Helmbrecht Breinig and Kevin Power (1980), Margitt Lehbert (1994), and Anne Stokes (2014) respectively show the bird in different lights. Starting from diverging titles, namely “The Meropsbird”, “The Merops Bird”, and “The bee-eater”, there is hardly one similar line across all three versions. When I provide selected insights into their versions below, my focus is primarily on the emerging eco-poethical attentiveness and not part of an in-depth comparative analysis. Breinig and Power begin their poem as follows:

The big
 very beautiful Meropsbird
 Flies at the first signs of Spring
 To the south where shadows
 Fall at their most vertical the stone
 Warm as the glances I give it (Breinig and Power 197, ll. 1-6)

The line „kaum zeigt sich ein Blatt“ (Kirsch 146, l. 2) is notably absent here, as is the ambiguous connection of temporal embodiment in German implied by the hyphenated „Augen-Blicke“ rendered as “glances”. The poetic I is already introduced in the first stanza, the “I” specifically mentioned in the last line. Its presence appears thus more foregrounded instead of being covertly intertwined with the activity of the sun that creates shadows and warmth. The choice to translate „Mensch“ (human) specifically with “man” – if not owed to the context of a yet less gender-sensitive time – seems to bend this poem towards a love poem fitting into the sentiment

of the New Subjectivity movement with which Kirsch is associated. Perhaps due to its grammatical male gender in German, the bird is in fact rendered male in all three translations. This opens room for further, ecopoetically inclined translations providing a different perspective on the bird as more than an analogy. Another noticeable feature of this translation is the visual detail Breinig and Power add by replacing the conjunction “and” with the ampersand. In contrast to the German poem, they also include it in instances where the source poem emphasises an opposition between flying away and coming closer („He flies *yet* he looks / back flying“, my translation and emphasis) or where words run into one another („groß ist er stark schön“) to form Kirsch’s typical “Sarah-Sound”.²⁵

They say he’s big strong & beautiful
 Like a man & once heard of
 The longing never stops. He flies & as he flies
 Looks back, [...] (Breinig and Power 197, ll. 7-11)

Appearing three times in succession, the visual sign seems to create a rather dominant disruptive effect as it pulls the reader’s eye and attention to the page, inwards to the text. Combined with the absent detail of the appearance of the first leaf of spring (Kirsch 146, l.3) and the fact that Kirsch’s enlivened space and time are flattened to merely “have come between us” (Breinig and Power l.14), the more-than-human world seems to be less foregrounded in this poem, while the human pen is overtly present.

The fact that Lehbort’s translation is the only one not printed on the right page facing the source poem traditionally occupying the left page suggests that she was ready to claim it as a version in its own right. Her translation is my personal favourite, not least because of the vivid soundscape she creates through assonating [f] and [s] sounds whose airflow seems to undergird the bird’s flight in the first stanza:

The great
 Very beautiful Merops bird
 Flies off in spring when the first leaf barely shows
 Flies to the south where shadows
 Fall most vertically the stone
 As warm as my glances at him (Lehbort, *Winter Music* 54)

The reader does not directly encounter the poetic I until the second stanza, which gives more space to the bird who unfolds “strong beautiful as a / Human being” (ll. 7-8). Lehbort’s line breaks and her choice to include “yet” strengthen the ambiguous relationship between bird and human. The middle part of the second stanza thus reads:

²⁵ Peter Hacks coined this expression with regard to Kirsch’s overtly subjectively coloured free verse; her non-conformity with syntactic rules, jumbled sentences, elliptic enjambments, sparse use of punctuation, and an explorative juxtaposition between a causal, often chatty colloquial tone and eloquent onomatopoeic neologisms (Hacks 114-18).

He flies yet he looks
 Back flying, he moves off, approaching nonetheless.
 Through the eyes. The blood. To the heart. O beautiful
 tale! A
 Jumping from rock to rock; hope
 where space and time lie
 Down between us [...] (ll. 9-15)

The bird's movement is reinforced by the enjambments that enact a necessary "jumping" from line to line. Furthermore, the easily overlooked "A" following the indented, enjambed exclamation, initially connects the "jumping" more directly to the bird as opposed to expressing a general change of circumstances. In a similarly enlivened vein, space and time are buttressed by spatial depth as they "lie down between us" (l. 14), previously having been activated by "hope" (l. 13) not only as a noun but as a potential verb. Using artfully simple phrases ("He comes." (l. 15)) and free-syntax echoing the Sarah-Sound, Leibert's poem creates a very tangible ecopoetical longing for contact across the species border.

Stokes' version, the most recent of the three translations reviewed here, avoids the foreignness of the name "Meropsbird" and creates a concrete image by introducing the name "bee-eater" right from the beginning. It is arguably much harder to connect the barbarous name "bee-eater" with a mystic beautiful "Meropsbird" whose eating preference — not exclusively limited to bees — may be previously unknown to the reader. The structure of the first stanza slightly differs from the other two versions, as the reader is only slowly moved towards the bee-eater:

In spring
 When hardly a leaf is visible
 The large very beautiful bee-eater
 Already heads south where shadows fall
 Most vertically the stone warm
 As my glances at him (Stokes 51, ll. 1-6)

The line "When hardly a leaf is visible" (l. 2) is an interesting approach to the German line „kaum zeigt sich ein Blatt“ (Kirsch l. 3). While the latter seems to be oriented towards the expected onset of spring, the latter reverses this orientation and still points to winter; it is therefore turned backwards rather than forwards. In combination with Stokes' syntax that delays the place of "already", it can be read as recreating the mythical backwards-flight of the bee-eater itself. The first line of the second stanza introduces the bee-eater as a man who is:

[...] big strong and handsome
 As a man and if you know of him
 Your longing never ends. He flies but looks back
 As he flies, withdraws, yet advances nonetheless. (Stokes ll. 7-10)

Expressing a general longing by using the second person pronoun, the poem seems to be less personal. Instead, it emphasises the intertextual framework as it seems to tell the exclaimed “wonderful legend” (l. 12) (“tale” in Leibert (*Winter Music* l.12); “myth” in Breinig and Power (l. 11)) of the bee-eater itself, which adds to the previously mentioned seasonal setting in the first stanza, reminiscent of a fairy-tale. In that regard, a childish “hopping from stone to stone” (Kirsch l. 13) does not really seem appropriate for the majestic bird. Much less physical, the slightly formal expressions “withdraws”, (l. 10), “advances” (l. 10), and “interpose” (l. 15) seem to initiate register shifts that feel vaguely distracting.

This overall incoherence is reinforced by a more distinctly isolated third stanza, which makes the poem less compact and decreases the fast pace and ambiguity achieved by loose syntax and interlacing lines. It is all the more surprising given Stokes’ explicit premise to re-create Kirsch’s typical voice (xxii-xxiii), which is characterised by casual language, colloquialisms, contractions, particles, and informal exclamations. Stokes’ intention raises questions as to how to re-create the idiosyncratic Sarah-Sound in English and further whether this sound can really be separated from what Stokes compartmentalises as the “semantic content” (xxiii). Such a view arguably runs counter to the poem as an organic entity composed of interactions between its different layers and units. Understanding translation as an interpretive act that necessitates change, Stokes’ additional desire, namely to render the poems “as close to the German original as possible” (Kirsch xxii), must be viewed critically. Not only does it seem to adhere to an essentialist idea of faithfulness, it is further unproductively vague, suggesting closeness as a diffuse metaphor without extending it to specific poetic features or methodic approaches at that point. Given that the translation inevitably presents a completely new reading of the poem moved to a different language embedded in a different historic, socio-cultural context, and given that Stokes’ translation consciously wants to situate itself alongside already existing translations (Stokes xxi-xxii), the attempt to remain close to certain isolated features has arguably occasionally mitigated the target poem as a new organic whole.

Emerging in the waging indeterminacy between distance and closeness, the ecopoetical relationship between human and bee-eater hovers in the variations of three slightly different final lines zoning this movement: “Coming closer, moving away” (Breinig and Power l. 17), “He approaches he moves off” (Leibert, *Winter Music* l. 18), and “He advances he moves away” (Stokes l. 17). Showing the ecological translation zone in practice, in flight, all three versions reveal different nuances of a specific intertextual, interlingual, and interspecies encounter culminating in a never fully bridgeable distance to an-other. While the first version emphasises the immediacy of the moment in the final line, the other two translations echo Kirsch’s free, overlapping syntax. The various possibilities in translation disclose the depth of a poem that can never be grasped in full, only read from different angles and moved towards different directions. In this perspective, the translations orient the source along different paths, fleetingly touching it in one way or another, not resolving its ambiguity but exposing selective aspects of its elusiveness.

One year after this poem was published, Kirsch left the GDR for the FRG and spent the rest of

her life in the North of Germany.²⁶ In Tielenhemme, a small town by the rivers Eider and Tielenu in the county of Schleswig-Holstein, she led a private life, writing again and again the places and her relationships with them, trying to soak in every facet of her new home, thus describing her immersive ecoethics, as it were:

Remarkably, I can describe the same thing again and again from different angles. I've already written so many poems here. Then, in my last volume, *Schwanenliebe* (Swan Love), I suddenly wrote these short haiku-like things, in which I basically presented everything again, from a different angle. When you know something really well, have absorbed it to such an extent that you can reproduce it in two lines, it's really very satisfying. Even my daily notes are essentially the same, but they always take different turns. *It's just like life, the same and yet not the same.* (Stokes xviii, my emphasis)

While Kirsch imagined that there was one right solution for the writing attempt in that specific moment, she simultaneously emphasised that it was only ever possible to get to it as close as possible (Radisch): "There is actually only ever one correct solution, as with a crossword, and I've got to get as close to it as possible." (Stokes xvii) Never able to fully grasp something in its entirety, writing poetry remained a "quest" (xvii) seeking to reveal something new by moving yet closer to the always escaping more-than-human world in which the human is likewise incomprehensibly implicated. It presses the need for more and more and multiple poems as ecoethical translations, as echoes of, as approximations to an infinite oikos, of which interlingual translations can then be seen as further translations as approximations of approximations, always prodding at the unknown.

Inquiring into eco poet(h)ics in relation to translation grounded in theoretical context emphasises translation as a process that inevitably entails change. It reveals a persisting untranslatability axiom co-existing with an avid translation culture as a virtual argument against translation as such. Since the target text will necessarily, by definition of translation as transformation, differ from the source, a translation tied to the illusion of sameness can hardly be ever anything else than a failure. Against this narrow view, translation as a reflective interpretive act, as an expanded revelatory force, as a continuation of the source, begins to unfold its potential as a creative form of writing. In this form, it can speak to ecoethics in a number of ways, focusing on its negotiation of the foreign and the familiar, reinforcing the paradoxical potential of making relations at the edge of what we know, and turning outwards to embrace other languages.

Countering an essentialist view, poetry not only poses specific obstacles in translation but also invites translation. Its intrinsic openness and ambiguity inspire multiple readings, multiple entryways into its "vast ecology" (Balaban et al. 87). Questions that can follow these insights

²⁶ Following her participation in the collective petition against the expulsion of Wolf Biermann in 1976, Kirsch was excluded from the leading political party (SED) and the association of authors. She was permitted to leave the GDR in 1977.

are no longer concerned with the feasibility of interlingual translation but rather ask how an expanded translation nexus handles the multiplicity of its source and how the continuous inability to fully grasp it influences translation forms; ask what happens around an expanded notion of translation in cross-cultural eco-poetic theory and practice that revolves around tropes of untranslatability whilst expressing an interest in communication across species borders. They may further ask how translation approaches the unfamiliar and indeterminate that is not only encountered on the way but unfolded through translation, and they can finally explore what other notions may be helpful to conceptualise translation beyond narrow equivalence, faithful/free, and source/target paradigms within an ecological zone seeking to activate eco-poetic attentiveness to the *Mitwelt*.

New definitions

[after Dorothee Sölle]

workinginaway
results light up the process
at any time
lovinginaway
results, at any time
even in pain,
shine seeing
the morning star who
doesn't always hide
knowing happiness not
only by hearsay
touching
 with hands burnt

Far-House

[after Rainer Kunze]

Who is troubled

will find walls, a

roof, and

no need to p(r)ay

2.2 Writing Poetry in (M)other Tongues

As Benjamin's essay suggest, even the languages we "know" are foreign to us and particularly reveal themselves as such through translation (14). Exploring this further, this section will focus on the imbrication of my own ecopoethical translation-as-writing and writing-as-translation practices between German and English, that is to say, a specific *kind* of German (generally speaking, High German) and a specific *kind* of English (generally speaking, British English). From playful approaches present in the poem "Improvising with Vogel" to the repeated emphasis of translation as an interpretive act in "Jelly fish ear", I want to particularly look at an emerging, returning, and persisting unfamiliarity setting in motion one's "own" (m)other tongue.²⁷

"In language we are veering: No one owns it", writes Nicholas Royle (73). This is, practically speaking, of course wishful thinking. As pointed out earlier, even though the idea of owning words is as absurd as the idea of owning natural resources (Tarlo, 'Eco-Ethical Poetics' 127), words do get copyrighted, patented, and sold for extraordinarily amounts of money on a regular basis (cf. Hutton). On a national level, language ownership has been fuelled by the concept of the mother tongue, dating to late 18th century Europe and largely persisting to this day (cf. Yildiz). The notion of the mother tongue collapsed one single, "true" language with the identity of the arising nation state. Establishing an innate bond of belonging with its respective mother tongue speakers, they collectively emerged as one homogenous people united under one language closed-off against others (7-8). Laying the grounds for relativist notions, a concomitantly emerging "monolingual paradigm" (2) not only constructed demarcated hierarchical language territories and ethnic exclusiveness,²⁸ but has arguably contributed to a sustained instrumentalised view on translation as a unidirectional transaction from source to target. With this in mind, I want to reformulate and ecopoethicise the dualistic source/target model to make further space for a plurality of translations taking place in an ecological zone of interacting languages permeated by transformation. This critical review of the source/target model adds to previous critical remarks directed at the idea of one singular perfect translation channelled by this model, which is moreover underscored by an ecologically untenable static conception of language that can be fully known, mastered, and possessed.

What does it mean to *know* a language?²⁹ Does it, as foreign language speakers are so often asked, mean *dreaming* in it? Does it mean always knowing where to put the comma in a sentence? Does it mean confidently using every word listed in the dictionary? In either of the

²⁷ Although it is not my focus here, the discourse of mother tongue and language ownership is of course also inscribed by politics and colonial violence; see for example Derrida's reflections on being a French-speaking Algerian Jew that underwrite the discussion of his proposition «Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne.» (*Le monolingualisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine* 13)

²⁸ Yasemin Yildiz' study *Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition* demonstrates how the concept of one single unique irreplaceable mother tongue was historically reinforced as an ideological "natural norm" (Yildiz 6). Idealised monolingualism consequently displaced the multilingual reality and continues to obscure and discursively structure the prevalence of multilingualism.

²⁹ I am referring to so-called "natural" languages only here. The distinction between artificial and natural languages deserves an ecocritical discussion of its own and reaches beyond the scope of this thesis.

latter two cases, I can safely say that I do not know any language, including my so-called *mother tongue* with which I am supposed to have a congenital, maternally imprinted relationship even though it is politically and historically inscribed by patriarchal dominance (cf. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* 42).³⁰ As “language-using animals” (Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 261) or, to emphasise generative creation, “language-making creatures” (Street xxxvii, my emphasis), we humans are not only full of language, but also language-less, shaped by all the tongues and expressions unknown to us; all the words that escape us, the fleeting moments and memories and dreams that seem to slip from language upon closer examination. Translating can be a way to reveal whatever appears foreign – in what is either known or unknown – and to connect with it, through prevailing disconnection. My ephemeral knowledge of German and English begins to unfold in the differences between the two versions “Zweite Haut” and “Second Skin”: The former has originated in German, the latter emerged shortly after as an English translation, although the line between writing and translating was – and is – not always self-evident. Investigated within an ecological translation zone, the poem – both poems – emerged in a predominantly English place-knot shaped by other languages as well. While it initially played with the expression of growing a thicker skin, I eventually came to realise that both poems are partly about wearing two layers of language-skin that are in interaction with their vibrant surroundings.

I can trace back their origin to the experience of being entangled in a particular global-local place-knot: the coast in South-East England at low tide, with a view on demarcated beach booths, with the thought of being situated in a different time zone than the mainland that can be anticipated in the far distance, on the other side of the Channel. In that sense, the poem translates this moment into text via the body: an illusive immediacy of the place and an attentiveness to bodily sensations shape the poem. The body turns into an intersection of sky, sea, and human that refuses a hard border between natural and unnatural aspects. Instead, there is a sense of strange artificial naturalness, as glittering waves are conspicuously lilac, cloud’s veins made of or filled with plastic, and 3-D printing becomes an undercurrent to the fourth line “glitter grains between 3-coloured wave prints” in “Second Skin”. Both human body and other participating organic bodies seem to be in need of renovation and are, regardless of their texture, all mended with expanding foam.

In the German version “Zweite Haut”, the word „Schuppen“ (l.9) implies both scales and scurf, reinforcing the ambiguity as to who is getting fixed here. The repeatedly mentioned pharmaceutical drugs (paracetamol, diazepam) affect the entire ecosystem in this poem. Combined with a slightly uncanny calmness associated with low tide, they effect a dullness of the senses. Yet, it only appears to be the calm before the storm: there is a subtle tension in the air, since plastic veins are on the edge of bursting and the poetic I seems on the edge of an emotion, apparently pressing the tongue against the palate in an attempt to restrain tears. The poem enacts that moment of

³⁰ Since their introduction into modern Linguistics, the terms “mother tongue”, “native”, or “first language” have been hotly debated, see for example Davies, Paikeday, and Singh. For a critical discussion of the naturally assumed language authority pertaining to the native speaker, see for instance Love and Ansaldo.

Second Skin

[after Zweite Haut]

all is dull at low tide
clouds injected with diazepam
plastic veins almost bursting

glitter grains between 3-coloured wave prints
etching off spliss from cilia tips

press tongue against palate
you know why

vermeerte straits
stick scurf together with expanding foam
swap stanzas around / leave out
what is not lost

less coffee and paracetamol
since we've been here

restraint: increasing its pace by intercepting the metrum with the stressed syllable („du“, l.6), “Zweite Haut” slows down as the underlying reason for the particular action remains enclosed in “you know why” (l.7).

The English poem adds a further element of meta-strangeness to the indirect mode. It recreates the German neologism „vermeerte“ and continues with a direct, yet ambiguous reflective comment that could either refer to the intratextual act of manual repair by means of expanding foam or to the writing and translation process. For me, a substantial element of making poetry means finding words, collecting them like shells, and organising them in interaction with an animate Mitwelt. On the lookout for words to move a memory, an experience, an overheard conversation, a feeling into a poem, there is not always a separation between English and German – it happens in the synergy, the back-and-forth translation. In the poem “View from the N59 road” for example, which also exists in English and German (“Blick von der N59”), the difference between translation and writing is even more muddy. The first few lines were written in German, but then the enjambling “rain/resistant” emerged simultaneously in German and English and prompted a continuous bilingual writing process, where each version suggested different turns and twists while also feeding back into the other. I would therefore find it impossible to label one as the original and the other as its translation. Rather, I understand them both as occurring in an ecological translation zone, where they have not only ontologically emerged through interconnection, but are further intrinsically connected to the real-life moment that inspired them.

Since none of the two poems (“Blick von der N59”; “View from the N59 road”) temporally preceded the other, I would clearly distinguish my process from self-translating, which has been famously practised by a number of writers, including Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Yoko Tawada, and Haruki Murakami. Even in these cases however, the emerging texts often differ significantly, as the writers not only subconsciously followed the possibilities and routes suggested by another language but also consciously edited and changed parts once they saw them refracted through their (m)other tongue. This demonstrates again the unsteady position of a so-called “original” in translation. It further shows an uneasy distinction between writing and translating that is always already under pressure if conceived along a creative axis. As provisional conclusions in a Benjaminian sense, texts as translations are only ever fleetingly in a finished, that is, an abandoned state, before they are shifting again, as the world around them, too, is shifting and abounds with new possible relations and meanings.

The variability in translation is reinforced when looking closer at the interpretive act underwriting it. In this respect, “Jelly fish ear”, a translation of the German poem “Ohrenqualle” (*Massenhaft Tiere* 62) by the contemporary poet Mikael Vogel particularly sounded out the process of translation as a form of reading. Gayatri Spivak, who famously translated Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, even suggests that “translation is the most intimate act of reading.” (183) The translator as reader has to fully immerse herself in the source text, “surrender” (183) to its different layers, internal and external influences. When recreating a word in a different language, it has to be examined in its multiple meanings and contexts, as has the relation between source

Blick von der N59

Unter den richtigen Bedingungen entstehen hier

Doppelt endende Farbphänomene im LGTB-Format

koordinatenlose, nicht abbaubare

Lichtbrücken zwischen Salzwänden und quietschbuntem Plastikcharme

Connemara-Culture

Postkarte mit regen

festen Schaftupfern: Lanolin, Isopropanol, Benzine

Besprüht mit rot umrandetem Viereckbaum

ein rücklings fallender fisch am fluss rand

der asphaltsschramme

blüht Heidekraut

and target language, which interposes its own particular dynamics. It should be noted, however, that a full immersion into the source does not imply full knowledge of it. It merely allows using the intimate connection with it as the pivotal point from where the translation can begin to take shape in analogous intimate proximity. With a poem as light and ephemeral as “Ohrenqualle”, which hardly touches the paper,³¹ the act of immersion feels more like dipping in and out, trying to hold on to water. Every word is an opening that can be traced into various directions.

The German poem’s title “Ohrenqualle” refers to a species of jelly fish known as *moon jelly* in English (in Latin, the common name is *Aurelia aurita*). It was named after its prominent gonads which looked like ears to German scientists (Ohren = ears, Qualle = jelly fish). Of course I could have “simply” named the translated poem “Moon Jelly”. However, in my reading of the poem, the curious name of the jelly fish inspired its interplay with listening, which eventually shapes the entire poem. I therefore wanted to introduce the association with ear in connection with a jelly fish right at the beginning of the English poem as well. Nevertheless, knowing that a physical „Ohrenqualle“ would be called “moon jelly” in English had already influenced my perception of the poem. Not only do I have a personal fondness for the poetic name, but I also found that *moon jelly* ties in well with the image of night, in German „Nacht“, in the last line. I therefore decided to reinforce this link in my version and introduced the neologism “moonful” in the third line. In analogy to the play on „Ohrenqualle“ in German, my translation alludes to both the English and the German name, resisting full domestication in favour of attempting, in a Benjaminian sense, to create an echo of the foreignness of the original. The association with moon further added a spatial depth to my understanding of wideness („Weite“ in German) that informed my choice to translate „Strömung“ as “drift”, with regard to planetary drifts. Other options would have included current, flow, streaming, or even movement.

Working on this translation turned more and more into a completely autonomous creative writing process as the English poem gained momentum and prompted its own poetical dynamics. To this end, choosing “wideness” from other options including vastness or breadth was a sound-driven decision. Tonally enacting a widening from the [ɪ] to the [aɪ] sound, “wideness” forms an assonance with “lid-less” but sounds softer than for example vastness. “Lidless” itself is based on my interpretation of „unverklappt“, a neologism in German that appears strange to me even though German is my (m)other tongue. I can only speculate on its meaning: The prefix „un“ signals a negation and the root „klappt“ implies „Klappe“, as in “flap”, to close something or to regulate a flow, like a „Herzklappe“, a heart valve (in the German source text, „Herzklappen“ in plural actually appears in a poem two pages later (Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere* 64)). „Unverklappt“ then suggests to me something that is not at all closed off but radically open; the wideness is, in a way, unregulated and endless.

However, a little more research led me to a very different association, which is ecopoethically open nonetheless. The German noun „Verklappung“ denotes the illegal activity of ocean dumping

³¹ I would like to thank Mikael Vogel for sharing this thought on his poem with me long after I had prepared my translations of it.

Jelly fish ear

I keep listening
in your always lid-less wideness, moonful
Night until last drift of night

by vessels at sea — traditionally through a flap in the ship’s hold, hence the name. This connection naturally fitted the maritime context of the poem. Within the associative realm of ears and listening, the issue of marine pollution eventually moved me to noise pollution, another critical ecological danger for land and sea life. Drawing on Murray R. Schafer’s remark that, in contrast to eyelids, “we have no earlids” (11) to shut out the constantly increasing noise surrounding us, I finally decided to use “lid-less” in the English poem. This is nevertheless only one out of many readings that resulted in a particular making of it, which I, at the time of translating, felt closest to. Emphasising translation as an interpretative act, there are arguably as many translations as there are readings of this poem, interacting with and echoing one another in a translation zone of ecopoethic responses. Other translations coexisting with this poem could include, for example:

Moon jelly

I’m still listening
in your unflapped vastness
night until last current of night

Or:

Ohrenqualle

I continue to listen
to your unfolding distance, night
until final flow of the night

Each translation adds further doubts to my comprehension of the source text in the first place: what does the German verb „lauschen“ really imply here? And what weight does the night’s German feminine article „die“, which I decided not to take into account in “Jelly fish ear” “really” carry in this context? While I question the meaning and reference of every word, my mother tongue feels more and more distant. The poem remains opaque, even to the native reader, and its opaqueness is all the more apparent in the act of translation, in the act of moving the text, relating it to elsewhere. I should note here that even the decision to use the German title in the last version above is not tantamount to sameness. The word “Ohrenqualle” is a stranger in the English language, arguably even stranger than the use of an English word in the German language, which has generally developed a high tolerance for the use of Anglicisms. If encountered in an English text, the effect of a word such as “Ohrenqualle” would probably be alienating, and the word itself is more likely to be deciphered on basis of its graphemes, its potential resemblance to other

Oyster

Morning

found us un

prepared, your shells torn

open

foreign words, or its imagined pronunciation.³²

Multiple translations emphasise different aspects of the source text, yet they are not able to fully exhaust its wider ecology in its “irreducible opacity” (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* 115), which is not an argument against translation but on the contrary always leaves room for more translation. In his reflection on literary translation, Clive Scott suggests that “[W]hen we operate with language, we are always varying our distance from it.” (*Literary Translation* 32) At the same time then, we vary our closeness to it; we are moved towards and away from it, only ever approximating, feeling familiar with it at one moment, alienated at the other. Thus keeping in motion, the use of language can be constantly reflected and reinvented, which is crucial to orienting it against static hierarchies and critically inquiring into its complicity in destructive systems.

With this in mind, the idea of a single perfect translation capturing all possible readings, nuances, and depths of an always shifting source text embedded in a specific historic, cultural, and temporal moment is inconceivable. However, the source text/target text model and its associated search for equivalents, which has been prominent in translation studies since the 60s, does precisely suggest that there is one correct target text.³³ Allegedly moving unidirectionally from a pure source, the model implies that a translation can only be successful if it hits the target: “To translate a text adequately means, accordingly, to hit the target without betraying the original purity of the message.” (Guldin 22) The process, the work facilitating the movement from source to target is overshadowed by the focus on the product: It comes as no surprise that the source/target model has been widely adopted by a generally low-paying translation industry. Within the dilemma between either source- or target-orientation emerging from this model, the translator is furthermore forever imprisoned in the role of a betrayer, no matter which side they choose.

In order to revise this model and emphasise translation as transformation-, process-orientated, I draw on the terminology suggested by Italian translation scholar Federico Montanari and further discussed by Umberto Eco. Informed by personal translation practice, source and target are replaced by a source text/mouth text model (“testo-fonte/testo-foce”) (Montanari 175; Eco 101). As we will see, this is much more capacious and responds to an interconnected ecological view. Mouth refers to a variety of things, generally implying an opening rather than a narrowing down to a particular target. As an organ, the mouth represents an intimate border and physical threshold of the body, a potential opening where speech comes from, where private words enter the public, where mother and other tongues mingle regardless of linguistically defined borders.

³² The latter comes into effect in homophonic translation, i.e. rendering words in one language into similar sounding words in another language with no intention of recreating the initial semantic meaning. It has been famously practised by experimental poets, including for example Celia and Louis Zukofsky (C. Zukofsky and L. Zukofsky; also see Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 214-24) or members of Oulipo (cf. Oulipo; also see Dembeck). I used this method in my translation of the title of Rainer Kunze’s “Pfarrhaus”, in English rendered as “Far-House”

³³ In the wake of structuralism, a specific linguistic approach to translation gave rise to the relationship between source text (ST) and target text (TT) and the process of finding equivalents (cf. Catford; Nida).

Response: Anbaden

Baltic heat, non-native

Feuerqualle! screams

Stena waves around nylon straps

translucent jelly ribbing between children's fingers

Translation from source to mouth is thus emphasised as a revelatory and amplifying process, as an activity that courageously crosses a – less static – border in order to give a voice to someone, a voice that is embodied in context. The mouth can also be conceptualised as the mouth of a river, where the source text has the potential to branch out, open up, and change the entire flow. Emphasising that target- or source-orientation can never be an abstract decision but involves continuous negotiation at every sentence (100), Eco suggests that translation conceptualised as a process between a less businesslike source and mouth underlines its potentiality:

Perhaps there are source texts that widen out in translation, and the destination text enriches the source one, making it enter the sea of a new intertextuality; and there are delta texts that branch out in many translations, each of which impoverishes their original flow, but which all together create a new territory, a labyrinth of competing interpretations. (101)

Without necessarily agreeing that the flow gets impoverished, as in suffering loss, it is indeed the sign of a successful text to be more often read in translation than in the source language, perhaps with the exception of English texts. Becoming more significant overall, the source text itself, the “original flow”, in its source language, is thus paradoxically becoming less significant (“impoverished” in this sense, perhaps). Eco’s view emphasises the transformational effect of translation in context of the wider literary world: The transformation initiated by translation not only pertains to a linear movement, similar to an arrow flying from source to target, but to a radial one affecting a wider translation ecology. The possibility of multiple translations alters the river bed entirely, making space for the potentiality of even wider changes and implications. As part of a bigger ecosystem, alterations of the river bed change the entire habitat river with all its participants.

Situated in an even larger environment, the ecological river zone is not immune to anthropogenic influences but politically governed, thus implying the socio-cultural issues surrounding translation. Furthermore, the transformation from one source language to a different mouth language is a gradual process, happening in accordance with the movement of the river: solid divisions between languages, in line with the monolingual paradigm conceiving a language as a “clearly demarcated entity” (Yildiz 7), are thus replaced by a continuous flow, where languages are opened to one another in a mutual overlapping exchange. Continuing the metaphor, the river as a third player in the source/mouth equation adds its own dynamics that shape the translations and their intertextual relations. The surface can be taken to represent implications and decisions one might be able to be aware of and reflect on. The depth of the river, however, also yields the unknown, including unconscious choices and linguistic habits that cannot be fully sounded out but that nevertheless also influence the writing process.

Within such a reconfigured source/mouth model, I situate my two responses to the poem “Ohrenqualle” that widen the river bed through expanded translation. Taking up W. Benjamin’s notion of translation as an independent form (9), the poem “Response: Anbaden” is inspired by

Response to Response: which stone

Hühnergottaug^e stonechalksandyearsluck is hidden

salt lily is hidden

sea is sun-warm

firth of kiel stone-stone-skin

dunst. miniature light house

[made with witch stone]



Kalinowski, Katharina Maria "Hühnergott" 2021 *photograph*

my situated knowledge of moon jellies that potentially also underscored my reading of “Ohrenqualle”. Having grown up by the Baltic Sea, I often encountered these jellyfish when I went swimming. As children, we would make fun of tourists unable to distinguish the harmless blue or sometimes brown moon jelly from the painfully stinging hair jelly called „Feuerqualle“ in German. Registering a subsequently evoked memory, the poem “Response to Response: which stone” seeks to re-create — visually, textually, and materially — the experience of finding and looking through a stone with a hole, a witch stone (also known as snake’s egg, fairy stone, hag stone, eye stone, holy stone, and adder stone), in German vernacular known as „Hühnergott“ (also referred to as Feuerstein, Lochstein, Drudenstein, Hascherlit, Krottenstein). In the light of the variety of names for this peculiar stone, which also symbolises different cultural meanings ranging from a sign of good luck to a powerful magical object which allegedly offers a glimpse to the Otherworld, the English title turned into a pun based on the homophony of “witch” and “which”.

Based on German memories flowing into an English writing mode and now forming an English layer on the initial memory, it is hard to make out where my writing or thinking process in English or German started or stopped. In a zone of mutual exchange between translation as writing and writing as translation, the two responses thus encompass a number of translation layers: they change memories, experiences, and mental images into a different form; they translate German moments into English, they re-translate English words into my German memory, and both poems relate to another inter-lingual translation through which they also relate to the respective source text. Within an ecological translation zone surrounding the flow of a river between source and mouth, various branches with their own respective sources are added to the current. The encounter with the initial theme and foreign voice of the initial source text has created an othering undercurrent to my poems, echoing forth the economical form and Haiku-like quality in “Response: Anbaden” and “Response to Response: which stone”.

A similarly responsive mode, combined with a playful visual element, prompted the poem “Improvising with Vogel”. The left wing of the visually created bird is made up of a translation of another of Mikael Vogel’s poems, “Zeithaare” (*Massenhaft Tiere* 48). The lines forming the right wing are inspired by the first translation and assemble continuations or variations of lines and reflections on the poem, on the translation process, and on language itself. The line “[P]ushing from a solid standpoint”, for instance, expands the verb “pushing” by reflecting on the denoted activity. The two wings, however, are in interaction and the lines occasionally overlap. Although it is directly related to the source poem, the word “snow” for instance has been moved to the right side. The choice to include “[l]imping” can be traced to the similar sounding “limbs” on the left side, and “time hair” is a word-for-word translation of the German title „Zeithaare“.³⁴ Despite being in my (m)other tongue, this neologism appears very alien to me, and I wanted to create its strangeness and inexplicability in my (m)other tongue English as well. Adding to this, the visual layout, a meta-play on the author’s name „Vogel“, (bird), which is incidentally also the

³⁴ By word-for-word, I here mean a translation that re-creates the source’s word order and uses commonly used analogous words in the mouth language without paying attention to the potential context.

Improvising with Vogel

swollen branches limbs against snow with limping time hair
winter pushed bird into poverty pushing from a solid standpoint
again every year shifts language from escape to inscape

topic of this poem, allows different readings in different orders. The text refuses to be fixated, but continues its translation processes as it approaches the reader, coming closer, moving away. In my writing process, there was no distinct point at which a more narrowly understood interlingual translation activity ended and poetry writing as original text production began. Instead, there were fleeting moments of intimacy and approximations to two languages that I will never fully know.

Taking place, or rather, *roaming*, in an ecological translation zone, the poems in dialogue with this section and the poems gathered in this chapter as a whole particularly engage with the edge, as in an ecotone, of translating and writing.³⁵ In order to orient ecopoethics in relation to translation, as a potential translation even, it is vital to better understand the generative dynamics as these two processes intersect. The source/mouth model emphasises the creative interdependent flow between them and acknowledges a certain element of obscurity: What comes out of our mouth is sometimes foreign to us, and what happens with it is out of our control. To translate a text means to enter into an ongoing dialogue with it, which is shaped as much by non-understanding as by understanding. Using the creative tension between two other languages that displace, add, and interact, the poem-translations seek to expand to realms of plurality beyond a stable place and beyond a stable, invariant mother tongue, to a (m)other tongue. They embrace the potentiality of not having a distinct singular original to fall back on but encompassing a continuous translational “travel between cultures and between times”, likewise welcoming “personal experience and active transformation of self by text.” (Parker and Mathews 17)

During this travel between cultures, a nexus of literary and translation ecologies indicates cross-cultural dialogue as well. I have so far primarily participated in such a dialogue through reflections on my poetic practice between German and English, which has informed a bilingual undercurrent in my writing from the very beginning. While the first chapter particularly focused on the trajectory of Environmental Studies in the Anglo-American world, Sarah Kirsch’s work brought into view a connection to an ecopoetical engagement coming out of a different cultural and historical context. Reinforcing translation as expanded relation-making in ecopoet(h)ical perspective, the next section will explicitly expand the ecological translation zone to the environmental writing tradition in my (m)other tongue German. Simultaneously lifting the latter out of its „nationalphilologische[n] Perspektive[n]“ (national philological perspective) (Zemanek and A. Rauscher 93), it sets up a zone of response to and continued conversation with German „Ökolyrik“, while giving heightened attention to the translation processes shaping it.

³⁵ There are a number of poets who have – more subconsciously than consciously, I think – served as influences for writing responses to translations and more generally mixing translating and creative writing practices. In particular, I want to point to Jack Spicer’s ‘After Lorca’, Ciaran Carson’s translations from the French poet Jean Follain (*From Elsewhere*), which are accompanied by poetic responses as translations of translations, and the collection *Twitterers for a Lark. Poetry of the European Union of Imaginary Authors* (2017) edited by Robert Sheppard, which includes translations from imaginary as well as from “real” source texts.

Eisvogel

[after reading too much Freud combined with German poetry]

heute nacht träumte ich.

von einem singenden Eisvogel.

Er war wirklich – aus Eis.

Ein Brautvogel, ganz in Weiß.

Halb-lebendig nur noch. Wissend,

dem Ende seines Lebens nah

zu sein. Das Wetter änderte sich zu schnell.

Er schritt vorwärts. Die Augen halb blind. Den Kopf unter

seinen Flügel gesteckt, hebend, wenn er sprach, nach jedem zweiten Schritt.

Er sprach so schön, sprach nicht, sang. Die alten Opern. Und als er sang

erstand ein zweiter Eisvogel und folgte synchron-verzögert. So staksten sie beide, wunder

voll singend dem Ende entgegen. Ich schaute zu, unwissend wo ich war und wer. (Im Traum sind

wir lebende Materie.) Beim Zuhören gefror auch mein Blut

zu Eis und ich wurde

Vogel

Baumschule I

[after Dorothee Sölle]

Learning from the tree
who, no matter what day
summer or winter
explains again
nothing
convinces
no one
produces

nothing

2.3 Expanding the Ecological Translation Zone to Germany: The Crimes of Trees and Ökolyrik

Going back in time to the beginnings of a literary environmental discourse, the annual issue of the periodical *Tintenfisch* in 1977 was dedicated to the topic of *Natur oder: Warum ein Gespräch über Bäume kein Verbrechen mehr ist* (Nature or: why a conversation about trees is no longer a crime). The editor offers further elaboration on the title in his introduction:

Was ist geschehen? Warum erscheint uns der Satz, daß ein Gespräch über Bäume fast schon ein Verbrechen ist, heute fast schon selbst verbrecherisch? Weil es nicht mehr sicher ist, ob es in hundert Jahren überhaupt noch Bäume geben wird auf dieser Erde, und weil das Schweigen über Bäume das Verschweigen so vieler Untaten einschließt, denen nicht allein Bäume zum Opfer fallen. (Buch 7)

What has happened? Why does the phrase, that a conversation about trees is almost a crime, almost strikes us as criminal itself today? Because it is no longer certain whether there will still be trees on earth in a hundred years time, and because the silence about trees includes silence about so many misdeeds, whose victims are not only trees alone. [my translation]

As part of a greening wave that swept across Europe (see section 1.1), this conviction is indicative of a changing attitude towards the environment in the wake of post-war industrial expansion in Germany. Scientific advances and publications including Rachel Carson's bestseller in translation (*Der stumme Frühling* (Auer)) contributed to a growing public awareness of ecological issues. At the same time, the natural destruction caused by the war and the concrete environmental impact of economic progress became more and more visible. As Karen Leeder notes, the word „Baum“ (tree) itself became “acutely political” (“Those Born Later” 225) under threats of acid rain, urbanisation, nuclear power, and ecological extinction. Both the tree and conversations about it thus became programmatic for the onset of a cultural-political shift. Acknowledgement of isolated environmental destruction enlarged into an acknowledgement of unequal global processes ultimately harmful to both humans and trees. Against this backdrop, nature was partially redeemed as serious subject matter in literature, the imaginative and emotive powers of language called upon to disrupt what Buch perceived to be a normed, globally spreading, subject-less, sedating “[F]asten your seat-belts, rent a car, fly and drive, sit back and relax” diction (12). This section will outline the troubled path of nature poetry, later evolving into Ökolyrik, in conjunction with the beginnings of ecocriticism in Germany. Doing so, it will offer reflections and responses from within an ecological translation zone.

The reason nature had to be redeemed in the first place can be traced back to the source conversation about trees referenced above, initiated by Bertolt Brecht. Exiled in Denmark from 1933 to 1938, he penned the celebrated triptych „An die Nachgeborenen“ (“To those born later”), whose first part included the following, retrospectively decisive lines:

Was sind das für Zeiten, wo
 Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist
 Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt! (*Svendborger Gedichte* 84)

What times are these, when
 a conversation about trees is almost a crime
 because it includes silence about so many misdeeds [my translation]³⁶

In the wake of “a reception unparalleled in twentieth-century German literature” (Leeder, “B.B.s spät gedenkend” 111), this verse got caught up in a discussion concerning the putative dichotomy of beautified aesthetic representations of nature on the one and historical realism on the other hand. Numerous scholars and poets “born later” have responded to Brecht’s calling and established the “conversation of trees” as a topos that shapes the lyric debate until today.³⁷ In the course of this, a number of one-sided, if not mis-understandings of Brecht’s articulated dialectic as a rejection of nature poetry have played an important role in its legacy for the environmental discourse. A closer look will retrieve what can be virtually seen as a poethical approach providing insights into the problems and possibilities of language embedded in the world.

As for instance Mecklenburg (7), Knopf (130), Egyptien (43), Leeder (‘Those Born Later’ 216), and Rduch have pointed out, the subject of Brecht’s criticism are specifically not the trees that metonymically represent nature. Instead, he criticises the current times and those responsible for their horrors – Brecht was notably writing this poem during the rise of German fascism. The poetic I affirmatively repeats that these truly are dark times (“Truly, I live in dark times!”) and thoroughly discusses their numbing effects: the terror of the Nazi crimes erases the meaning of love or the appreciation for nature and renders life futile (“Love I practised carelessly / And nature I looked at without patience”). The circumstances of the “dark times” bereave those who live in it of any joy and make conversations – not poetry per se – about subject matters other than the constant “terrible news” almost impossible.³⁸

Indeed, Brecht feared that poetry and humanity might not survive fascism (Leeder, “B.B.s spät gedenkend” 112). It is worth remembering here that this was still before the beginning of World War II – Brecht’s poem could only anticipate the full extent of the violence to come.

³⁶ With a focus on straightforward simplicity, I provide my own translation here, which is in line with my preferred translation of Celan by Michael Hamburger following below.

³⁷ Among the many poets who have responded and alluded to Brecht’s poem are Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Wolf Biermann, Johannes R. Becher, Peter Huchel, Paul Celan, Günter Eich, Jürgen Becker, Günter Kunert, Helmut Preißler, Peter Schütt, Volker Braun, Brigitte Oleschinski, Adrienne Rich, and particularly Erich Fried. Compare the anthologies *Von den Nachgeborenen: Dichtungen auf Bertolt Brecht* (Wallmann 1970) and *Gespräch über Bäume: moderne deutsche Naturlyrik* (Gnüg 2013), and also see M.E. Humble on Brecht and posterity. In 1944, Theodor Adorno also takes up the problematic aesthetic perception of the blooming tree in the shadow of the Nazi crimes, thus contributing to its idiomacy (21). For a detailed analysis of the poem and its reception see for instance Hiltrud Gnüg (‘Gespräch über Bäume. Zur Brecht-Rezeption in der modernen Lyrik’), Wendy Kopisch, and Karen Leeder.

³⁸ Brecht’s aphoristic poem “Motto” from the collection *Svendborger Gedichte* also attests to the endurance of poetry in times of crisis: “In the dark times / Will there also be singing? / Yes, there will also be singing / About the dark times.” (Willett et al. 320)

Paul Celan's poetic response from 1968 in contrast, included in Buch's renewed perspective on "conversations about trees", had witnessed the Holocaust. It consequently goes a step further when it asks:

EIN BLATT, baumlos,
für Bertolt Brecht:

Was sind das für Zeiten
wo ein Gespräch beinah ein Verbrechen ist,
weil es soviel Gesagtes
mit einschließt? (Celan 24)

A LEAF, treeless
For Bertolt Brecht:

What times are these
when a conversation
is almost a crime
because it includes
so much made explicit?
[Trans. Michael Hamburger (331)]

For Celan, a conversation itself resembles a crime, as it inevitably takes place in a space and time and language forever violated by the Nazi regime. Nevertheless, Celan, like Brecht, uses a qualifier – in German slightly modified („beinah“ instead of Brecht's „fast“), in Hamburger's translation also “almost”. Celan further never fully surrendered to the often addressed speechlessness against a backdrop of seemingly untranslatable terror but instead made it part of his hermetic aesthetics (cf. *Der Meridian*). Radically reinventing and estranging language, his poetics often weave in silences and a stuttering struggle for words. In addition, the ambivalence of „Blatt“ (“leaf; sheet”) subtly evokes nature even in a treeless poetic time. Neither Celan nor Brecht entirely left either language or nature but worked through and with and against their barriers. It is worth lingering here for a while to orient Brecht's ecopoet(h)ical relevance in comparative perspective.

Composed in a very specific historic context, which is not all too easily transferable, Brecht's dialectically folded prioritisation of conversations about the times over conversations about nature was in line with his larger political aesthetics. With the view turned to translation as transformation in a larger continuum, the English version of the poem did notably not include the lines that launched the idiomatic “conversation about trees”. Translated by Ruth Landshoff and John T. Latouche, it appeared in 1943 in an anthology of European poetry co-edited by Klaus

Mann who like Brecht had gone into American exile.³⁹ Titled “Yes, I live in a dark age” (Mann and Kesten 719-20), the mouth text reinforces the poem’s documentary function. The poetic I witnesses and suffers from the dark age, hopes for better times after its death, “[W]hen men help men” (720), and pleads those born after to “[T]hink of us kindly” (720), or at least, slightly mitigated as suggested by the German poem “not to judge / us too harshly” („Gedenke unsrer / Mit Nachsicht“). After all, there is only one time “assigned to me on earth” (720), during which the envisioned politically engaged subject has no choice but to confront the times, dark as they may be, to deal with and respond to them (cf. Leeder, ‘Those Born Later’ 235-36).

Brecht articulates a mode that can be seen in relation to Retallack’s poethics of responsibility (*Poethical Wager* 3). Embedded in everyday life that is necessarily intertwined with the natural and with the socio-political realm, language is used and adapted according to the changing circumstances. In Brecht’s own dark time, poetry needed to be resistance. In his opinion, it had the purpose to educate, document, warn, and ideally turn people into critical readers of the world (cf. Speirs, Introduction 2-3; Constatine). At the same time, poetry had to be able to hold the contradictions of reality (Constatine 32-33). A straightforward rejection of nature, elsewhere described as entailing a particular degree of reality („besonderen Grad von Realität“) that cannot be fully exploited (Brecht, ‘Herr Keuner und die Natur’, my translation), therefore runs counter to Brecht’s poet(h)ics. Even the poem „Schlechte Zeit für Lyrik“ (“Bad times for poetry”, more specifically: poetry connoted as traditional lyrical poetry) written around the same time and often read alongside „An die Nachgeborenen“ to confirm Brecht’s dismissal of nature poetry, evokes nature through negation:⁴⁰

In mir streiten sich
 Die Begeisterung über den blühenden Apfelbaum
 Und das Entsetzen über die Reden des Anstreichers.
 Aber nur das zweite
 Drängt mich zum Schreibtisch. (‘Schlechte Zeit für Lyrik’ 257)

Inside me contend
 Delight at the apple tree in blossom
 And dismay at the Anstreicher’s [Hitler’s] speeches.
 But only the second
 Drives me to my desk. [my translation]

The relevance of these lines for a larger dispute between aesthetic representations of nature and ecopolitical critique is not hard to detect. Risking the problems of analogy, the emotional dilemma of the poetic I expressed by Brecht can find resonance in an ecopoetical conflict between

³⁹ Under the title “Yes, we live in a dark age”, the translated poem had already appeared in 1941 in “Decision. A Review of Free Culture”, a magazine for exile literature also edited by Klaus Mann (Haarmann and Hesse 1109).

⁴⁰ I am drawing on Reinhold Grimm here, who refers to this technique as „Evokation durch Negation“ (evocation through negation) (Grimm 23).

the beautiful bird and the destructive bulldozer (Spahr, *Well Then There Now* 69). The dialectical response Brecht offers moves towards an eco-poetical wager, reflective of its process and courageous in its swerves through sometimes clashing layers of connectedness with the wider world.

It is again testimony to the multifacetedness and versatility of poetry that a poem like Brecht's „An die Nachgeborenen“, in all its understandings and misunderstandings, should have such a rich, vital, controversial afterlife. Nevertheless, the local historical trajectory of the blooming tree whose political *raison d'être* the editor of *Gespräch über Bäume* felt the need to retrieve as poetic matter is a complex one. In East Germany turning into “a token of resistance against the pressures of silence” (Leeder, “B.B.s spät gedenkend” 113), Brecht's lines became the epitome of an argument against nature poetry in West Germany. Tying in with criticism against the anachronism of the magic nature poetry (*naturmagische Schule*) of the 20s, the use of nature motifs was regarded as an apolitical attempt at neglecting the horrors of the past (Kopisch 73-74). This was reinforced by charges against writers who had gone into inner emigration and resorted to nature as escapism (cf. Griffiths). While nature poetry was having a hard time in other countries as well (Gifford, *Green Voices* 25), the stakes of its associated irrationality and escapism were much higher in post-war Germany. Key topics such as nature conservation and protection, place, home, and belonging that shaped the development of American ecocriticism were tainted by the misuses of nature in Nazi propaganda and their blood and soil ideology.

In context of a wider postwar crisis of truth, history, and culture, nature poetry thus gained a long-lasting bad reputation, from which it took long to recover. Still in 2001, when Thomas Kling speaks of a „Naturlyrik-Relaunch“ (relaunch of nature poetry) (163) in German literature, he associates it with Biedermeier form-obsession and ahistoricism immediately smacking of „Innerlichkeit, nach der Blutzugenschaft innerer Emigration, nach dampfender Scholle“ (“introspection, brown heritage of inner emigration, dampfende Scholle” (title of a landscape painting by the artist Max Bergmann showcased as part of Nazi propaganda art exhibitions and purchased by Hitler in 1939 (Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte)) (163).

In view of the strong reactions against nature poetry, the British German literature scholar Axel Goodbody lists its troubled path as one of three reasons why the field of ecocriticism as a whole has been slow to enter German academia (*Nature, Technology* 20-21). In line with this is the fact that the term ecology itself was initially predominantly associated with Ernst Haeckel who had defined it as a science in 1866 and whose racial ideology significantly influenced the Nazi eugenics. Eventually taking on another layer of meaning in the 60s and 70s, the emerging pejorative use of the German prefix “Öko” to describe alternative lifestyles, left-wing subculture, or environmental protesters probably did not help to pave the academic way for ecocriticism either. Goodbody precisely sees the second reason for the delay in its association with a pedagogical political message, which invoked the didactic agenda of East German Socialist Realism. In the course of a celebrated turn against moral aesthetics in the 90s, ecologically-oriented literature was perceived as restricting the independence of art (Greiner). One may also add here that

the accompanying socio-political orientation ecocriticism expressed from the very beginning sat uncomfortably with a general “ethos of political disengagement that prevails in the German humanities” (Bergthaller, ‘Ecocriticism’ 276-77). Meanwhile, early criticism against a lack of theory and coherent methodology in anglophone ecocriticism (cf. Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology*; Cohen; Buell, *The Future*), also clashed with a German academic tradition heavily based on theory and methodology. The discussion surrounding ecopoetry, which will be analysed momentarily, can be seen as a case in point in that regard. Ecocriticism was therefore initially more likely to be discussed in Culture Studies and English departments than integrated as an independent research field into German or Literary Studies (cf. Bergthaller, ‘Ecocriticism’; Goodbody, ‘German Ecocriticism’ 3-4; Dürbeck and Stobbe, Einleitung 11-12).

The third and final reason Goodbody states for the reluctant acceptance of ecocriticism in Germany is a lacking equivalent tradition to American nature writing (Goodbody, *Nature, Technology* 22; ‘Literatur und Ökologie’ 13), which served as primary reference for first-wave ecocriticism. Even though environmental issues were amply discussed in early scientific and philosophical discourses, their prominence in canonical novels was, so Goodbody, less obvious.⁴¹

While there has been a strong and diverse tradition of ecological thought from Hildegard von Bingen to Alexander von Humboldt to Hans Jonas, German ecocriticism as an independent field situated between a global ecocriticism movement and its own distinct local ecological knowledge culture has thus only gained momentum in recent years: ASLE’s European affiliate EASLCE was founded at the first ecocritical conference in Germany in 2004. The first German-speaking introduction to ecocriticism was published in 2015 (Dürbeck and Stobbe), and the Rachel Carson Centre in Munich, founded in 2009, has become an important site for international, transdisciplinary ecocritical research.⁴² Given the strong focus on theory, it seems only natural that the legacy of the Frankfurt School (e.g. Adorno, Horkheimer), the hermeneutic tradition (Gadamer),

⁴¹ This slightly less convincing argument seems to revolve around a chicken-or-egg dilemma: American nature writing was arguably canonised as part of the growing ecocriticism movement, not necessarily prior to it. In a similar vein, many existing German novels are merely receiving more attention now, following the arrival of ecocriticism in German academia. Meanwhile the prominence of Goethe and the strong Romantic tradition with its idealised harmony with nature could have easily resulted in an earlier onset of an ecocriticism equivalent in Germany. Adding to this are numerous works by major 20th-century authors that engage with environmental issues, including Nobel prize winners Günter Grass and Herta Müller (cited by Goodbody himself, see ‘German Ecocriticism’ 547). Additionally, environmental topics and the theme of *Heimat* in particular have widely featured in German art and film (549) and could have provided another starting point for an ecocriticism movement. The problematic heritage of the Nazis is presumably the more important reason for the delay of German ecocriticism.

⁴² Other landmark texts specific to German ecocriticism include *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte des ökologischen Bewusstseins* (Hermann 1991), *Literatur und Ökologie* (Goodbody 1998), *Ökologie und Literatur* (Morris-Keitel and Niedermeier 2000), *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie: Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans* (Zapf 2002), *Natur – Kultur – Text: Beiträge zur Ökologie und Literaturwissenschaft* (Gersdorf and Mayer 2005), *Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism* (Gersdorf and Mayer 2006), *Die Ökologie der Literatur. Eine systemtheoretische Annäherung. Mit einer Studie zu Werken Peter Handkes* (Hofer 2007), *Kulturökologie und Literatur. Beiträge zu einem transdisziplinären Paradigma der Literaturwissenschaft* (Zapf 2008), *Ökologische Transformationen und literarische Repräsentationen* (Ermisch et al. 2010), *Ecocritical Theory. New European Approaches* (Goodbody and Rigby 2011), *Ecocriticism: Grundlagen - Theorien - Interpretationen* (Bühler 2016), *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture* (Dürbeck et al. 2017), *German Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene* (Schaumann and Sullivan 2017), ‘Ökologische Genres’ (Zemanek and A. Rauscher 2018).

and phenomenological thought (Heidegger, Gernot and Hartmut Böhme) should play central roles in the trajectory of German ecocriticism. Investigations into proto-ecological thought and ecotheology (Herder, Schelling, Jacob Böhme), Romantic nature philosophy (Novalis), classical humanism (Kant), biosemiotics and biolinguistics, (Uexküll, Kull, Nöth), literary anthropology (Wolfgang Iser), cultural ecology (Zapf, Finke, Bateson), and social sciences (Beck, Luhmann, Latour) form further cornerstones. Perhaps because it offers a way into representations of nature less obviously reminiscent of the Nazi past, the Anthropocene as a cross-disciplinary anthropological, socio-cultural, and aesthetic concept recently seems to have accelerated environmental research.⁴³ Apart from Goethe, who since his green rediscovery has been celebrated as an ecological precursor (cf. Zimmermann; Goodbody, *Nature, Technology* 45-86; Muschg; Kreutzer; H. I. Sullivan; Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*), authors that have been repeatedly read under an ecocritical lens include for instance Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Christa Wolf, and Günter Grass. Emerging genre classifications from the anglophone world such as climate change novel or ecotriller have also been assimilated into German scholarship, as has the term ecopoetry (cf. Falb, *Anthropozän* xx; Detering; Goodbody, 'German Ecopoetry'; Zemanek and A. Rauscher; Weber xx).

In light of diverging cultural traditions, different languages, and historical pasts in an internally growing ecocriticism movement, processes of translation are indispensable. Actual interrogation and attentiveness to translation as more than either an invisible foil or a burdensome obstacle surrounded by clichéd terminology, however, is once again risking to get lost in emerging cross-cultural conversations: Introducing the English anthology *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture* (2017) for instance, the editors invoke an essentialist view on untranslatability when they claim that a concept can never be "adequately translated in its full richness and semiotic complexity" (Dürbeck et al. xv). While the actual existence of the anthology once again attenuates their conviction, the phrasing is indicative of the prevalence of a narrow translatable/untranslatable dichotomy that neglects the underlying interpretive work as well as an ecological approach to language as such. It further mitigates the efforts of the anthologised authors and to a certain extent foredooms their translation attempts by implying that they will never be sufficient. Precisely what an "adequate" translation would entail is then also never specified. The phrase ultimately runs danger of leading into an argument against readability and comprehension as a whole.

With that in mind, I want to return to the development of German nature poetry post 1945, move the emerging term „Ökolyrik“ into comparative ecopoet(h)ical perspective, investigate its forms, and challenge its reception. Ökolyrik seems to have obtained a peculiarly bad name that arguably arrests its potential as well as a productive transnational, transdisciplinary ecopoetic dialogue. Two translated poems from the time period in question lead the way.

⁴³ This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

Willow rods

[after Helmut Salzinger]

filtering the sky orange
red and blueish

against white, they
black, reveal
parts of a skeleton

Nature poem

[after Ralf Thenior]

A seagull before sunset,
Wing-tips tinged with pale-red,
High above dunes and sea
On a disc cover
In a transparent plastic case
During afternoon rush hour

2.3.1 No More Nature Poetry

Initially weighed down by escapist accusations, Nazi ideology, and a selective understanding of Brecht, a growing environmental awareness in the 60s and 70s simultaneously led to a subsequent change in natural representations in art and literature (cf. H.-J. Heise; Goodbody, *Literatur und Ökologie*). Echoing the observation that the decay of nature also means the decay of nature poetry (Kluge 7; Mecklenburg), Christa Wolf's narrator in her novel *Störfall* (1987), summarises it aptly: „Vielleicht ist es nicht die dringlichste Frage, was wir mit den Bibliotheken voller Naturgedichte machen. Aber eine Frage ist es schon, habe ich gedacht.“⁴⁴ (44-45) That the novel itself deals with the Chernobyl disaster is further indicative of the concerns that were shaping the public climate: Apocalyptic notions surrounding the onset of the nuclear age and the discovery of the ozone hole, forest and species decline, and increasing suspicion of industrial progress and consumption propelled by the oil crisis in 1973 characterised the dawning ecological movement.

In view of direct tangible natural destruction, poets in West and East Germany alike (cf. Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik'; Mecklenburg 27), including Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Sarah Kirsch, Rainer Kunze, Jürgen Becker, Günter Eich, Volker Braun, Günter Kunert, Heinz Czechowski, Jürgen Theobaldy, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, Johannes Bobrowski, Karl Krolow, and Wulf Kirsten contributed to the rediscovery of the now "acutely political" (Leeder, 'Those Born Later' 225) dimension of Brecht's blooming tree. A number of anthologies registered this paradigm shift, including *Veränderte Landschaft* (Kirsten), *Moderne deutsche Naturlyrik* (Marsch), *Die Erde will ein freies Geleit. Deutsche Naturlyrik aus sechs Jahrhunderten* (von Bormann), and *Flurbereinigung: Naturgedichte zwischen heiler Welt und kaputter Umwelt* (Kluge).

In the preface of the latter, the editor points out that contemporary nature poetry is now synonymous with critical environmental poetry (7-8). Exemplifying an anti-pastoral approach to nature, the anthology contrasts traditional nature poems with poetic reflections on destroyed landscapes, polluted rivers, concreted meadows, and radioactive air. The tone is often humorously-dark, ironic, mournful, or cautionary. Goethe's well-known line „Über allen Gipfeln / Ist Ruh“ ("O'er all the hilltops / Is quiet now") from "Wandrer's Nachtlid" ("Wanderer's Nightsong") is for example echoed by Hugo Ernst Käufer as „Über den Betonsilos / ist Ruh“ ("O'er the concrete silos / is quiet now") (31-32). To classically metred appraisal of seasons by Eduard Mörike, Theodor Storm, Adelbert von Chamisso, Heinrich Heine, or Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Jürgen Becker responds with a free-versed „—Kein Fragezeichen; / oder ein Fragezeichen / auf leerem Papier.“ ("no questionmark; / or a questionmark / on empty paper") (121), and Renate Fuess adds that it is impossible to tell the seasons on the tube, where summer and winter are lukewarm and passengers' faces „zusammengelegte / Zeitungshälften“ ("folded halves of a newspaper") (155). In the final section, Hans-Jürgen Heise weaves an intricate ekphrastic relation between the human as an observer of a dynamic landscape whose seeming attempts to capture it eventually end with

⁴⁴ "Perhaps it is not the most urgent question what we are going to do with the libraries full of nature poems. But it still is a question, I thought." [My translation] Wolf's novel has been translated into English by Schwarzbauer and Takvorian (*Accident*).

the view on the river course turning into an epigram: „Und im Blick / wird der Flußlauf / zum Epigramm“ (211).

Parallel to the post-war literary genre called „Neue Subjektivität“ (New Subjectivity) (Reich-Ranicki 21), the surfacing movement of environmentally-oriented poetry was dubbed „Ökolyrik“. P.C. Mayer-Tasch, publisher of the anthology *Im Gewitter der Geraden*, suggested the „zugegebenermaßen reichlich légère[n], vielleicht ein klein wenig ironisierende[n], jedenfalls aber einprägsame[n] – Begriff der ‚Ökolyrik‘“ (“admittedly rather casual, perhaps slightly ironic but nevertheless memorable term ‚Ökolyrik‘”) (Mayer-Tasch 11) as a tentative (10-11) poetic category

in der die – in den sozialen, politischen, philosophischen und theologischen Raum hinein wirkende – ökologische Thematik von Gleichgewicht und Ungleichgewicht, Maß und Maßlosigkeit, Verstrickung und Erlösung in besonderer Verdichtung zum Ausdruck kommt. (11)

in which the accumulated social, political, philosophical and theological layers of ecological concerns pertaining to balance and imbalance, excess and temperance, entanglement and disentanglement come intensely to the fore. [my translation]

The comprehensive anthology contains a variety of German poetry from the GDR, FRG, Austria, and Switzerland by both established and emerging poets. Mayer-Tasch situates the emergence of an ecological consciousness in an unresolvable dialectic of rationality and emotionality (9), in which industrial progress and consumer culture are increasingly emerging as alienating counter forces to the intrinsic human desire for a flourishing life (9-10). Responding to, challenging, or disrupting a one-dimensional, unidirectionally economically progressing line of growth, thought, and consumption, the collected poets find themselves, literally, in a “thunder of the straight line”, as expressed by the title (14-15). Although not all poems have explicit political intentions (12-13), socio-political concerns of the age as well as of a specific German context are, particularly in hindsight, omnipresent.

For instance, Arnfrid Astel’s very short poetic remark „Die Bäume / auf deiner Seite / stehen auch auf meiner“ (211) appears to imply issues of ownership and increasing privatisation, which are also present in other poems (see Peter Schütt “Besitzverhältnisse” (196-97)). The poem can be further read as a critique against the division of Germany, and the simple language it uses is characteristic for the majority of poems in the collection. Echoing Brecht’s observation on the difficulties of writing eloquent lyrical poetry in “bad times”, many poets articulate a search for a suitable poetics in times “without flowers” when “we run after, run against progress, losing words like teeth” (165).⁴⁵ Margot Scharpenberg’s poem, titled “Grenzen der Sprache”, ponders on words vanishing with vanishing landscapes (214-215) and Hans Christoph Buch ends his essayistic illustration of smog and radioactivity with the line „Dies ist kein Gedicht.“ (“This is not

⁴⁵ See Jürgen Theobaldy “Ohne Blumen”: „Und wir rennen dem Fortschritt hinterher, / wir rennen dagegen an, Wörter fallen aus / wie Zähne.“ (Mayer-Tasch 165) The translation above is my own.

a poem.”) (145-46) Meanwhile, Annemarie Zornack’s poetic I tries and fails to plant the words „Levkoje“ (hoary stock), later „Reseden und Berberitzen“ (mignonettes and barberries) into

öde flächen die sich gut
zur bebauung von
serien-
bungalows
eignen. (‘versuch’, 49)

barren surface well
suited for
building
cookie-
cutter
bungalows. [my translation]

Reminiscent of an ecopoetical mode, Mayer-Tasch assumed no separation between poetry and everyday life: The ecological poem was to be fully situated in the public realm, alongside academic publications, philosophical treatises, political speeches, theological sermons, statistics of opinion research institutes, and public protests (12). Although not comparable to the formally innovative Anglo-American poetry tradition, this plurality is mirrored by the variety of poetic forms and a reappearing casual tone. Personal anecdotes are flanked by ballades, songs, elegies, smear and warning poems. Harsh critique against the state of nature meets self-criticism when Peter Salomon narrates a car trip to Austria („Welche Autobahn sollen wir nehmen?“ (“Which motorway are we taking?”) (100)) and Enzensberger ironically asks with Brecht “wer soll da unserer gedenken / mit nachsicht?“ (“who will then think / of us kindly?”) (219).

The anthology clearly documents an awareness of economical and ecological interconnections in the wake of an increased process of globalisation. Poets point their fingers at the wrongdoings and lies of the chemical and nuclear industry, try to explain the impact of unlimited growth, the connections between DDT and the ozone hole, between pharmaceutical products and polluted water. Some have lost all faith in humanity and resort to apocalyptic scenarios (e.g. “Hinterlassenschaft” (240), “Die letzten sieben Tage der Menschheit” (237-39)) but some, like Rainer Kirsch, the husband of Sarah Kirsch, still find hope in the remnants of nature:

[...] noch wächst das
Gras
Ich hörs nicht aber riech es, das ist Hoffnung. (‘Protokoll’, 210)

[...] the grass still
grows
I don’t hear it but I smell it, this is hope. [my translation]

United by a common ecological attitude manifesting itself in a multitude of topics and poetic forms, Ökolyrik in Mayer-Tasch's terms could be understood as – sometimes more, sometimes less explicit – embodied words of resistance (12). Further building on this definition, Manon Maren-Grisebach points out that the subgenre of Ökolyrik set itself apart from nature poetry by dissolving traditional descriptions and experiences of nature in a lamenting, accusatory, critical stance recognising its destruction (266). Marking a new historical stage, nature poetry consequentially turned into a lyric of responsibility (266). Against a highlighted osmosis between aesthetic, realistic, and ethical fields, so Maren-Grisebach, Ökolyrik could not be reviewed independent of a context of ongoing natural destruction (266). In view of an ecological translation zone seeking cross-cultural contact, this underlines again an orientation that can be understood as eco-poetical, propagating active intervention and a changed attitude towards the oikos in a largely accessible way.

Another, different and commonly underexplored strand of ecologically oriented poetry was pursued by an alternative culture grouped around literary and music critic Helmut Salzinger and artist MO Salzinger, his wife. Guided by bioregionalist principles, spiritualism, and ethno-poetics, their emerging literary underground network looked to the American West Coast. Its inspiration were the Beat Poets, above all Gary Snyder, whose collection *Turtle Island (Schildkröteninsel)* emerged in translation from the alternative scene. Between 1984 and 1986, monthly limited editions of the literary magazine *Falk* were published by a small press led by the Salzingers, Thomas Kaiser, and Michael Kellner (Braun and Rosenthal 373; Höge). Initially planned under the title “Die Poesie der Erde” (The poetry of the earth) (Kaiser 37), it included Chinese and Japanese poetry, works by the Beat Poets, contemporary German poems, letters to the editor, articles on deep ecology and Zen Buddhism, as well as prefaces and essays by Snyder himself (Braun and Rosenthal 371-74). Salzinger's own poetry collection *Irdische Heimat. Gedichte* (1983), dedicated “To / Gary Snyder native / of Turtle Island” (3), can be read as a manifesto for bioregionalism. Sounding out his local environment, accounts of specific birds, trees and flowers, close descriptions of natural phenomena, and observations of the seasons enact a desired reconnection with place:

ich möcht in meinem Garten wachsen
 wie Kohl und Kräuter darin wachsen
 wie das Gras wächst und wie
 die Bäume wachsen und wie
 die Tiere leben, an diesem Ort, und so
 möcht ich wachsen, und so
 möcht ich auch sterben, im Herbst
 (Salzinger, “Im Garten”, *Irdische Heimat. Gedichte* 18)

i want to grow in my garden
 like cabbage and herbs grow in it
 like grass grows and like
 trees grow and like
 animals live, in this place, and that's how
 i want to grow, and that's also how
 i want to die, in autumn [my translation]

The idealised return to a pre-industrial natural state corresponds to trends in first-wave eco-criticism. Rhymes and repetitions embody cyclical movements of the earth who is “not owned by humanity but who does own humanity” („Die Erde gehört nicht der Menschheit, aber die Menschheit gehört der Erde“ (cf. cover)). The tone is gentle-hortatory, the perspective biocentric. The elements rule Salzinger's verse poetry („Sturm, nichts weiter“ – “Storm, nothing else” (15)). Language, too, is earthly, planted in the garden, grown in the soil, able to break silences if given sufficient care, work, and attention, which the Western world, however, has forgotten to do, in Salzinger's view (17). Constant warnings concerning the impermanence of endangered natural realms permeate Salzinger's engagement with the earth. References to natural destruction, acid rain, and documentary accounts of nuclear power protests are also part of the collection. The concluding essay directly echoes Snyder's bioregional principles by promoting the idea of becoming native to a place of one's choice (86-90). While the shortcomings of such a view have already been pointed out (see section 1.4), Salzinger's ecopoetics included his own lifestyle and recognised the different interconnected systemic layers of an ecological crisis. He thus demands a radical change of the anthropocentric order, whose foundations he leads back to a Christian world view (87). His counter model is an egalitarian, earth-centred value system (87-89). Emphasising the need to re-learn belonging to a place, which does not necessarily have to be the native place, an embodied experience with the earth is seen as the beginning of comprehending the new value system which is then envisioned as the beginning of acting in accordance with it (89-90). Different in its approach, the political dimension is therefore also apparent in Salzinger's place-sensitive Ökolyrik and its vision for less violent earthly co-existence.

While the ecological legacy of *Falk* and Salzinger's own poetics is more often dismissed than discussed,⁴⁶ German Ökolyrik as outlined by Mayer-Tasch and Maren-Grisebach has generally obtained a negative reputation. Ironically, much of the criticism against it seems to follow the reverse logic of earlier voiced reservations against nature poetry: instead of being too sentimental,

⁴⁶ Neither Kopisch nor Zemanek and A. Rauscher nor Detering, who discuss the genealogy of German ecopoetry in detail, mention the ecopoetical counter culture around *Falk*. Goodbody refers to it only briefly (‘Naturlyrik’ 296; ‘German Ecopoetry’ 271). Daniel Falb dedicates a slightly longer section to what he calls German „Ökodichtung“ (*Anthropozän* 25), yet does not discuss any specific poetic examples (cf. 23-27). In the wake of a flourishing eco-criticism movement in Germany, a rediscovery of Salzinger's ecopoetical contribution can be anticipated. Recently, Fischer has claimed his writings as nature writing (211), while one of the first detailed dialogic explorations of Salzinger's and Snyder's bioregionalism argues that Salzinger's work performed a radical ecological turn and sought going beyond classic nature poetry (Braun and Rosenthal 379) – an argument that speaks to my own ecopoetical analysis of Salzinger.

too far away from reality, the Ökolyrik of the 70s and 80s was now deemed to be too didactic and too political (Maren-Grisebach 264; Goodbody, *Nature, Technology* 21; Kopisch 133; Detering 295). Goodbody claims that the term Ökolyrik is mostly synonymous with predominantly activist and confessional poetry composed of slogans, clichés, and general statements (Goodbody, 'Literatur und Ökologie' 13). He repeatedly laments its one-dimensionality, crude simplicity, and lack of aesthetic value ('Deutsche Ökolyrik' 376; 'German Ecopoetry' 271; 'Naturlyrik' 296; *Nature, Technology* 21-22), combined with a tendency towards "technophobia and irrational green ideology" ('German Ecopoetry' 271).⁴⁷

Similar sentiments are shared by Gebhard (73), Gsteiger (102), Greiner, and Egyptien (51). The latter ascertains the aesthetic failure of Ökolyrik and polemically adds via Gottfried Benn that "well-meant" is the direct opposite of art (62-63). In fact, a substantial portion of the criticism is taken up by subjectively coloured, but further unreasoned and therefore questionable, if not untenably unprofessional side remarks referring to the "ugly term 'Ökolyrik'" (Goodbody, *Nature, Technology* 21) or the „Schwachsinn der Ökolyrik“ ("bollocks of Ökolyrik") with its „weinerliches Gezeter“ ("whiny nagging") (in Maren-Grisebach 264). Contemporary ecocritical studies tend to adopt this tone, quickly deeming Ökolyrik a „meinungsstarke[n] ästhetisch anspruchslose[n] Variante politisch agitatorischen Schreibens“ ("opinionated aesthetically unchallenging variant of political-activist writing") (Detering 205). Ökolyrik has then largely been rejected as artless functional or occasional poetry bound to a specific purpose (Scheuer 67) but without any "linguistic or poetic subtlety" (Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik' 376).

However, what is often absent from an occasionally heated, rather emotional debate (Maren-Grisebach 264; Wiesmüller 159) is an actual substantial critique that would do justice to the breadth of environmentally oriented poetry or specifically Ökolyrik – notably initially suggested as a working title only (Mayer-Tasch 11) – at the time in question.⁴⁸ As pointed out earlier, it encompasses not only a variety of poetic forms and techniques, including docu-poetry, free verse, sonnets, prose-poetry, and tentative formal experiments, but also a number of well-known award-winning poetic figures elsewhere discussed in favourable terms (e.g. Peter Huchel, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Günter Grass, Marie-Luise Kaschnitz, Paul Celan). Indeed Goodbody himself claims:

Some of the best poems of the 1970s are *Ökolyrik* in this sense, blending description and protest with historical reflection and analysis, and fusing these with personal emotion, grappling with significant conflicts of interest and expressing them with

⁴⁷ Goodbody's various studies on Ökolyrik occasionally appear somewhat contradictory. As a central figure in the development of an ecological orientation in German literature, he has significantly contributed to its visibility and regards it as an important, serious element of literature that is "more than a mere document of social and political culture. It goes beyond the narrowly mimetic depiction of landscapes, polemic triteness and subservience of art to political interest." ('Deutsche Ökolyrik' 376) On the other hand, he repeatedly refers to it as crude didactic political activism, which therefore is aesthetically irrelevant ('Literatur und Ökologie' 13; *Nature, Technology* 21; 'Ökologisch orientierte Literaturwissenschaft in Deutschland' 296; 'German Ecopoetry' 271).

⁴⁸ Egyptien does review a number of poetic case studies, yet his criticism is often polemically coloured and based on an a priori dialectic of nature poetry and political poetry (eg. 51, 60-63).

precision and originality. ('Deutsche Ökolyrik' 376)

This suggests Ökolyrik as a poetics of witnessing and making sense of a rapidly changing time in a specific historical context, in which formal innovation was furthermore not accompanied by an academic poetological inquiry.

The fact that some poems may be more eloquent and better received than others is generally unsurprising. Yet the fact that political intent, prosaic elements or straightforward language are immediately regarded as downgrading poetry to a lesser aesthetic level (Egyptien 62; Detering 205) implies a rather narrow idea of a poetic aesthetics. Not only does it clash with the initial explicit articulation of the sociopolitical as an integral element rather than an external layer of Ökolyrik that seeks movement on and off the page. It also clashes with the dialectic interleaving of politically engaged and aesthetically motivated poetry in the sense of Brecht. The literary paradigm shift outlined by Maren-Grisebach (266-70) towards what corresponds to a poethics did not seem to have taken place. The literary scholar Jost Hermand, a forerunner of the literary environmental movement, notes the instigated bias in Goodbody's influential collection on literature and the environment, whose exclusive focus on aesthetics from a genre-specific perspective already suggested little space for ecopolitically oriented poetry (Hermand, 'Review of Axel Goodbody's *Literatur und Ökologie*' 47). This bias has been repeated in newer accounts of environmental poetry, the prejudices against political and didactic tendencies never properly dissociated from the fierce literary dispute aimed at moral aesthetics („deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik“) in the 90s. German "ecopoetry", too quickly presumed to be the natural translation of Ökolyrik (Detering 205), thus often remains couched in prejudiced attitudes that clash with a wider ecopoetical zone, as will be discussed below.

In contemporary ecocritical discourse, Zemanek and A. Rauscher seek to overcome Ökolyrik as a mere historical poetic unit. They begin to frame it as a transhistorical literary category against a horizoning framework of anglophone ecopoetry (94). Given an alleged insufficiency of a common thematic ground as genre characteristic (91), Ökolyrik is perceived to be in need of clear boundaries and a distinct definition on the basis of quantifiable features. In comparative perspective, Zemanek and A. Rauscher's poetological approach can be seen as a realisation of the earlier discussed distrust of genre: they virtually intend to identify the correct specifications of a "car" that can then be inserted into the neat slot Jane Sprague feared ecopoetry might become (see section 1.1). The authors also make reference to the anglophone ecopoetical landscape, particularly to Bryson, Astly, and H. Moore, whose ecopoetical considerations they nevertheless dismiss as too unspecific (94-96). To rectify this, they search for formal, semantic, and stylistic genre-specific features beyond a perceived insufficiency of common thematic ground, which emerges as a case in point for Hermand's observation of a theoretical genre-biased approach. The result is a catalogue of ecological procedures outlining literary criteria to strategically measure and capture the ecological concentration („ökologische Gehalt“) of poetry (93).

In the course of this genre-oriented probing for essentially necessary specifics of poetry (95),

historical Ökolyrik is once more omitted on the basis of its reiterated conceptual irrelevance (94), politically coloured accusatory tone, and explicit message (100). Again, the socio-political plane is a priori excluded from the poetical analysis, which precludes any fundamental theoretical and methodological reflections oriented towards a radical ecoethical opening off the literary studies page. From an ecological perspective of interconnection, the destruction of the natural world is precisely not only a destruction of the external poetic referent. It is also a destruction of those who make poetic matter, a destruction, furthermore, that they contribute to, in unequal shares. From an ecological point of view, the discussion of this matter calls for a wider perspective, recognising interdependencies between extra- and intra-textual ecologies that instigate shifts in systems of writing and thought. Mayer-Tasch explicitly pointed out that Ökolyrik should take place in the public realm, that it coexisted with other mediums as part of the everyday life.⁴⁹ The majority of critics, however, continue to regard political intent or effect as a mere external hindrance to lyric beauty. Closing off any space for an ecoethical discussion, the poem's place within wider ecological ramifications as a potential element of its aesthetics is not even considered a possibility. It is further not discussed what writing itself from a position of entanglement means or how practice-based and cross-disciplinary approaches could be integrated. In that sense, there is a lack of relation-making, a lack of processes of translation recognised as movement and mutual change across disciplinary and across national boundaries. Within an expanded ecological translation zone between German Ökolyrik and Anglo-American ecopoetics, I thus want to offer the following critical remarks and responses.

When the German literary scholar Detering claims that the mere translation of an English „literaturtheoretischen Essay“ (literary theory essay) (205) called “What Is Ecopoetry?” (H. Moore) poses difficulties given the association of the term Ökolyrik with an emphatic political intent, he disregards two important issues:⁵⁰ First, he seems to assume that ecopoetry has a static definition in the anglophone realm, which, as shown in chapter 1, is clearly not the case. In fact, the need for an essay asking the very question “what is ecopoetry” seems to reinforce this. What ecopoetry is and could be and should do has necessarily changed over time. Instead of regarding it as entirely detached from the German context, sketches of Ökolyrik can be seen in relation to early studies of ecopoetry as well. Sharing a global ecological concern, Hönnighausen's and Scigaj's previously discussed emphasis on the political message as an integral part of the ecopoem serves as a particularly good comparative reference point (see section 1.1). The explicit parallels between Snyder's and Salzinger's bioregional poetries are another under-explored aspect in that regard, proving that translation between German and Anglo-American ecopoetic practices did in

⁴⁹ As the publisher himself acknowledges in the preface of *Im Gewitter der Geraden*, he himself is no literary scholar but has a background in political science (Mayer-Tasch 13). It is not unthinkable that his perceived virtual status as an “amateur poet and Germanist” (Goodbody, ‘Deutsche Ökolyrik’ 376) has contributed to an all too quick dismissal of the anthology's aesthetic quality, irrespective of its variety of anthologised poems that includes works of prestigious writers.

⁵⁰ It is also questionable if the term ecopoetry should be translated at all here, since H. Moore uses it in relation to a specific anglophone phenomenon. After all, the term ecocriticism has not been translated into German either. A new term or a new definition of the term Ökolyrik certainly could have been an option as well.

fact take place before it was turned into a theoretical literary studies problem.

Second, what Detering is quick to frame as a “literary theory essay” is notably a practice-led essay, in which H. Moore explores her own poetic practice in dialogue with other poetic examples (1, 5, 8). Her springboard into ecopoetics are themes conceived as “portals through which ecopoetry can be approached and developed as a practice.” (1) As H. Moore notes, “there is no intended hierarchy — and in many ways the strands merge and shape each other.” (1) Echoing my own approach, she therefore implicitly suggests that an ecologically-literary turn starts with reconsidering how to think and write about ecologically oriented poetry. The essay can thus be seen as enacting ecopoetics as a dialogue between practice and theory, as a “creative-critical edge” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 1). That this breaks not only with genre expectations but also performs deep structural changes with regard to literary theory remains entirely neglected by Detering as well as by Zemanek and A. Rauscher, who also draw on H. Moore’s essay. In addition, and as a third meta-issue with regard to Detering’s argument regarding the complicated translation, I want to point out that a translation, always entailing transformation, necessarily complicates. Detering seems to assume that the source word ecopoetry naturally hits the target Ökolyrik, its surface analogue, but translation inevitably entails a deeper movement across linguistic, cultural, political, and historical borders, thus producing friction. Relations *are* complicated; translations necessarily disrupt, pose questions, inspire engagement with the unfamiliar and movement out of one’s comfort zone. A translation that retains the status quo on both sides, a translation without change is, as discussed earlier, “not translation but mere citation” (Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 38).

Retrospectively, the bad reputation of Ökolyrik on the basis of its entanglement with a historically specific political culture can itself be seen as a sign of a culture with a specific history. Repeated accusations against its tendency towards didactics, political activism, and insufficient genre specificity imply a literary lineage with a strong focus on politically disengaged aesthetics and a dogmatic requirement for methodic classification. Kopisch’s pessimistic résumé on Ökolyrik, in which she attests its failure to formally distinguish itself from New Subjectivity by introducing novel theoretical aspects into the critical literary debate (Kopisch 129-30), is programmatic for the genre-focused tone shaping a predominantly monodisciplinary ecopoetical discourse. It also points at a larger prevailing gulf between practice and theory, in which my own approach to ecopoet(h)ics is situated. The insistence on the traditionally coloured term „Lyrik“, even though other terms (e.g. „Ökodichtung“ (Falb, *Anthropozän*); “German Ecopoetry” (Goodbody, ‘German Ecopoetry’)) are available, can be seen as an additional symptom in that regard. Alternative names such as *Ökopoesie* or *Ökopoetik* would not only be able to hold a broader transmedial poetical engagement but also result in a softer sound than the “ugly term ‘Ökolyrik’” (*Nature, Technology* 21).⁵¹ Finally, the terminological inflexibility points to a lack of integrating translation concerns into applied uses, calling for more studies at the nexus between literary and translation ecology.

⁵¹ A link to a broader discussion on the aesthetics of eco-art is for example offered by Gernot Böhme, who argues against Kantian aesthetics and for an ecological inclusion of aesthetics beyond a nature/culture division (26).

Contrary to Kopisch's pessimistic terminological diagnosis, however, 'Ökolyrik' continues to make an appearance, even if in restrictive scare quotes (cf. Detering 205). Its recent continuation within a debate on Anthropocene poetics (cf. Falb, *Anthropozän*; Goodbody, 'Naturlyrik'; 'German Ecopoetry'; Weber) is reminiscent of an analogous anglophone debate on ecopoetics in the context of the Anthropocene, with the advantage of not being immediately tied to a culture-specific negative image of nature in view of the Nazi past. It offers promising and also controversial connection points that will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter (see section 3.3).

Nevertheless, a proper discussion on the larger ramifications of an ecological framework that has the potential to scrape once more at the very roots of how poetry is structured, reviewed, discussed, and written about has yet to take place. The continuous lament of Ökolyrik's lack of aesthetics beckons again the question of what a successful ecological aesthetic needs to look like and what the tasks and audiences of poetry are and should be in light of an ecological crisis. In a poetic discussion that has been simultaneously propelled and complicated by Brecht, it is unthinkable that political impact is continuously disregarded. For Brecht, after all, poetry always had to be politically "useful" (Constatine 36). Even whilst fearing failure (31), it had to provide a source that could potentially be – with inevitable difficulties – translated into motion, into action. As a poethical wager in that sense, it is all the more necessary in dark times, for we cannot choose the times we live in but have to respond to them nonetheless.

With that in mind, the expanded ecological translation zone has shown up Ökolyrik in connection to a historicised shift in poetics. Its emergence correlated with an increasingly global economic market and an accompanying intensifying global ecological crisis whose causes as well as effects are manifold and interconnected. Faced with these pressures, German ecologically-oriented poetry searched for forms and words at the borders of language, at the edges of vanishing ecosystems, at the limits of its intervening capacities. To continue some of these searches, the poems preceding this section and the poems following below seek to move selected writings from the Ökolyrik movement into the ecological translation zone and place them in dialogue with other poems. Having released translation from a narrow translatability/untranslatability framework and explored it as a transformative, generative, creative force in context with ecopoet(h)ics, the subsequent, final section of this chapter will intensify their connection even further and investigate ecotranslation as a practice-informed concept emerging from the ecological translation zone.

Baumschule II

[after Dorothee Sölle]

One day trees will be teachers
water will be drinkable
and gratitude quiet
like wind on a September morning

Pearls & Dents

[after Arnfrid Astel]

TEETH bleached
by dead fish
scent of
the big white world

[BOCHUM]

[after Hans Kasper]

fumes of wealth
poison
the air
three tons soot
per lung
per year
but
the electronic brains
of production calculation
will infallibly
proof
they breathed incorrectly
and way too much

Poetics of Disenchantment

Bird in their branch turned themselves into
pieces of coal against dawn light

**Living deep in the wasteland
but then again at a traffic junction**

[after Marion Poschmann]

Living in a sky scraper with a view on the lake.
By the motorway right behind the acoustic barrier.
Sleeping in the waste of others, in their noise.

Norway's radioactive reindeer no longer serve
as canned goods. The own mirror reflection slips
over the cooker's white enamel like an autumn

leaf near the Russian border Bear attacks
Runner, eats her. Losing oneself in shiny advert
ising brochures, swaying in the iridescent craze of the lake.

Nordsee 2.0

Salz wird hier
in die Straßen geschüttet, acker
hellerkraut wartet
bis die nächste flut höher steigt
diamantkreuz im gummireifen hängt
japanische Liebe

2.4 Towards Ecotranslation

Sand tongue / Echo translation

place
 feet
 side ways
 to the water line. foam-beards stand
 in file & limbs free-floating
 in a rusty cough skies
 dap velvet mossy
 kidney stones
 cut where straits choke
 lava corals
 pulse the beating
 sunny / moony inter
 vals
 measuring betweenness
 do
 ver & calais

Ec(h)o translations

[21.11.2017]

We are always too late.

I initially came to the term “ecotranslation” as a practice intertwining close attentiveness to places as explored in the first chapter (section 1.4) and a bilingual writing-as-translation mode outlined in this chapter (section 2.2). Even though not always immediately present, the oscillation between English and German in particular is always hovering at the back of my writing, situating my practical engagement with ecopoetics at the edge of translation. A deeper understanding of place as an ecologically interconnected and spatially open more-than-human knot arose in interplay with poems like “Sand tongue / Echo translation” and its extension “Ec(h)o translations” above. Further informed by a radical landscape orientation, they seek to get to the bones of a particular moment whilst expanding a sense of place through an expanded sense of the body. Expressed in and expressing material elements, the landscape is entered from an unusual angle and stretches viscerally, from the kidney stones through the sea to outer space, reminiscing over ancient corals in the much contested strait of Dover from a planetary view. For reasons I will more fully explore in the following chapter (see section 3.4), I spelled this poetic mode “Ec(h)o translation”, and it was conceptually intertwined with the short line “We are always too late.”

When I discovered existing lines of research around the term “eco-translation”, I decided to

enhance my understanding of the term in context with other approaches. The first part of this chapter's final section will thus review eco-translation as introduced by Cronin, Scott, Badenes and Coisson, and scholars of eco-translatology (e.g. Xu, Hu). It is complemented by reflections on poems-translations preceding this section. Building on previous insights, the second part of this section will begin to develop my notion of ecotranslation as an eco-poethic writing practice in dialogue with Les Murray's sequence *Translations from the Natural World*. Giving a tangible poetic form to manifold unfurling relations between snake, shoal, sunflower, or air, ecotranslation loses its hyphen by enmeshment with the more-than-human world and its alignment with eco-poethics. It begins to inquire into continuous translation processes emerging in an eco-semiotic tradosphere that endows not only humans but more-than-humans with semiotic capacities and orients translation towards a post-anthropocentric stance. Relational, always approximate yet independent, ecotranslation as a creative, poetic endeavour situated in an abundance of languages will carry over into engagements with the Anthropocene in the next chapter.

Michael Cronin extended the term "eco-translation" in 2017 to loosely cover "all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change." (*Eco-Translation* 2) His influential cultural-political approach is motivated by the necessity for Translation Studies to register the recent "ecological shift" and "take seriously the idea that translation and translators do not exist in isolation" (3) but are entangled with a larger physical and living more-than-human world. According to Cronin, translation as a "body of ideas and a set of practices" intertwined with ecocritical thought can be central to exploring the human species' interconnectedness and vulnerability (1). The urgency of climate change requires all disciplines, so Cronin, to leave their rigid borders behind and orient their thinking processes towards a post-anthropocentric stance (3).⁵² Outside a source/target, translatability/untranslatability paradigm, translation corresponds to extended forms of relatedness from an ecological view of infinite planetary connectedness. In that vein, Cronin explores translation as a process-oriented means of energy, its ecological relationship with food production and consumption, and the ecological irresponsibility of endless translation growth in an age of technology. He further examines the role of travel writing across linguistic interdependencies and power imbalances between minority and majority languages in a globalised world, thus highlighting various facets of an ecological continuum.

Mapping a "post-humanist ecology of translation" (15) undergirded by principles of "place, resilience and relatedness" (15), Cronin stresses the necessity to extend and situate translation as transformative relation-making to the eco-semiotic *tradosphere*, which means:

the sum of all translation systems on the planet, all the ways in which information circulates between living and non-living organisms and is translated into a language or a code that can be processed or understood by the receiving entity. (71)

⁵² Cronin's post-humanist ecology primarily draws on Timothy Morton and Rosi Braidotti to whom I will turn in the following chapter 3.1.

This last notion in particular will be guiding my approach to ecotranslation as a writing form anchoring “(re)connection” (H. Moore 1) with the oikos from an interconnected position as language-making animals: an extension of self channelled by attention to the more-than-human, a material awareness of “belonging to the widest community that we can imagine and experience” (1), “eye-and-eye eye an eye” (Murray, *Presence* 22), anthropocentrically (dis)placed as “a comet streamed in language far down time” (53). Cronin’s approach does not focus on poetry as such, but his conceptual development of translation along a global ecological axis invites a range of engagements that further consolidate transformative, relational capacities from many sources to many mouths.

Within a cultural translation landscape, Cronin’s outline of a “translation ecology” (*Translation and Globalization* 165-72) has found particular resonance in a Chinese branch of translation science (cf. Xu; Hu, ‘Translation as Adaptation and Selection’; *Eco-Translatology*; Liu).⁵³ It seeks to formulate a synthesis of ecological studies and translations studies as the subdiscipline of Eco-translatology, meaning that all aspects (processes, criteria, principles, methods (Hu, *Eco-Translatology* 7)) of Translatology, the discipline concerned with the “transmission of linguistic messages” (6), are aligned with an eco-paradigm. Focused on translation proper, Eco-translatology builds a translation framework based on ecological principles, including for instance Liebig’s laws or Darwinian adaptation, natural selection, and survival of the fittest (‘Translation as Adaptation and Selection’ 283). Aims of Eco-translatology also include the theorisation of translators in relation to their “eco-environment” (284) and analysis of dynamics between source and target text, that is, source and mouth text situated in such an environment. It is further concerned with the articulation of strategic translation methodologies and language-pair specific problems related to textual representations of a larger ecosphere.⁵⁴

Though widening translation with its cross-disciplinary perspective, the eco-translatological approach is narrowed by its exclusive focus on interlingual translation. This also applies to another practical approach to eco-translation formulated by Badenes and Coisson. They suggest a politicised threefold strategy for eco-translation, namely:

Rereading and retranslating literary works where nature, having its own voice in the source text, was silenced in translation; translating works that present an ecological cosmovision and have not yet been translated; and translating via manipulation works that do not originally present an ecological vision with the aim of creating a new, now ecological, text. (Badenes and Coisson 360)

The translator’s status as a creator of autonomous text is strengthened here; their task imbued with an ecopoetical agenda seeking to positively affect the human/nature relationship. Prac-

⁵³ Cronin initially conceived a translation ecology in 2003 as “a translation practice that gives control to speakers and translators of minority languages over what, when and how texts might be translated into and out of their languages” (*Translation and Globalization* 111).

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, and somewhat ironically, many of the texts surrounding an eco- paradigm are not available in English and thus remain closer connected to their cultural home.

tically all my translations-as-mouth-texts collected in this thesis can be seen in response to the second approach outlined above. Many of them could also be explored with regard to the third aim, although it has more often been a case of adjusting the source more explicitly towards a detected underlying ecological orientation rather than intentionally overwriting it altogether. Within the conceptualised ecological translation zone, attentiveness to the Mitwelt is naturally on my mind, not so much as intentional manipulation but rather as an inherent part of translation creatively reconfigured outside of a restricted notion of faithfulness. In a number of poems, I thus consciously emphasised more-than-human creatures as active agents to uplift them from a passive status. The bird in the poem “Poetics of Disenchantment” and the tree in “Baumschule I” are both grammatically classified as subjects; the willows in “Willow rods” actively filter the sky, and it is the dead fish themselves that have bleached the teeth in “Pearls & Dents”, instead of the fish mortality that is listed as a cause in the source poem (in German: „durch Fischsterben“ (Astel 73)).

Furthermore, the delayed appearance of “white” in my version of “Pearls & Dents”, which is included in the first line in the German poem, disrupts the common phrase “big wide world” with an almost homonymous adjective that subtly points to the economical and political power imbalance of said world. It also intratextually connects back to the teeth, striving to reinforce the interdependencies within the poem. Arguably, these techniques can no longer be solely discussed as part of an eco-translation strategy attempting to foreground an ecological vision — they enter a broader field of poethics. Inquiries into the translations of Hans Kasper, Marion Poschmann,⁵⁵ and Dorothee Sölle would simultaneously benefit from poethical perspectives that explicitly make thoughts on form, line length, and sound integral parts of the “ecological vision” pointed out by Badenes and Coisson (360), thus calling forth an ecopoethics

Before eco-translation became part of a still relatively small but increasingly popular eco-paradigm in Translation and Culture Studies, it was indeed envisioned in the form of a “poetics of eco-translation” (cf. Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’; *Literary Translation* 61-84). In fact, Clive Scott may have been the first scholar to introduce the term “eco-translation” at a conference in 2015, after which it was subsequently taken up by Cronin (*Eco-Translation* 2). Scott uses the term in context of literary translation, more specifically poetry, in order to map out a phenomenological reading practice anchoring a translation of “psycho-physiological” involvement with the text (‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 285). In contrast to literary or eco-criticism, which according to Scott relies on a dislocative act of “withdrawal” from the environment (286), eco-translation foregrounds the individual experience of reading as an ecological activity in three senses:

in the sense that translation is the way in which we feel our way into the environment embodied in the ST; in the sense that the text of the ST itself, in its very textuality, is an environment of which reading is the act of inhabitation; and in the sense that the

⁵⁵ I will investigate Poschmann’s poethics and selected translations in section 3.3.

text is a material object in the environment of reading. (286)

Scott demonstrates these qualities, the “eco-poetics” of translation, in his English versions of 19th century French poetry. Incorporating different typefaces and fonts, handwritten notes, doodles, and photographic collages into his practice, he creates various versions of Rimbaud and Mallarmé as site-specific “ecological events” (301). Scott’s approach assumes interlingual translation as a starting point but then adds various responses to the immediate environment. One version of Rimbaud’s “Au Cabaret-Vert”, for instance, records the act of reading it in a book shop. The interlingual translation as a “ground plan” (296) turns into an almost unreadable background of the version. Written on music paper, it translates the soundscape of the reading environment, distracting sounds of traffic, talking, furniture, or machinery that prompt constant “re-engagement” of the reader with “the world around the text” (296), or rather, the interaction between text and reader embedded in the world:

Here the music paper tries to suggest, along with the humming (doodles), that a scene is trying to find its music, that the essentially linear text is positively trying to draw other acoustic elements, on their different trajectories, into its ambit and compose something, a brief polyvocal cantata; the watercolour touches (blue, yellow, green), notes of different values, are as if themselves in motion, looking for somewhere on the stave to settle. (298, 301)

The English version composes a visual object that incorporates the translation of the “sensory dynamic of a space” (301) in which it took place. Instead of blanking it out, the reading experience is included and makes the 19th century text visible as being part of an inhabited contemporary environment. Overheard discussions about household shopping (“4 bananas, washing liquid, flour, toothpaste, dozen eggs” (300)) and “Kritsch” (300) noises thus become layers of Rimbaud’s autobiographic travelling poem conserving a happy memory of taking a break at the hotel “Au Cabaret-Vert” in Belgium.

Contending that “our [very] alphabet cuts us off from the world” (286),⁵⁶ Scott argues for an extension of language’s expressive range able to register the multisensory dynamics of language as that what we perceptually “live in and through” (Scott, *Literary Translation* 66). Eco-translation in Scott’s sense is not the translation of texts ecocriticism is traditionally interested in but the translation of text into “eco-consciousness” (‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 285),⁵⁷ into the reader’s own immediate environment. In that it is “relational becoming” (*Literary Translation* 63), translation and reading in their ecological function track the dynamic between human and environment and bring forth translation as “first-order creation, a reformulation of the source text (ST) which

⁵⁶ Such a stance is subverted, for instance, by Gary Snyder, David Abram, and Scott Knickerbocker. As already discussed, an ecopoetical view refutes such a distinction as well (cf. section 1.3), acknowledging continuities between the two instead.

⁵⁷ Scott’s view on eco-texts is arguably too reliant on a traditional idea of literary representations of the natural world, such as classic nature writing that informed early first-wave ecocriticism. The use of text here could also suggest a wider perspective on things read as text, but Scott only refers to poetry.

enlarges or extends or relocates its activity by enacting the existential and multisensory response of the reading subject.” (‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 286)

Scott’s experimental push of translation as a multidimensional “performance” of the ST is crucial for a re-evaluation of translation as a form of independent, transformative creative writing. Conceiving reading not as interpretation but as “ongoing psycho-physiological, psycho-perceptual relationship” (‘Translation and the Spaces of Reading’ 34) that activates the text casts an altogether different light on textual engagement (*Translating Baudelaire* 184). As Celia Rossi notes, it shifts questions such as “what does this text mean?” to “what does it do?” or “what does it do to me?” (391). In this perspective, translation as necessary multiple, creative, and formative (Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 291), is further empowered as a force, reaching off the page, released from a narrow faithfulness/betrayal paradigm.

It is particularly interesting that Scott inserts his avant-garde approach into an interlingual practice that assumes full knowledge of the respective foreign language as the basis for further experimentation. In contrast to the previously mentioned appropriative “poet’s version” (Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything* 179), which often operates without any knowledge of the foreign language (section 2.1.1), creative experiment and interlingual language engagement are mutually constitutive in this perspective. They thus challenge a singular source text/target text production from within the field of interlingual translation, offering points of contact for experimental expansion. Exploring the dynamic relation between reader and environment through their connection with the ST which is subsequently extended into a TT (Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 301) unfolds translation as a “non-aligned and subversively fluid activity, where the differences between ST and TT might be accounted a kind of dissidence” (291). Translation is thus necessarily multiple (291), the various embedded relationships in constant flux inviting further and further open-ended translations as mouth texts, roaming an ecological continuum. This dynamic plurality is a vital component in my notion of ecotranslation as an ecopoethical mode seeking embodied contact with the world as enacted by Sarah Kirsch (cf. section 2.1).

Although Scott’s perspective is initially productively wide and provides useful points of reference that underpin an ecological connection-making of translation as writing, it is insofar limited as it is text-centred and exclusively focused on white male French avant-garde poets.⁵⁸ Additionally, despite his emphasis on the constant reciprocal change between “the human and the non-human world” (67) the former is clearly in the centre. The abstracted “non-human world” remains inanimate and subordinated to its relevance for the human, while the type of change it experiences due to the human is not discussed. Diverging from Cronin, Scott’s envisioned “poetics of eco-translation” (285) or “translation as an eco-poetics” (*Literary Translation* 61) is not politically tied to the ecological crisis or the urgency to shift perspective to the planetary. Rather, its focus is on reinforcing language as an ecologically embedded, multisensory constituent of situated everyday experiences and engagements with the immediate environment.

⁵⁸ This is the case for both versions of the paper (the first published in 2015, the second in 2018).

While I value the attentiveness elicited in Scott's notion, I wish to expand it beyond the self to a vibrant more-than-human oikos and consider how it could be re-directed to register its expressive, vulnerable abundance. Scott's eco-translations of Rimbaud record a situated moment of experiencing the source text, but what is around that source text and in interaction with it? What if the eco-translation model is shifted to the very moment that Rimbaud recorded, the moment at "Cabaret-Vert" filled with sunlight, smells of ham and garlic, everyday sexism (cf. "enormés tétons"), and normalised abuse of non-human animals for food purposes? What if we take a step back in Badenes and Coisson's eco-translation concept and consider the initial source "where nature, having its own voice in the source text" (360) comes from exactly as that — a *source*, an active player in the translation equation, the potential source in an ecotranslation, the vibrant, manifold source that Kirsch again and again engaged with, trying to figure out exactly "what it looked like. What effect it had. What I felt. How the wind sounded. What the colour was." (Radisch)?

My approach to ecotranslation is therefore guided by Scott's emphasis on the generative and energetic multiplicity of translation in the context of poetry and propelled by Cronin's calling for a post-anthropocentric stance acknowledging the plurifold voices of more-than-human organisms in an age of ecological vulnerability. It is further driven by previous insights into both eco-poetics and translation, their reflective approximate limitedness, decentring, radiant orientation and imaginative transboundary movements into poethical indeterminacy. Taking into account issues surrounding the "voice of nature", ecotranslation seeks to provide new perspectives into ecopoet(h)ics as it stands on the edges of texts, animals, landscapes, places, always approached from a position of interconnectedness. Translation is expanded to nature, not as a collective non-human realm in Scott's sense, but as all that co-exists and has co-evolved in a predominantly unequal, exploitative relationship with human animals; tree-teachers, wind, Norwegian lakes, hungry bears, birds, not-yet-dead fish. What is at stake is an ecotranslation taking off from an expanded ecological translation zone; venturing the previously outlined symbiotic relationship between translation and writing as an ecopoethical wager, an "[...] experimental instrument that creates a new order of attention to the possibility of a poetics of precise observations and conversational interspecies relations with all contributing to the nature of form" (Retallack, 'What Is Experimental Poetry' para 37). I will explore this further in dialogue with Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World*.

2.4.1 "nothing is apart enough for language"

The tripartite poetry collection *Translations from the Natural World* by Australian poet Les Murray was published in 1992. Recent posthuman trends in the growing field of Environmental Humanities and especially Animal Studies have sustained an interdisciplinary scholarly interest in it (cf. Armbruster; Ryan, 'Sacred Ecology of Plants: The Vegetative Soul in the Botanical Poetry of Les Murray'; Oerlemans; Bouttier, 'Creaturely Texts, Texts on Creatures'; 'Non-Human

Voices'). Subject of my inquiry will be the middle section called *Presence: Translations from the Natural World* (15-56), which makes up the central body of the book. In line with the premise of its title, Murray creates a variety of poetic registers to invoke the multifaceted "flora and fauna" (Matthews 121), including tree, spermaceti, bird, or elephant. As tempting as the distinction into these two categories, flora and fauna, may be, their anthropocentric colouring is subsequently unmasked by an omnipresent sense of interconnectedness, aliveness, and individuality in Murray's sequence. He takes seriously the challenge of pushing against the boundaries of human perception by composing "short dramatic monologues by various beings, animate and inanimate." (Dunkerley 80) The readily assumed distinction between animate and inanimate testifies yet again to an anthropocentric ontology challenged by Murray's poetry. From sunflowers (*Presence* 42) to spermaceti (52), all participants in the interconnected net are imbued with vibrant aliveness, both in their immediate, personalised presence and in their significance for other participants. The "Great Bole" for instance talks about perceiving natural forces of the earth, the sensation of growing, and of being an active part of an ecological chain:

Through me planet-strain
 exercised by orbits.
 Then were great holding,
 earth-give and rain,
 air-brunt, stonewood working.

Elements water brought
 and solar, outwards sharing
 its all-pollen of heats
 enveloped me, spiralling

In no one cell
 for I am centreless
 pinked a molecule
 newly, and routines

so gathered on
 that I juice away all
 mandibles. Florescence
 suns me, bees and would-bes,
 I layer. I blaze presence. (29)

Murray defies a detached view on nature insofar as his poetry does not take a descriptive or observing approach but practises what may be called an "ethically disciplined imagination of others" (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 142). Anchoring an increased attentiveness to and appreciation

of more-than-human organisms, they are imaginatively reconfigured as active participants in human language. The engagement with them leaves traces in language, forcing “it into contortions it never knew it could reach” (Beer 319), and thus marks an otherness. Neologisms, unusual syntax, and nouns hinging on verb functions characterise the experimental Australian English translation of bole-expression, whose presence extends through a greater sense of time and a greater sense of subjectiveness. The growing process as an experience of being pulled upwards is recorded by the many tree layers, as is the knowledge of how it feels to be healthy (“Health is hold fast / infill and stretch.”) or ill (“Ill is salts lacking / brittle, insect-itch” (*Presence* 29)). Both experiences manifest as natural signs in the tree rings, its bark, size, and bloom. The bole comes into being through relationality with the earth, which provides them with consciousness and orientation:

Needling to soil point
lengthens me solar
my ease perpendicular
from earth’s mid-ion. (29)

Made up of many cells, feeling “enveloped” by the sun and their own arboreal umbrella of blossoms, the bole is part of a tree that is in cyclical symbiosis with the surroundings. The sun enables production of energy through photosynthesis, to flourish and produce oxygen for the bees that feed on and pollinate the blossoms in turn. Poetically, the interrelations can be seen as being enacted by the homophonic pun on “bees” and the anticipated “would-bes”, closely conjoining creature and existence. The final line “I blaze presence” (29) further echoes “presents”, which could refer to the multiple layers of the tree, each recording different memories. In addition, it implies the plurality of organisms encompassed by the bole as a larger ecosystem offering many gifts (“presents”).

Drawing on Cronin, an emergent “post-humanist ecology” (*Eco-Translation* 15) can be seen as being at work here, giving a sense of deep time where each poetic I is older and wider than itself.⁵⁹ It comprises in an Uexküllian vein also its “Umwelt”, the sum of stimuli each creature perceives individually as a subject (von Uexküll 5-6, 55).⁶⁰ The I is thus many; it is “the animals of my tree” (Murray, *Presence* 48) or “the unison of the whole shoal” (22), is a blurred line between subject and object hierarchies, situated in the present while the perfect balance and interdependence between different Umwelten reach farther than the current moment to the greater time span of an evolutionary continuum “lived and died in” (20) (cf. von Uexküll 177-78).⁶¹ From an ecosemiotic perspective as touched upon by Cronin (*Eco-Translation* 71), the organisms in

⁵⁹ Deep time extends human history into planetary history, opening a geological timescale which will be further explored in chapter 3.

⁶⁰ Umwelt here is notably not synonymous with environment, the passive surroundings. The Uexküllian Umwelt is not external to the organism but part of it, merging inside and outside. In a sense, it is already a Mitwelt, although one specific to the organism.

⁶¹ Tønnessen discusses the problems in Uexküll’s envisioned perfect harmony of organisms in a time of ecological crisis and species extinction, see ‘Umwelt Transitions: Uexküll and Environmental Change’.

the poems are endowed with subjective awareness and expressive agency. Their ability to respond to and communicate through verbal and non-verbal utterances conceived as signs unfolds the global “semiotic dimension” of the oikos, the relational semiosphere which encompasses all more-than-human processes on earth as interconnected semiotic agents (cf. Hoffmeyer; Kull, ‘On Semiosis’):⁶² “I am ever fresh cells who keep on knowing my name / but I converse in my myriads with the great blast Cell” (*Presence* 42)

Extending the communicative register to sunflowers here, Murray’s poem makes them visible as semiotic participants in a tradosphere that emphasises “non-anthropocentric form[s] of communication” (Cronin, *Eco-Translation* 71). Reinforcing expanded translation as an original creative writing process, Murray’s poems begin to unfold as ecotranslations of worlds usually rendered inanimate from within emerging animated poetic subjects. Entangled in a meshwork with other organisms, they develop through interrelation, posing a challenge to unified voice and individuality in a regenerative cycle of presence, vulnerability, change, interconnection:

I am the singular
in free fall
I and my doubles
carry it all

life’s slim volume
spirally bound
It’s what I’m about
It’s what I’m around (*Presence* 41)

The reflection of the “Cell DNA” (41) on its act of genetic decoding, “re-wording, re-beading / strains on a strand” (41) reveals another affirmative perspective on Guldin’s earlier cited statement (section 2.1), namely that “the very basis of life on earth” (118) is — translation. In order for cells to renew and organisms to function, proteins are generated from amino acids via genetic translation and transcription, that is, gene expression and protein biosynthesis. During the vital process of biochemical translation of genetic information, the transference from the sequence of nucleic acids into amino acid sequences of proteins has to exactly follow the original code, yet creates something new, essentially different, thus “making I and I more different / than we could stand.” (Murray, *Presence* 41) The enlivened DNA cell emphasises an extended ecosemiotic, post-anthropocentric perspective, acknowledging that not only human but also more-than-human or-

⁶² Initially formulated by Yuri Lotman, semioticians such as Hoffmeyer, Petrilli and Ponzio, Sebeok, and Nöth have moved beyond Lotman’s anthropocentric notion of the human semiosphere to include the physical world. I am here drawing on Hoffmeyer’s broad understanding of a global semiosphere that incorporates a semiotic plane of the biosphere and Kull’s notion of a totality of interconnected signs (‘Semiosphere and a Dual Ecology’ 178-80), but I refrain from using “biosphere” as a potential limitation to physically and biologically knowingly existing, intentional, determinable matter only (cf. Kotov and Kull 191).

ganisms are able to communicate, experience, and feel.⁶³ Poetry as ecotranslation amplifies this view, taking the poem as one of many possible translations created in response to the manifold source oikos itself.

Murray's collection is often described as an attempt to "speak for nature", "on behalf of nature", or as "giving a voice" to non-humans (e.g. Matthews 121-122; Dunkerley 80; H. Moore 4; Cone 131). Problems of this notion aside for a moment, H. Moore refers to the collection as an example of a spiritual eco-poetic "(Re)connection" with the earth, implying a growing sense of awareness of being interconnected with the physical world, which results in a renewed sense of humility and responsibility. She suggests that the poet offer themselves as a "channel through which the earth's voice and those of other species can be expressed." (H. Moore 4)

This envisioned practice of enlarging the self, pushing aside ego-centrism in order to accommodate other earthlings on the basis of increased kinship and compassion is doubtlessly a vital eco-poetic "portal" (1) on the path to a post-anthropocentric tradosphere. Murray himself has pointed to a spiritual orientation in his poetics, writing that he wants his poems to be "more than just National Parks of sentimental preservation, useful as the National Parks are as holding operations in the modern age. What I am after is a spiritual change that would make them unnecessary." (*The Paperbark Tree* 95-96) This seems to partly chime in with H. Moore's idea of (re)connecting to the planet earth and ultimately also intertwines a larger vision for political change with his poetics. Considering the word "park" in eco-poetical context here, it is further interesting to note that this seems to clash with the apolitical, "re-creational", "imaginary" parks poems are supposed to constitute in Jonathan Bate's line of thought (*The Song of the Earth* 64) (cf. section 1.1). Instead, Murray gestures at an emerging eco-poethic contact which lies at the heart of poetry and serves as a catalyst for a different attitude to the material world. Irrespective of whether an emphasised reconnection is built on nostalgic longing for an illusionary state of being one with nature, which arguably has never been the case (cf. McMurry 172; Williams), a heightened sense of connection and care for the earth, specifically on part of those with the biggest ecological backpack, has possibly never been more urgent in the light of climate emergency.

Nevertheless, the notion of "speaking for nature" or indeed giving the earth itself "a voice", an ancient spectre of ecocriticism, itself must be viewed critically. It implicitly reinforces a view in which nature is distinctly separate from the human and, moreover, silent. It implies that the earth is initially passive and without a voice, and it simultaneously undermines the violent politics of being rendered *voiceless* in the first place (cf. Suen 1). In contrast to an eco-semiotic view perceiving organisms as active participants in an interconnected tradosphere, Lambert's interjected assertion that "[N]ature cannot speak — and it represents something that cannot be translated" (44) upholds yet again an anthropocentric perspective, in which those without a human voice appear to be outside of an exclusively human tradosphere altogether. If "to speak" is meant metaphoric-

⁶³ As David Abram phrases it: "Are we humans unique? Sure we are. But so is everyone else around here." ('On Being Human in a More-Than-Human World')

ally here, referring to various forms of verbal and non-verbal expressions, the assertion is plainly untenable. Even following the implication that nature retrograded to a realm outside society, it would still be full of metaphorical speech; birds' twittering, whale songs, elephant trumpeting. Their untranslatability is moreover presumed rather than explained.

Otherwise, if "to speak" only refers to the ability to produce verbal sounds evidently forming some kind of conventional language, then it is worth remembering that many humans also cannot speak in this regard, and that "human language" includes a variety of more than 6000 languages, non-verbal sign language among them. In this perspective, the trope that "nature cannot speak" seems to be built on a specific anthropocentric as well as discriminatory ethnocentric assumption of what it means to speak in a predetermined proper manner. While it remains further unspecified, it perpetuates a troubling hierarchy based on "right" and "wrong" – slipping into a paradoxically reversed idea of "natural" and "unnatural" – ways to speak in a manner that can or cannot be understood. Everything belonging to nature, however abstractly apprehended here, is consequently separated from those who are able to speak in a way that can be understood and is assumed to be translatable. Everything belonging to nature is conversely rendered passive and entirely untranslatable, since it is not able to speak in a way that can be understood – and must therefore be given a voice to begin with. This is clearly incompatible with an ecological view replacing nature as a separate realm with infinite interrelations between co-evolved humans and more-than-humans. Furthermore, it seems to undermine the foundation of Murray's translation endeavour which conveys an expanded semiotic view on speech: "Living things do all talk, I say, but they don't talk human language, or always speak with their mouths."⁶⁴ (Alexander 244)

Rather than constituting a solely human privilege, language comprises movements, bodies, ultrasound and olfactory senses in Murray's poetry. In the translation "From Where We Live on Presence", written from a beetle's perspective, the beetle asserts that "nothing is apart enough for language" (Murray, *Presence* 54). Murray's poems as ecotranslations can be seen as stretching Scott's emphasis accounting for other forms of expression and widening the idea of language to an embedded form of interaction to an eco-semiosphere. Language is physical and synaesthetic, emphasised as a relational capacity. A multiplicity of semiotic processes, it thus includes the "sonic bolt" (44) of a whale, the "sotto voce" (50) of a raven, and the ultrasound of a bat that blurs linguistic conventions into an onomatopoeic bat singsong: "err, yaw, row wry – aura our orrery, / our eerie ü our ray, our arrow"⁶⁵ (*New Collected Poems* 355).⁶⁵ Instead of being regarded as

⁶⁴ "Living things" seems to limit semiosis to the biosphere here, but as suggested earlier, Murray's poetry does not draw a steadfast border between animate and inanimate things, including for example also a poem written from the perspective of air. In this sense, his poetry echoes Vicuña's holistic view (cf. section 1.3).

⁶⁵ The poem "Bat's Ultrasound" was originally published in *The Daylight Moon* (Murray 1987) and not included in *Translations from the Natural World*. However, Murray has identified it as the "ancestor" poem of his collection ('Introduction to "Bat's Ultrasound"'), and in Murray's *New Collected Poems*, it opens the section *Presence*. It is also part of the German translation *Übersetzungen aus der Natur*. Labelled as a translation, the poem offers an interesting response to Thomas Nagel's seminal and much discussed essay 'What Is It like to Be a Bat?', in which he argues that "every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view" (Nagel 168) that can thus never be known – though it can potentially be imagined – by other subjects.

something that separates the human from the world, language is perceived as something greater in which every more-than-human participates. It permeates everything, because something even greater nurtures it, intrinsically connecting all participants of the oikos and enabling their poetic translation: presence.

Underpinned by Murray's Catholic faith in a single origin of all creatures (cf. Beer 315; Malay 161-66; Fürstenberg 144), the shared presence of every-thing that *is* dissolves a rift between untranslatable nature and translatable culture.⁶⁶ Presence can be seen as a "common ground" (Fürstenberg 155-57) over which Murray spans his rope for translation. From a decentred human stance, an expansive eco-semiosphere unfolds, in which presence and semiosis are co-extensive.⁶⁷ Murray's beetle expresses themselves through their own corporeality: "[B]eetlehood itself is my expression. / It was said in fluted burnish, in jaw-tools, spanned running, lidded shields." (Murray, *Presence* 53) The verb "said" explicitly applies the communicative register to the beetle. They speak by means of their unique beetle-ness, different from the human, which "is a comet streamed in language far down time; no other / living is like it." (53) Among the "living", human-ness is thus unique as well – unique but not special. Throughout the poem, the beetle is shown in lively exchange with their Umwelt:

[...] Ants, admittedly, headlong flesh-mobbers meeting,
hinge back work-jaws, part their food jaws, merge mouths in communion
and taste their common being; any surplus is message and command.
Mine signal, in lone deposits; my capsule fourth life went by clues.
I mated once, escaped a spider, ate things cooked in wet fires of decay
but for the most part, was. [...] (53)

Situated in an animate more-than-human world, the beetle interacts with other organisms through movements and actions that can be understood as ecosemiotic signals. The "surplus" for example may refer to the food storage certain types of beetles deposit in underground tunnels to feed their larvae: for them it is a "command" to nourish, grow, and pupate. For the human observer, the tunnels further signal the presence of the beetle, or rather, of beetles in general. Their plurality, quick generational change and relatively brief life span (from a human point of view), may be encapsulated in the obscure "fourth life". In a similar vein, the "pungent chemistry" in the penultimate line could refer to substances beetles excrete in order to attract other species or repel

⁶⁶ The significance of presence as a key concept in Murray's work is for example discussed in 'Animal Presences: Tussles with Anthropomorphism' (Beer), 'Creaturely Texts, Texts on Creatures' (Bouttier), 'Non-Human Voices in Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World*' (Bouttier), '*Les Murray Country: Development and Significance of an Australian Poetic Landscape*' (Fürstenberg), 'Incarnations in the Ear: On Poetry and Presence' (Leighton), *The Figure of the Animal in Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (Malay), and 'Sacred Ecology of Plants: The Vegetative Soul in the Botanical Poetry of Les Murray' (Ryan). Murray himself expresses his belief in the sacrality of poetry as "wholespeak" able to express everything in the poem "Distinguo": "Prose is protestant-agnostic, / story, explanation, significance, / but poetry is Catholic; / poetry is presence." (Murray, *New Collected Poems* 341)

⁶⁷ I am here drawing on Sebeok's principle which states that life and semiosis are co-extensive (Emmeche and Kull 69; Sebeok). I further extend life to presence here, in order to account for the encompassing view on life enacted in Murray's poems.

predators. A limitation in terms of factual ecological engagement can be seen in the fact that the poem does not seem to refer to any particular beetle but only evokes their general existence,⁶⁸ signalled by six feet, shell, jaw functions, absence of lungs, and spanned walk: most vitally, the beetle *is* – situated in an interrelated tradosphere shared with beetle mates, predators, and also, humans.

As Cronin stresses, the point of an expanded notion of communication underpinning ecological translation is not “anthropomorphic projection but communication across and in the full knowledge of radical difference.” (*Eco-Translation* 71) Difference does not necessarily mean separateness (cf. Cronin, *Translation and Identity*). The more difference there is and “the more lives circling you” (Murray, *Presence* 42), the more important it is to learn how to be open and attentive to them, to find transformative ways through them. As has been explored with regard to (m)other tongues (section 2.2), difference even pervades what appears to be homogenous and fully knowable, and it is intensified when moving to the edge of presumptions concerning the (more-than-)human. Difference is why there is a need for translation in the first place, making relations from a common ground of shared presence and semiosis.

Murray’s emphasis on presence as a commonality between organisms and an accompanying acknowledgement of their expressive agency underpins the conviction that poetically translating them is a genuine possibility. As Michael Malay points out, it distinguishes him from other poets who have made similar attempts (162-63),⁶⁹ and reinforces the need to investigate his project within an ecological translation zone. Understanding translation as a mere “trope” (Bouttier, ‘Non-Human Voices’ 157), as a vague poetic way to “give nature a voice” or “channel the voice of the earth” not only undermines the semiotic ability of the oikos, in this case, the source for the translations, encompassing nature and culture in entanglement. It also diminishes translation in its generative effort to connect through the differences whilst noticeably recognising the presence of the source surrounding the translation – an effort that is based on creative labour on part of the translator (cf. W. Benjamin).

Lambert assumes that Murray’s translation project is “impossible, doomed to fail, a blunder from the very beginning, but then, failure underscores every translation.” (44) Her view, however, is based on the corresponding assumption that successful translation means “there would be no more translation” (44). This is not so much an appraisal of Murray’s attempt at translating allegedly untranslatable nature as it is a negation of the very concept of translation, since the perfect translation in this perspective entails a pre-Babel state of absolute, universal sameness in which translation became superfluous. “Unifying” (44) differences is arguably homogenisation, not translation. Particularly not in the expanded way it has been conceptualised in the ecological translation zone, nor in the way it reinvents human language in Murray’s poems in interaction

⁶⁸ A different poetic approach to beetles in this regard will be explored in section 3.2

⁶⁹ Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and Ted Hughes for example (162-63). Malay goes arguably furthest in investigating Murray’s translation concept, drawing on literary translation frameworks by Edith Grossman and George Steiner (184-99).

with a vibrant eco-semiosphere. His “audacious” belief that “language can speak of a world of beings outside of language in an age dominated by Saussurian philosophies” (Almon 123) extends an anthropocentric notion of semiosis and turns human language itself into something unfamiliar, permeated by co-existences with an-others. It once again unfurls translation here as a creative form, as an attempt to move towards unknown perspectives we may not be able to fully know or comprehend but may be able to imagine if “we unshell, into feathers; we lean open and rise / and magnify this meat, then that, with the eyes of our eyes” (Murray, *Presence* 15). In other words, the concept of “we” needs to move away from anthropocentrism and encompass different points of view, different, multiple Is/eyes:

We shell down on the sleeping branch. All night
the limitless Up digests its meat of light.

The circle-winged Egg then emerging from long pink and brown
re-inverts life, and meats move or are still on the Down.

Irritably we unshell, into feathers; we lean open and rise
and magnify this meat, then that, with the eyes of our eyes. (15)

This “Eagle Pair” translation invites the reader to learn to see with the eyes of two eagles, coupled by rhymed couplets. Eagles usually mate for life, which may be implied by the homophonic play on “I and eye” and “eyes of our eyes” that weaves I and I closely together. Additionally, it invites the reader’s presence to be part of the eyes/Is and share the specific experience of the eagles as fellow creatures in a more-than-human oikos. Malay suggests that Murray’s poems often feel “like a news report from a foreign country, where, although the words have a meaning for the locals, every sign strikes us as strange and mysterious” (165). Seen from an anthropocentric point of view, “Eagle Pair” does not tell the reader much. They have to begin to imagine the world as it may unfold for an eagle, separated into Up and Down, the sun compared to a familiar, life-producing element in the eagle-world, a “circle-winged egg”, that swallows, “digests” the daylight at night and “re-inverts life” in the morning.

While its formal composition of five couplets situates this ecotranslation from the natural world in a familiar literary form, its innovative use of human language estranges commonly used words. The reader has to veer, varying distance and proximity to an othered tongue in shifting constellations of relationality. Various motions, perceptual, imaginative, and poetical, underpin this transformative process of relation-making, including close observation and attention to the eagle, acknowledging their specific features, relating eagle world to human world, and imagining a different stance to the world by finding poetic expressions both close to and far away from general frames of reference that throw the reader off the human orientation. The final couplet of the eagle pair’s flight reads: “but all the Down is heavy and tangled. Only meat is good there / and the rebound heat ribbing up vertical rivers of air” (*Presence* 15). Murray works with a con-

scious de-familiarisation and decentring of the human eyes/Is that flicker through an alienated poetic skyscape unwilling to submit to human conventions. Rivers are newly contextualised from the angle of flying eagles perceiving the surrounding air as rivers flowing upwards. Similarly, the unusual reoccurring image of “meat”, an anthropocentric term so strikingly anchored in an exploitative human/animal relationship degrading selected animals into edible parts, urges the reader to feel its significance for the eagles.

Reading with magnified eagle eyes requires a changed attitude: In analogy to a foreignising translation method idealised by Schleiermacher (47) and Venuti (*Translator's Invisibility* 19-20), it sets the reader in motion towards the source text. Recalling Scott's concept of ecological reading as an “ongoing psycho-physiological, psycho-perceptual relationship” (“Translation and the Spaces of Reading” 34), they have to feel their way into the text. Language here is a point of contact for human and eagle; language itself translates, that is, moves the reader closer to a foreign, enlivened source place, where Up and Down reign, animate and inanimate blur into sleeping branches, moving meats, digesting Ups, circle winged eggs. Conceptualised in an ecotranslation, this source is the physical oikos, tangible, ungraspable, at distance, in proximity, coming closer, moving away: an ecopoethical wager into the indeterminate, resting on curiosity and the possibility for interspecies polylogues as resistance against monologic anthropocentrism.

In order to unpack this ecopoethic momentum, it is crucial to conceive translation as more than a trope or potential metaphorical stray from translation proper. Equally unhelpful is a notion in which a perfect translation somehow means that all differences are overcome, that all otherness is fully appropriated and turned into total sameness. However, various views on translation along these and similar lines are not only surrounding Murray's project but also its German translation. Margitt Leibert, one of Sarah Kirsch's translators, has translated many of Murray's works in personal dialogue with him. Her bilingual poetry collection *Übersetzungen aus der Natur* includes selected translations from Murray's *Presence* as well as related poems from other collections. The public reviews of the German versions are living proof that translations continue to be regarded in a narrow translation framework, as mere shadows of their originals, and that poetry translation in particular is seen as a lost cause.

While Murray's collection is a manifesto for the autonomy and creative force of translating, reviewers of the German translations were quick to comment on the “unfortunate yet simply inevitable loss in poetry translation” and on the usefulness of being provided with an accompanying CD containing original poems read by the author (B. Stein). To exemplify that point, one reviewer cites the line “All me are standing on feed” from Murray's poem “The Cows on Killing Day” (*Übersetzungen aus der Natur* 10). Leibert translated it as “Alle ich stehen auf dem Futter” (11), which, according to one critic, does not compare to the original in terms of sound

and does not convey the pun on “feed” and “feet”, since “Futter” only means fodder.⁷⁰ Other than belonging to the original, the praised sound is not specified any further, which seems to say more about a persisting idea of the sacred original than about the poetic qualities of either line. In a sense, this can also be related Frost’s emphasis on an invariable sound intrinsic to one language, which has already been revealed in its inconsistencies (section 2.1). Understanding languages as co-evolving over time and meaning as contingent, Leibert presents but one possible version of Murray’s phrase; one translation rather than *the* translation. Leibert may have opted for a more unambiguous version in this moment, but at the same time, the decision results in a new, intralingual reference to the fifth stanza where the English “cud” is also translated as “Futter”. Similarly, the translation of “bull human” as “Menschenstier” creates an intriguing echo of “tier”, meaning animal, in the human, which is absent in the source and complements the human violence towards the cows addressed in the poems.

Yet, the working, reading, and inventive writing process underlying the creation of a naturally different, independent German poem is equally ignored in positive comments that note how Leibert managed to “rescue” semantic and vocal features, which eventually makes her versions “almost” equal to the original (‘Les Murray: Übersetzungen aus der Natur’). All these metaphorical expressions continue to shroud poetry translation in mystery and reinforce an image of the translator as someone trying to catch as many of the original properties as possible while they fall through a barrier from one into the other language, risking to be once again *lost in translation*. Such views are untenable if languages are understood as versatile, ever-changing, and in motion, and if translation is acknowledged as the generative creative writing form Scott’s approach has yet again buttressed. As a relation-making movement, in a Benjaminian sense an approximation to the also changing, ultimately ungraspable source as a site of plurality, a translation can be once again seen as “another blade of grass in the field – not a conclusion but a provisional entryway into the vast ecology of the poem within its greater tradition?” (Balaban et al. 87)

Recalling these qualities of translation in an expanded ecological framework gives rise to ecotranslation that crosses through an interlingual framework and encircles ecopoetics itself with the potentiality to take the form of an ecotranslation. Its deep engagement with the oikos as a source suggests a multi-sensory immersion beyond the borders of self and beyond the borders of human exceptionalism. Underpinned by ecopoethical attentiveness, Murray’s translation-poetry as ecotranslation unfolds the source as inhabited by multiple complex sentient agents. The acknowledgement of not only their presence but also their active partaking in an ecosemiotic tradosphere performs a post-anthropocentric pull which reconfigures the human as one among many earthlings. In this sense, anthropocentrism can be understood in accordance with Val Plumwood as an avoidable centrism that follows the logic of other centrisms: While being human assumes

⁷⁰ As an aside comment, I will point out that in most cases, especially if a text is translated for the first time, interlingual translations are aimed at readers who will not read original and translation side by side and are therefore not able to compare. If not specifically marked as such, many people will often not even notice that they are reading a translation (cf. Bellos 35-38).

a certain inevitable “epistemic locatedness” (Plumwood 132) based on human experience, it does not necessitate – nor justify – privileging the category of the human over the interests of other beings (132-38). One step towards decentring the anthropos in this regard is to recast language as a holistic concept rather than a distinctive human ability. It is much easier to align poetry prepared in this vein with anthropomorphism than to reflect underlying presumptions of what it means to measure the world in terms of human exceptionalism. Complicating such a stance, ecotranslation assumes as common ground a more-than-human tradosphere in which presence itself is deeply intertwined with semiosis, as exemplified by Murray’s beetle who says that “beetlehood itself was my expression” (*Presence* 53).

Murray’s seriousness in a translation project that tries to be neither “Walt Disney nor Ted Hughes” (Alexander 244) grounds ecotranslation as an act of listening to and giving attention to that beetle expression by expanding the lines of language through manifold difference and orienting it towards unknown and unfamiliar points of contact. Moving within a more-than-human eco-semiosphere, human language, in Murray’s case 20th century Australian English, presents one among a myriad of expressions. Ecotranslation conceptualises ecopoetics as a creative approximation to an infinite source that can never be grasped in its entirety. Although resulting in autonomous compositions, they are conscious of their limitations as they point beyond their own presence to the entanglement within a greater, indeterminate plurality of a “vast ecology” (Balaban et al. 87). After having established themselves as a semiotic subject, Murray’s beetle thus declares:

[...] I could not have put myself better,
with more lustre, than my presence did. I translate into segments, laminates,
cachou eyes, pungent chemistry, cusps. But I remain the true word for me (*Presence* 53)

Behind, around and connected with the poetic beetle translation is another source, the physical presence of the beetle. In a Benjaminian sense, it shines through the translation, through language, ecopoethically contextualised and transformed, negating its absoluteness. Ecotranslation does neither obliterate differences nor does it assume total understanding of its source. Instead, it moves human presence apart in order to make space for a connection point with the more-than-human, hoping to create one fleeting moment in which reader and poet-translator can begin to imagine figuring out “exactly” what it is like (cf. Kirsch in Radisch).

Creatively empowered by Scott and poetically reconfigured in Cronin’s broad definition, ecotranslation embraces translation as a movement, as a perceptual, imaginative, and poethical motion into a different stance to the Mitwelt. Language, through expanded translation, discloses a form of creative contact-making, shifting between human and more-than-human paths. Language opens itself to strange analogies arising from the stranger acknowledgement of being always already in interrelation and exchange with the lines of another, which necessitates leaving behind a fixated position and entering an oscillation of relational roaming. Not on the basis of a metaphorical voice-giving, poetry as ecotranslation emphasises the oikos as inhabited by

enlivened semiotic agents. With a stressed attentiveness to language flows – interspecies, intercultural, interlingual – and their associated power dynamics, ecotranslation encompasses and engenders movement, transformation, distance and intimacy with words and worlds that enlarge the sense of self towards a posthuman “we”, no matter who, that are sharing one earth, older than human time, more complex and more infinite than we can begin to understand.

The engagement with poetry in particular moves plurality, creativity and autonomy into an expanded translation framework, in which the poetic form moves from registering the existence of an eco-semiosphere to specifically recognising it as worth translating in the first place. As a relational practice within an ecological zone, it thus simultaneously highlights attentive engagement and interaction with other earthlings as worthwhile. In alignment with Scott’s experiential shift in textual engagement, this adds to the previous questions “what does it [the text/poem] do?” and “what does it do to me?” (Rossi 391) the question of “what does it do to others, what does it do in eco-poetical terms”? Stretching forward to the unknown carried by imagination, tangible concerns of more-than-humans project new points of eco-poetical accountability for lives that we may not understand but can appreciate due to translations approaching them in a form that can affect and move us. Emphasising the need to make connections through radically different inhabitants, ecotranslation unleashes “translation thinking and practices that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change” (Cronin, *Eco-Translation* 2) specifically as a creative making practice “converging on the oikos, the planet earth that is the only home our species currently knows.” (Skinner, ‘What is Eco-poetics?’)

Translation has been shown in its manifold guises in this chapter, stretched into various directions, and enmeshed with eco-poethics in an ecological translation zone. Viewed from an expanded perspective, the cultural shift and theorists operating outside a narrow faithfulness/betrayal binary in translation offer insights into its elicited creativity, reflectiveness, and transformative motion. These qualities oppose persisting notions of a translation’s derivative, subordinated nature, as well as the trope of untranslatability that particularly prevails in poetry translation. Whether tied to German eco-poetry, Murray’s *Translations from the Natural World*, or Leibert’s translations of Murray’s collection, the casual re-occurrence of untranslatability throughout this chapter underlines the necessity to continuously demystify and clarify processes surrounding the linguistic practice of translation and, in addition, open it to discussions concerning other frames of reference. Given the prominent association of translation with “translation proper”, a dialogue between different disciplinary branches seems vital in order to move away from traditional biases, further the acknowledgement of labour associated with translation, and make visible instances of domesticating violence and appropriation. Concepts like the “mother tongue”, built on a static view on closed-off language systems, often serve as powerful ideological instruments that yield hierarchical distinctions and distrust of otherness. Language, however, as Cronin argues, “does not have to become the shield of ethnic otherness, a weapon of exclusion with translation forever bound up in a teleology of loss and betrayal.” (*Eco-Translation* 135) Entwined with eco-poethics, translation can be furthered from an ecological standpoint instead, its attentiveness to language

exchanges and its meta-reflectivity as a “study of language” (Steiner 45; Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 35) expanding the radius of poethical inquiries in turn.

In that vein, translation found application as practice, investigative lens, and concept in this chapter. An increased number of poems gathered here are interlingual translations from German; in fact, from an angle of ecotranslation emerging in this section, all poems can be conceived as such.⁷¹ The creative momentum of translation as a specific interrelated reading and writing form outlined in the second section (2.2) also inspired various poems as responses embedded in a practical interlingual translation process, as well as other poems driven by a reflective mode resulting in comments on their origin (“New definitions”; “Nordsee 2.0”), related readings (“Eisvogel”), or their co-existence in another language (“Second Skin”; “Zweite Haut”). The latter further show the close kinship of poetry writing with translating and translating poetry with writing, underlined by intimate engagement with the source and the simultaneous paradox of never being able to fully grasp something that is in constant flux and therefore permeated by indeterminate unknowingness. Suggesting an alternative to the unidirectional source/target paradigm, the source/mouth model emphasises translated texts as one possible version in a linguistic continuum, forming autonomous versions with their own dynamic, just as incomprehensible as the source.

In the third section (2.3), translation as methodological connection-making led to an investigation into the post-war trajectory of ecopoetry in Germany. The context of Ökolyrik not only provides a grounding for the translated poems from my (m)other tongue, but further adds a germanophone perspective to a predominantly anglophone ecopoetics, which then again is reliant on translation as a practice carried by decisions of the translator, conscious or unconscious, and the way they read and communicate the source through the mouth text. A stance of ecopoethics provides a particularly productive angle to critically review selected underlying reasons for a lasting split between politics and poetics resulting in a concomitant dismissal of German Ökolyrik. It further reveals a tendency to match eco-related subjects with established disciplinary genre expectations, which occasionally seems to restrict the discussion or repeat prejudices initially up for dispute.

Issues surrounding the vocabulary used to discuss earthly relations are addressed in this final section (2.4) as well, which orients towards a concept of ecotranslation. Murray’s poetry as an act of giving a voice to non-humans carries a number of anthropocentric presumptions that need to be treated with caution, as they reinforce a human/animal divide. With an untranslatable nature, the discussion returns once again to an untranslatability axiom also repeated in reviews of Leibert’s translations of Murray’s translation of the allegedly untranslatable. In the face of translation happening on a daily basis, the rationale behind such an axiom is not always clear and contributes to the devalorisation of the work of translators, the plurality of text, and the intricacy of literary texts. Even in perspectives assuming translatability, translations are often

⁷¹ This will be further explored in section 3.4.

restricted to evaluative scholarship following a faithfulness/betrayal orientation. In this regard, Venuti's outline of a "translation culture" remains a desideratum (Venuti, 'Translating Power' 247-48).

Meanwhile, Murray's *Translations from the Natural World* offers approaches to a wider idea of language roaming a more-than-human tradosphere. Translation has been subsequently articulated as an ecological concept informed by but deviating from existing lines of research (cf. Scott, 'Poetics of Eco-Translation'; Cronin, *Eco-Translation*) adhering to an eco-paradigm in Translation Studies. Initially however, it arose from and as a writing practice that filtered aforementioned qualities of expanded translation into a form of research: driven by increased attentiveness and relation-making, ecotranslation too complicates neat divisions in favour of acknowledging time and again interrelations between disciplines, human and more-than-human, theory and practice. Ecotranslation expresses in ecopoethics transformative motions, layers of creative writing processes, and a turn towards apparently radical other voices. It pulls at its edges, orienting ecopoethics towards a fuller understanding of exchanges between languages and cultures. This focus opens up new conceptual points of connection, underpinning a relational poethic writing practice that begins to make room for an expanded human-ness to which the next chapter will add further layers and complications. On the basis of respecting other creatures as complex sentient agents, on the basis of translation that is expanded, creative, and dynamic, and on the basis of acknowledging a multiplicity of ecologically embedded languages, poetry is framed as ecotranslation in response to the vital, manifold, expressive, more-than-human, and forever ungraspable earth. Pondering on the subject of making relations with foreign microcosms of the oikos, the travelogue by poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant offers the following observation:

«Les oiseaux blancs, — des ibis, — traçant leurs gammes sur les branches des arbres, me rappellent ces nuées d'oiseaux bleus et noirs qui s'abattent à heure fixe sur les bords de l'étang de La Restinga, dans l'île de la Margarita près du Vénézuéla. *Signaler de tels rapports, qui affinent le souvenir, ce n'est pas ramener toutes choses du monde à l'égoцентриque uniformité que vous décidez en vous-même. C'est enrichir la diversité d'une folle équivalence, qui permet de mieux estimer.*» (*Tout-monde* 527, emphasis in original)

The white birds — ibises, — on the branches of trees remind me of those clouds of blue and black birds which at set times pour down on the shore of the lagoon of La Restinga on the Isle Margarita near Venezuela. To point out these relations, which refine memory, does not mean to bring down all the things in the world to the same egocentric uniformity that you decide within yourself. It means instead to enrich diversity with a crazy equivalence, which allows a better appreciation. (My translation, with recourse to Gysels (111))

Diverging from Spahr's outlined problem of analogy, the process of making analogy, accompanied by a reflectiveness on the actual life-lines of both parties and on the underlying act of

relating them, emerges as a positive relational outward movement ultimately attending to both birds, those immediately present and those currently in a different place. Instead of perceiving analogy as mere appropriation, Glissant suggests that it forges a connection with something previously unknown. Through that connection, one is then able to widen one's gaze and appreciate the unfolding interrelated world. Ecotranslations can be seen as such an attempt at a kind of "crazy equivalence" (Glissant, *Tout-monde* 527) in order to better appreciate the manifoldness of the oikos. Opening up poetic language to the engagement with the more-than-human not only shapes poetic language in new, innovative ways. The possibility of a crazy equivalence in ecotranslation also disrupts a comfortable anthropocentric view, enriching it with Ups and Downs (Murray, *Presence* 15), layers of pregnancy (16), snake's heat organ (28), and octaves of elephants (32). Acknowledging that the human is part of an interdependent ecological system that has much to say but is less often heard (cf. McMurry 23), such an ecotranslation begins to register the existence of many other voices, or rather, many forms of expressions, not restricted to the mouth and more importantly not restricted to the human.

Much has changed since Murray published what Leibert perceived as meditations on the creation (*Übersetzungen aus der Natur* 87). Propelled by an idea of human-animal communion, Murray's poetic rootedness in the Australian landscape particularly speaks to pastoral motifs (Gifford, *Pastoral* 12). It emphasises the already, albeit briefly, problematised notion of reconnection in his translations that "put[s] us in touch *again*" with the "rest of the creation which our society has tended to treat simply as a commodity for management and exploitation." (Crawford 67, my emphasis) Since Crawford penned this statement, the outlined tendency of ill-treatment has reached scales beyond the comprehensible, beyond the imaginable, and beyond the psychologically bearable. The so-called "rest of the creation" here includes more than 2 million animals slaughtered for human consumption per day, accompanied by usages of water, pastures, and rainforests that make the meat industry one of the biggest influencing factors in global warming. Meanwhile humans not part of "our" society also continue to be exposed to suffering and starvation against the background of unbalanced wealth and economical growth. As "we", in an expanded sense, complicated by Spahr and now by Murray, enter a new geological era of anthropogenic climate change, reconnection is arguably more and more pushed aside by the necessity to connect at all – connect to and *through* novel, inconceivable developments, dynamics out of our control, destruction beyond repair, modes of resistance without any immediately tangible effect.

In this view, many claims, critical observations, and grievances expressed by the generation Ökolyrik retain much of their relevance, while their dimensions and urgency have increased drastically. The characteristically bemoaned „Waldsterben“ in *Im Gewitter der Geraden* is now a case of acute global rainforest decline, the "echidna" (Murray, *Presence* 30), is severely endangered by tree felling and human hunting, and the landscapes Sarah Kirsch liked to engage with are currently under a pandemic entry ban. Facing places changing beyond recognition within the blink of an I, the next chapter thus seeks to carry ecotranslation into the so-called Anthropocene.

Elaborating on its relation to ecopoethics, it will consider further ways of connection-making through “crazy equivalences” (Glissant, *Tout-monde* 527) with inhabitants of a “we” that is more-than-human in more than one sense.

Bones

Pop-up Park: it used to be her
baceous borders planted with metal combinations,
Petunia-Lenin, Stalin from pansies, Chrysanthemum
Chruschtschow – blossom again in
consciousness, speak flower
and blood tongues
languages of power,

tons of bones under the lawn,
blossom out and speak languages. Who rakes? Who plants?
Who mows? Concrete flowers, freshly painted
in May Plattenbauten renewed,
edges and boxes whitewashed city
mother of gardens

Talk, park, just talk, that I may see you.
Talk about the remnants, relics, talk about your rocket-
travels to the beyond, about war
memorials surrounding themselves with red
tulips, winning and sighing
well-watered present
Walking here are those
who will be dead

Chapter 3

EcoTranslating Matters in the Anthropocene

eARTh

Roaming

Language

More-Than-Human

stay with the connections, who are we and how many where, bones like wings have failed to grow for so long, meer-als-menschlich perhaps it is not too late/it may not be too late, stay intouch with the Idiocene, Econocene, Technocene, Anthrocene, Capitalocene, Democene, Aerocene, Romanthropocene, Growthocene, Polocene, Mediacene, Betacene, Eremocene, Neganthropocene, Anthroscene, Eurocene, Aquatocene, Chimpocene, Anthroposeen, Thalassocene, Astycene, Urbicene, Metropocene, Cosmopolocene, Meropocene, Sustainocene, White Supremacy Scene, Homogocene, Christocene, Planthropocene, Noocene, Polemocene, Necrocene, Robocene, Simulocene, Gynecene, Entrepocene, Chthulucene, Hellocene, Anthro-po-not-seen, Prometheocene, Machinocene, Northropocene, Congocene, Phagocene, AnthroOcean, Narcisscene, Trumpocene, Euclideocene, Manthropocene, Ananthropocene, Myxocene, Oligarchocene, Black Anthropocene, Sinocene, Naufragocene, Goracene, Jolyoncene, Agnotocene, Misanthropocene, Paleanthropocene, Betacene, Vulcanocene, Thalassocene, Papiocene, Exploitocene, Phronocene, Translationocene, Anthroscene, Plasticocene, Wasteocene, Corporatocene, Symbiocene, Sociocene, Plantationocene, Atomicocene, Thermocene, ~~Anthropocene~~, Obscene, Solar-cene, Soterocene, Cyanocene, Platocene, Plutocene, Pyrocene, Ecocene, Urbanocene, Anglocene, Megalocene, Neologismcene, Covidocene, welcome.

We are in this together

We is wide and embracing
 We is cute, zany, and interesting
 We is the pregnant frame for an absent I
 We is you and me and all my other selves
 We has 1001 hearts beating at Christmas time
 We has (no) hair, (no) feet, (no) private insurance
 We are receiving tax relieves for our marital status
 We are battling cancer, dementia, and bad translations
 We married to other becomes weather on French drugs
 We contend that parmesan on pasta cannot be given up
 We is taking the Hogwarts Express from Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a trillion
 We are fine today, thanks Doc, but we forecast heavy rain for tonight
 We believe in the Father, the son, and that water is not a human right
 We hereby agree to let everything go and be ruled by money and meat
 We is an account of (not) my feelings tattooed into two letters that also mean:

WEdnesday
 WEather
 WEst Europe
 WErite Enable
 WEorld Education
 WEhole Earth
 WEireless Encryption
 WEater Equivalent
 WEomen Empowerment
 WEorkplace Economics
 WEight Enumerator
 WEll-Endowed
 WEith Equipment
 WEochenEnde
 WEatEver

3.1 Are ‘We’ in *This* Together? — Layers and Markers of the Anthropocene

“‘We’ are in *this* together” states Rosi Braidotti repeatedly in her posthumanist cartography of nomadic ethics (*Transpositions* e.g. 16, 36, 108, 116). At a creative-critical edge, the poem preceding this section enacts a playful, thought-provoking inquiry into Braidotti’s vision of a non-unitary pronoun encouraged to undergo transpositions, transplantations, transformations, and translations in contemporary global culture. Rather than assuming a stable body and a fixed subject, Braidotti explores rhizomatic and itinerant modes of becoming ethically “embodied and embedded” (cf. 132, 136, 154) in *this*, a shared habitat made up of expanded “life” that collapses clear-cut distinctions between human and non-human matter (cf. 37, 136). A posthuman “We” enlarges the individual, singular self to a non-anthropocentric ecological realisation of its continuous symbiotic interconnections with others. Enacting such a “creative process”, the poem can be seen as modelling this “play of complexity” (145). Each line unfixes the “We” again, placing it in a new, different context that discloses — sometimes unexpected — relations between issues at different scales: a connection is forged between meat consumption and capitalist structures, the denial of water as a human right voiced by Coca Cola is juxtaposed with patriarchal Christian beliefs, and the reference to Harry Potter is mentioned in the same breath as a figure that signals the quantified cultural capital of its worldwide success.

Building up in increasingly longer lines, the repetitive anaphoric composition provides a stable counterpoint while the “communal” pronoun, notoriously iterated by politicians, teachers, doctors, and advertisings, is successively deconstructed. We is many unstable, polyphonous voices, and it is shown in its inevitable interconnections with “the commercialization of planet earth in all its forms” (98). The echo of Sianne Ngai’s *Our Aesthetic Categories. Zany, Cute, Interesting* is another inter-textual layer in this regard, implicating the postmodern “hypercommodified, information-saturated, performance-driven conditions of late capitalism” (Ngai 1), while likewise repeating questions regarding the formation of “us” and “our” aesthetic categories. In line with an economically and technologically fast, anti-intellectual age demanding ever-shorter text forms, the short block containing decrypted acronyms of “we” stripped to the smallest unit not only implies their comical aesthetics. Ending with “whatever”, the poem also dismisses such a development, thus ultimately turning its back on the previous inquiry into “WE” as well as into *this* in which we are dis/placed. Across systems of each possible relation, “we” remains a “contested word” (*The Transformation* 22), as has already been observed in dialogue with Juliana Spahr (section 1.4). What matters in a time when the Whole Earth is facing climate change? Are we who “agree to let everything go” the same who will eventually experience the backlash of everything being let go? Are we who “contend that parmesan on pasta cannot be given up” the same who are forced to produce it? Are we who have incurred a geological strata of chicken bones the same who die from hunger before turning six years old? Who are we and who matters, in the end?

These are only some questions posed by a term that risks homogenising differences among humans as it abstractly places them in the self-inflicted universal condition of *this*: the Anthropocene, the age in which human-induced environmental destruction is said to reach geological scales; the age in which the histories of earth and humans converge, to the loss of both but the possibility only of the human joining the ranks of the “Sixth Extinction” (Kolbert). Since its introduction by Nobel laureate atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer in 2000 (Crutzen and Stoermer 17),¹ the Anthropocene as a geochronological time unit truncating the Holocene has long expanded its initial frame of reference to mark a paradigm shift in and outside a range of academic disciplines. Originating as a stratigraphic concept, its premise is that anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide and methane have significantly altered Earth System processes and left measurable, potentially irreversible stratigraphic evidence of geological longevity (cf. Crutzen; Zalasiewicz et al.). Geological records of the Anthropocene include for example microplastics and concrete now to be found in many sedimentary samples and glacial ice, radioactive fallouts, globally dispersed industrial chemicals and pesticides, perturbation of the carbon cycle, and biological changes linked to extensive loss of biodiversity and mass extinction (Zalasiewicz et al. 216). As Crutzen initially phrased it in his proposition for a “geology of mankind”, “[U]nless there is a global catastrophe – a meteorite impact, a world war or a pandemic – mankind will remain a major environmental force for many millennia.” (Crutzen 23)

This assertion, albeit speculative and feeling even more so as I am writing this during a pandemic, implicates a shift in perspective and scale regarding human interventions into the ecosystems of their home planet. Correspondingly, this concern must further translate into a shift in studies concerned with either the home planet or this forcefully re-configured “mankind”, or both. “We ourselves”, as Marcella Durand writes, “are the wilderness destroying the very systems of which we are a part, in a role we utterly do not understand.” (“The Elegy of Ecopoetics’ 252) Thus affecting historical, social, philosophical, ethical, political, cultural, literary, aesthetic, artistic, or environmental approaches across national borders, concerns amplified by the Anthropocene cut right through a nexus of ecopoet(h)ics and translation. Before orienting this nexus towards an Anthropocene compass point, which is what is at stake in this chapter, however, conditions and implications of the yet hypothetical, though already controversial and popular to a point it is hard to ignore, geological Anthropocene require further discussion.

The onset of the Anthropocene as a formal chronostratigraphic unit was initially dated to coincide with the First Industrial Revolution heralded by James Watt’s invention of the steam-engine in Great Britain in 1784. According to geoscientists, at this point “analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and meth-

¹ Initially launched in 2000, popularisation of the concept arguably began with an article in *Nature* (Crutzen 23) in 2002. Earlier references to a “human era” or an “Anthropozoic” (Comte de Buffon, Antonio Stoppani), and the increasing impact of humankind in the “nöosphere” (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Édouard Le Roy, Vladimir I. Vernadsky) go back to the late 18th century (Zalasiewicz et al. 5-8). It is not unlikely that Crutzen had already read the term somewhere and made an unconscious connection when he spontaneously introduced the Anthropocene (see section 3.1.1).

ane.” (Crutzen 23) However, this proposal has incurred much criticism, from the geosciences as well as the humanities and the social sciences (cf. for instance Davies-Venn and Pattberg; Nichols and Gogineni; Lewis and Maslin; Lundershausen). Alternative dates of onsets pertaining to the “many Anthropocenes” (Zalasiewicz, ‘Extraordinary Strata’ 124) it turned out to be include the invention of fire in the late Pleistocene around 1.8 million years ago (Marlon et al.; Abrams and Nowacki) (sparking the “Pyrocene” (Pyne)), the transition of nomadism to settler culture at the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution approximately 8000-5000 years ago (“Early Anthropocene hypothesis” (Ruddiman)), and the beginning of the final phase of the late Holocene, approximately 2000 years ago, coinciding with the flourishing of ancient empires and dynasties (“Anthropocene soil hypothesis” (Certini and Scalenghe)). In addition to the original start date coinciding with the First Industrial Revolution (Crutzen and Stoermer), more recent candidate beginnings include the colonisation of the Americas by European settlers between 1570 and 1620 (“orbis hypothesis” (Lewis and Maslin)) and the Great Acceleration following the end of World War II concomitantly marking the beginning of the Atomic Age in 1945 (Steffen et al.), in whose wake global environmental concerns eventually began to emerge (section 1.1).

As of spring 2021, the geologic epoch of the Anthropocene has not yet been formally approved by either the International Commission on Stratigraphy or the International Union of Geological Sciences (cf. *International Chronostratigraphic Chart*). The Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), in place since 2009, plans to submit a formal proposal in 2021 that endorses the latter date, meaning the Anthropocene would have begun in the 1950s (Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Results’; Subramanian, ‘Anthropocene Now’). In the meantime, however, the Anthropocene as “academic rhetoric”, “catchphrase”, “intellectual shortcut”, and “expanded question mark” (T. Clark 3) has long exploded its chronostratigraphic boundaries and, pertaining to “all the new contexts and demands [...] of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale” (2), is a key aspect of ecocriticism.

As a marker of a novel contemporary situation that assumes new perspectives on the multitude and incomprehensibility of ways in which humans are reconfigured as planetary agents whose daily actions multiply to geophysical scales, the Anthropocene has developed a meteoric dynamics of its own. In addition to instigating new interdisciplinary scientific journals (e.g. *The Anthropocene*, *The Anthropocene Review*, *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*), over 35 000 citations and over 5000 academic publications from Engineering to Food Science,² implications and consequences of an Anthropocenic age have been explored in films, novels, documentaries, art projects, exhibitions, installations, TV series, music albums, and newspapers. In addition to entering the English Dictionary in 2014, the term “jumped from geoscience to hashtags” (Cook) and joined “‘climate change’ and ‘sustainability’ as a pivotal term in public environmental discourse” (Alaimo 143). Bińczyk argues that the Anthropocene debate buttresses an “‘exceptional’” and “‘utterly never before seen’ situation in history” that addresses “the last chance for humanity

² Figures are taken from the Scopus Database, pertaining to the appearance of the search term “Anthropocene” in article title, abstract, key word, and references between 2001-2021, respectively.

standing at the brink of oblivion” (Bińczyk 10).

To this end catalysing post-apocalyptic cli-fi scenarios, urgent calls for climate action, unprecedented mourning, fear, anger, and frustration, as well as new frameworks for the human relations with nature alongside spatio-temporal, ontological, and historical reconsiderations, the Anthropocene as a “charismatic mega-concept” (Davis and Turpin 6) has attracted attention across sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. Its explosive popularity only seems to be exceeded by an increasing urgency of the external conditions that led to its declaration in the first place. As the German poet Daniel Falb points out, if the Anthropocene itself had an icon, it could be perceived as an exponential graph, indicating not only the exponential rise of carbon dioxide emissions signalling its inception, but also a global climate of extremes (*Anthropozän* 28). Even beyond its physical-material and geo-stratigraphic repercussions, the Anthropocene thus influences aesthetic and cultural concepts. Probing of theoretical strata of the Anthropocene has accordingly included a growing number of materially-oriented inquiries into the socio-historical formation of a planetary “we” in its inextricable natural-cultural “intra-actions” (Barad), material embeddedness, and resulting ethical more-than-human response-abilities (Barad; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*) in a newly configured *this*, in which we are allegedly together. Rob Nixon highlights the collaborative and transformative potentials of the “Anthropocene turn” as follows:

the myriad exchanges it has stimulated across the earth and life sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the arts, bringing into conversation scholars who have been lured out of their specialist bubbles to engage energetically with unfamiliar interlocutors. The humanities and arts have become vital to this conversational mix, which is as it should be. For the Anthropocene hypothesis shakes the very idea of what it means to be human. (‘The Anthropocene’)

Tracing selected lines of Anthropocene onsets, I will thus address initial problems posed by a collective “we” from a broader perspective before directing Nixon’s outlined query more specifically to a literary and translation ecology context. However, given the prominence as well as the controversies of the term, it seems necessary to work through selected critical aspects in the following subsection (3.1.1) as part of this chapter’s dedication to eventually navigate the Anthropocene as a compass point for an ecopoet(h)ics extending into ecotranslation. As will be shown, the role of language is intrinsic to the terminological birth of the Anthropocene and needs to be reflected through a prism of ecotranslation acknowledging its partaking in a socio-historic, political, ecopoietic continuum. My counter approach to a hubristic, humanly-controlled Anthropocene draws on intensified ecopoethical considerations of the more-than-human and its translation into forms of poiesis (see 3.1.2). Entailing the posthuman realisation of being embodied and embedded in symbiotic interconnection with vibrant matter, language is thus tasked with making connections through differences without homogenising them, leaving room for multiple coexisting voices.

Building on that, the subsection that follows (3.1.3) reframes selected problems of the Anthro-

pocene in view of its designation as the “Translation Age” (Cronin, *Eco-Translation* 7). Invoking ecotranslation, the subsection establishes continuity between ecopoet(h)ics and the Anthropocene, turning again to Juliana Spahr and her poem “Unnamed Dragonfly Species” as an ecopolitically aware exploration of what it means to be human in the face of insurmountable scales of interdependencies, distress, and unknowingness. Finally, the last subsection (3.1.4) of this introduction to the Anthropocene reviews critical approaches to Anthropocene poetics while envisioning the Anthropocene as a compass point that will act as challenge, orientation, and point of connection, as well as lens and amplifier to shape and re-shape ecotranslation throughout this chapter. In the course of this, however, the Anthropocene compass point will be calibrated in turn, beginning with the disentanglement of its contradictory intentions and homogenising effects. In light of the explosive breadth of the Anthropocene, the following discussion can nevertheless only represent a fragment of a much wider, fast growing ongoing debate, in which, as shall be seen, a lacking reflectiveness of fragmented knowledge sometimes seems to be the biggest flaw.

Poor Parasites

[after Mikael Vogel]

princes/s in deep
 shit, you
 who endure sewage pipes, stay under
 ground
 there will be no change
 in government improved
 atomic bomb, you will
 not
 survive either

3.1.1 “Look what we’ve done!” Stories from Humanity’s ‘Grand’ Path

To take up Nixon’s query, “[W]hat it means to be human” (‘The Anthropocene’) in a geologically determined “human epoch” depends, after all, heavily on when “we” place its onset and on which side of newly excavated Anthropocene time “we” happen to stand. As stated above, the Anthropocene moves beyond the perception of the human as biological agent: “we” have become a “geological force” (Steffen et al. 618; Steffen, ‘The Anthropocene’ 843), “we have changed the chemistry of our atmosphere, causing sea level to rise, ice to melt, and climate to change.” The traditional distinction between natural history and human history is therefore dissolved (Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’ 201). As its proponents themselves have confirmed several times in response to critics (Zalasiewicz et al. 216), the stratigraphic Anthropocene is founded on an overlap between geological and historical time. In consequence, it is not free from assuming, reinforcing, and in particular producing a genealogy of human history that is presented and instrumentalised as a depoliticised given. Converging with human historical time, the Anthropocene is not, cannot be a neutral concept but ventures a “new territory beyond scientific and ethical neutrality” (Retallack, ‘Hard Days’ 241), whose trajectory is inevitably politically charged from the moment of its determined name and onset.³ This is the reason why scholars have proposed a range of alternative starting dates with various accompanying names that make up the introductory poem of this chapter, ranging from “Atomicocene” (Freeman) to “Wasteocene” (Armiero).⁴

Geological time units are not standardly named after what brought them about, and they are usually much longer than the currently proposed 75 years of the Anthropocene (Finney and Edwards 4, 8). Even the objection that it is of course not the popularly dubbed “human epoch” but the epoch of the *impact* of the human (Zalasiewicz et al. 208; Zalasiewicz et al. 3), stands on a shaky ground that is currently probed for a sedimentary “golden spike” to unmistakably designate “the moment when humans achieved such power that they started irreversibly transforming the planet.” (Subramanian, ‘Humans Versus Earth’ 168) While some alternative names, like “Idiocene” (Caffard) primarily seem to mock the “-cene” phenomenon, the rationale behind many terms and their dates in particular is to pluralise the current Anthropocene, criticise its overt anthropocentrism, and address “the inventory of which it was made: from the cuthands that bled the rubber, the slave children sold by weight of flesh, the sharp blades of sugar, all the lingering dislocation from geography, dusting through diasporic generations.” (Yusoff 40-41) Terms such as “Capitalocene” (cf. Malm and Hornborg 67; J. W. Moore) or “Plantationocene” (Haraway, ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene’; Haraway et al.) seek to unearth the age-old backbone of the Anthropocene, namely relations of power and privilege, uneven distribution of labour,

³ For further discussions on the politics of dating the Anthropocene, see for example Fagan, Chakrabarty, Mirzoeff, Lewis and Maslin, Nichols and Gogineni, and Yusoff.

⁴ My introductory poem to this chapter collects terms I came across during my research or made up myself. The majority of them are catalogued in this paper: ‘Around the Anthropocene in Eighty Names—Considering the Urbanocene Proposition’ (Chwałczyk).

imperial violence, and colonial genocide, which are at risk of being subsumed by an illusionary picture of humanity's grandeur.

With regard to Crutzen and Stoermer's initially proposed correlation to the Industrial Revolution and therefore the beginning of fossil economy for instance, Malm and Hornborg have pointed out that the celebrated invention of the steam engine was fuelled by a global demand for cheap, large-scale production of cotton-cloth. It was produced on the back of Afro-American slavery and exploitation of workforce in British factories and mines, concomitantly resulting in the rising wealth of the owners of steam-power (Malm and Hornborg 63-64). When Steffen et al. reinforce Crutzen's proposed beginning, suggesting that the fossil economy can be tied to the even earlier "mastery of fire" that "put us firmly on the long path towards the Anthropocene" (Steffen et al. 614), they catalyse the "tale of entrepreneurship of a few white men" (Yusoff 48). Their proposed onset thus builds a success story of the human species' straight path to civilisation that nevertheless simultaneously erases the murky, bloody, not at all pre-determined trails of "our" pasts.

To begin with, "we" were not at all aware of where the path would lead "us": the state of the world today has not been pre-determined. Since we have no comparative models of it, the Anthropocene is speculative in reaching into the past as well as it is speculative in projecting into the future. In light of Anthropocene-enthusiasts centring on the smart, knowledgable, rational, enlightened human subject (cf. Crutzen; Schwägerl), it feels necessary to point out the obvious — the amount of things "we" do not — and may never — know.⁵ Before their devastating effects were consciously withheld in the interest of profit,⁶ many factors predicating the Anthropocene, for instance, were simply not known to be environmentally destructive in the first place: The insecticide DDT (cf. section 1.1), whose highly toxic effects eventually set in motion the modern ecology movement, can be listed as an example. Simultaneously, as already implied by Crutzen, it remains pure speculation whether "we" really will constitute "a major environmental force for many millennia" (Crutzen 23), or whether a singular event — or a completely unexpected development — will leave of humankind in the much vaster existence of the earth not even a lithographic layer. We do not know, and, importantly, we may never know.

In addition, while the majority of "us" had to walk or be carried this envisioned long metaphorical path into the Anthropocene, "we" were eventually overtaken by "our" invented fossil-burning trains and cars and planes that not all of "us" had access to or could afford. To recall Doreen Massey's critique of allegedly ever faster-growing times, some of us are still on this path on foot, for hours a day, "collecting water" ('A Global Sense of Place' 25).⁷ Considerations of

⁵ The philosopher Jürgen Manemann points out that the Anthropocene hypothesis frames the entire earth system in terms of knowledge: even not knowing is only not-yet knowing (Manemann 35-36). Reflections on not-knowing, however, are the basis for responsible actions in times of new, unexpected catastrophes and for respect when dealing with indeterminacy and the radical other (38-40). For further discussion also see Beck and Hetzel.

⁶ Returning to the contemporary poet John Kinsella, he fittingly writes: "[P]rofit means someone is losing somewhere." (*Polysituatedness* 377)

⁷ For full discussion, see section 1.4.

place politics reveal yet more problematic layers of the crucial question concerning the subject of the “we” in the formation of the geological force “mankind”. Reflecting on this, Malm and Hornborg articulate the following critical response to the collapse of biophysical conditions and social power engendered by Anthropocene history:

[...] as of 2008, the advanced capitalist countries or the ‘North’ composed 18.8% of the world population, but were responsible for 72.7% of the CO₂ emitted since 1850, subnational inequalities uncounted. In the early 21st century, the poorest 45% of the human population accounted for 7% of emissions, while the richest 7% produced 50%; a single average US citizen – national class divisions again disregarded – emitted as much as upwards of 500 citizens of Ethiopia, Chad, Afghanistan, Mali, Cambodia or Burundi (Roberts and Parks, 2007). Are these basic facts reconcilable with a view of *humankind* as the new geological agent? (Malm and Hornborg 64)

In light of its synchronicity with human history, the claim of Anthropocene supporters that the “we” of humankind is part of its re-framing as an abstracted geological agent is already untenable. It is now further complicated by the fact that this abstracted thinking from a species’ point of view does evidently not represent its majority. Put differently, referring back to the question “are we in this together?” informing the introductory poem, “we” do not all have a car, “we” cannot all walk on foot, “we” do not all celebrate Christmas time. Appearing to connect on a surface level, “we” runs danger to not actually *make* any deeper connections from a mutually engaged position that instigates alteration on either side.

Discerning troubling side effects of a so-called “species thinking” underlying “our” path to the Anthropocene,⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty points out that humanity is not only not one, but also that being human within humankind is not a natural, essentialist condition (“The Climate of History: Four Theses’ 214). Species are, evolutionary, not homogeneous but environmentally embedded (Smail 124-25). Concerning “humanity”, the human is also a historically, politically, and – not least – grammatically charged category whose “we” has always included some and excluded others (cf. Fagan 56). The very assumption of one universal human history undergirding the idea of a singular Anthropocene path is arguably sustained by European Enlightenment thought (cf. da Silva xviii) and thus feeds into the naturalisation of a specific human subject that is generally taken to be white, male, able-bodied, and heteronormative.⁹

⁸ Malm and Hornborg point out the flaw in Chakrabarty’s argument, when, in the face of the dangers of climate change, he admits to a certain equality among humanity, stating that “there are no lifeboats here for the rich and the privileged.” (Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’ 221) Highlighting certain events, Malm and Hornborg – rightly, I think – argue that “as long as there are human societies on Earth – there *will* be lifeboats for the rich and privileged” (Malm and Hornborg 66-67). Derek Woods provides a more critical view on species thinking itself, claiming that the human is unscalable (Woods 138).

⁹ For detailed postcolonial critiques of the Anthropocene, see for example Yusoff (*A Billion Black Anthropocenes - Or None*), Vergès (‘Racial Capitalocene’), and Mirzoeff (‘It’s Not the Anthropocene’). As Chakrabarty (‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’ 219) and others have noticed, many Anthropocene proponents rely on the vocabulary of the Enlightenment and appeal to universal human reason, calling for example for a “wise application of knowledge” (Crutzen and Stoermer 18) or “the intelligent use of our scientific and technological creativity” (Mauch and Trischler 8).

As it flattens humankind into one strata of “radionuclides, fly ash, microplastics, supermarket chicken bones” (‘Anthropocene Time’ Zalasiewicz in Chakrabarty 22), Anthropocene’s humankind is simultaneously disconnected from human experience, moral concerns, relations, and plurality of knowledges that its imbrication in the politics of supermarkets, microplastics, fly ash, and radionuclides nevertheless necessarily implicates. Geological time in this sense is not a neutral container since it ties global anthropogenic environmental change to spatial inscriptions of monumental historic developments — respectively primarily devastating ones — in the crust of the earth (Yusoff 40-48). Continuing to “deductively” (Nichols and Gogineni 112) search for stratigraphic evidence of human history and interpret world-historical events as suitable dates for the advent of the Anthropocene reinforces the internal disjuncture of an Anthropocene epoch that converges human and geological time without addressing underlying assumptions (Malm and Hornborg 65).

From its very beginning then, the geologic Anthropocene has couched itself in a complex knot of various histories, scales, times, and players, while insufficiently reflecting on its complexity. Geologists ascertain their neutral, “dispassionate” (Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Colonization of the Americas’ 7) practice, meanwhile negating the fact that they automatically produce a *narrative* of human history. Under the pretext of scientific objectivity, the Anthropocene as a time unit runs danger to be exclusionary and to obliterate the living conditions of the majority of humankind, whose violent, unequal histories have written and are continuing to write strata of “extraction and exposure” (Yusoff 58). Moreover, since the Anthropocene ruptures a firm distinction between the earth’s long past, present, and future, its produced story line has a significant impact on actualities and potentialities still in progress today. The chronostratigraphic Anthropocene thus generates and reaffirms the present as a naturalised endpoint built on a singular white, modernised European world founded on naturalised, unchallenged structural violence and inequalities. This makes practices resisting the status quo and furthering critical reflection on underlying relations all the more necessary. Results of the vote concerning the Anthropocene’s officially proposed onset, conducted by the AWG whose constellation itself is a mirror of its hegemonic politics,¹⁰ suggest that:

[I]ts beginning would be optimally placed in the mid-20th century, coinciding with the array of geological proxy signals preserved within recently accumulated strata and resulting from the ‘Great Acceleration’ of population growth, industrialization and globalization. (Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Results’)

Not only does this produce a narrative firmly anchored in the explosive growth of disparities during the post-war Great Acceleration. It is also tethered to the human mastery of nuclear power and, more specifically, to the power dominance of atomic nations over others. An earlier proposal even specified the exact time and date, namely the first atomic test by the US military in

¹⁰ Only four members of the AWG are based in countries outside of the OECD. Initially, there was only one woman among 29 members. In 2014, the number increased to five women among 36 male scientists (cf. Raworth; Mirzoeff 142).

New Mexico (cf. Zalasiewicz et al.), which underscores the US as the main global player in the Anthropocene epoch. Furthermore, the “optimal” natal moment implies a false causality between population growth and carbon dioxide emissions, thus veiling a much more problematic issue underlying the Anthropocene, namely that climate change may be less “anthropogenic” than “socio-genic” (Malm and Hornborg 66).¹¹ The stratigraphic Anthropocene turns out to be layered with contradictions in that regard: on the one hand, it obsesses with human time and geological evidence of pre-determined significant historical milestones in the formation of a “Western” world. On the other hand, it negates its historical significance altogether, claiming scientific objectivity on the basis of rock-hard evidence, which is however a priori linked to a specific interpretation of the world. In both instances, it fails to acknowledge correlations between human and earthly abuses that turn out to have been inscribed into the earth for a long time, recording more than one story.

Notably, it was “[human] history, not stratigraphy” that “informed the [Anthropocene] hypothesis in the first place” (Nichols and Gogineni 112, my comments). Acting contradictorily again, the geological Anthropocene demands a temporally expansive view but eventually comes back to the human and modern times, as the most recent dating proposal confirms. Stockhammer phrases it provocatively, yet aptly in this regard: “The humanities had hardly finished putting man to rest, and had happily arrived in the post-humanist stage — and now the geologists are threatening to drag them back into anthropocentrism.” (47) Opposing a wave of posthumanist scholarship is therefore a line of thought that governs the human precisely not as more than ever tied up in a natureculturally enmeshed physical-material world but rather as consciously forming the earth as they please. Described in the “dispassionate” (Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Colonization of the Americas’ 7) language of geology, we thus re-encounter the age-old battle ‘Humans Versus Earth’ (Subramanian), as the “God Species” (Lynas) are “overwhelming the great forces of nature” (Steffen et al.), envisioned as “weather makers” (Flannery); “Weltgärtner” (Schnabel and Leinfelder) of the humanly cultivated global Anthropocenic garden (cf. Marris, ‘Ecology Without Wilderness’); “geo-engineers”, and optimisers of climate (Crutzen 23).

It is hard to overlook the hubris of this “dispassionate” language. Dripping with self-aggrandising rhetoric, it points again at the controversial, much discussed name of this, “our” human epoch. The mastery of nuclear power, the earlier “mastery of fire” (Steffen et al. 614) channelling the Promethean notion that “we” have made this epoch, that it announces “human domination of our planet’s geology” (Zalasiewicz, ‘The Epoch of the Humans’ 8-9) — all of this fits much too well into a self-congratulatory narrative regressed into human exceptionalism. Deflecting existential concerns in the light of an ongoing ecological catastrophe, the convenient shortcut of the Anthropocene offers an inflation “of our importance and a promise of eternal geological life to

¹¹ According to research conducted by Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute, the richest 10% of the world’s population (ca. 630 million people) have accounted for over half of the cumulative carbon dioxide emissions between 1990 and 2015. The poorest 50% (ca. 3.1 billion people) were responsible for 7% of worldwide emissions (Gore and Alestig).

our creations” (Brannen) — *look what we’ve done!*

Such rhetoric leaves little space to question the necessity for said planetary “transformations” that come in the form of burning rainforests, extinct coral reefs, or the hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by the “bomb spike” (Subramanian, ‘Humans Versus Earth’ 170) potentially marking the onset of the Anthropocene. It does, however, draw attention to instrumentalised uses of language and the continuous necessity to attend to the entanglements between political and ecological ramifications from a decentred perspective. Speculative hypotheses, dressed as facts, suppress any hesitation that might follow claims regarding the irreversibility of changes “we” may simply not live long enough to witness be reversed. To come back to earth from god-like heights, the universe has existed for about 13 billion years, and humans did not exist until quite recently. Since then, they have indeed, to unequal measures, produced an incredible mess that makes them, in equally provocative rhetoric, look about “as godlike as a bull in a china shop” (Johns 38). It stands to question to what extent the name Anthropocene, already etymologically centred so firmly around the age of man, partly inclusive of the woman only by extension through history (cf. Raworth), leaves room for reflection and criticism, and is suited to propel non-anthropocentric journeys into planetary time, into future and past scenarios outside the human continuum (a task already hard enough as it is).

Continuously defending the suitability of their scientifically neutral term, Zalasiewicz et al. draw on the quantified popularity of the term Anthropocene in academic literature, which arguably shows again the contradictions in a debate founded on more than evidence-based scientific terminology. The AWG may continue to insist on dispassionate (Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Colonization of the Americas’ 7) objectivity purely grounded on geological evidence (Zalasiewicz et al. 206), but the context surrounding the emergence of their term Anthropocene nevertheless opens up an entirely different perspective: During a discussion of global change in the Holocene at a meeting of the IGBP Scientific Committee in Mexico, Paul Crutzen allegedly grew impatient and angrily remarked they should stop calling it Holocene: “We’re not in the Holocene any more. We are in the ... the the. . . the Anthropocene!” (Steffen, ‘Commentary’ 486; Zalasiewicz et al. 9) If the scientific term is as separate from political meaning as the AWG continues to claim it is, this raises the question as to why the group allowed an introduction that was based on subjective emotions attesting to a much more embedded view than the AWG admits to its critics. Since they did eventually change the name “Holocene”, it is further questionable why the decision-makers attest to a certain power or effect in naming on the one hand but reject any raised concerns surrounding the repercussions of that name as irrelevant for the scientific discussion (cf. Zalasiewicz et al. 219-222).

Crutzen’s outbreak can be read as a story about a much deeper realisation that is directly connected to ecotranslation and the *raison d’être* of ecopoetics: what it means to be human (cf. Nixon, ‘The Anthropocene’) is not disconnected from the material world around us and the expressions we use to understand that world, the planet earth *oikos*, the “only home our species currently knows” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’). Changes to that home and our affective in-

terconnection with it translate into our languages: we are, in this sense, once again, not weather but language makers; “language-making creatures” (Street xxxvii). The realisation of the fragility of “our” home, as expressed by Skinner, has more recently found an echo in the popular climate protest slogan “There is no planet B!”, seeking to communicate a state of emergency with brevity and clarity. Language is not a neutral mirror, not emergent in a vacuum, but an embodied and embedded practice. It shapes our consciousness and our perception, to powerful effects that necessitate a careful, reflective handling. The emerging variety of alternative “-cenes” such as the previously mentioned Plantationocene or the Capitalocene are, after all, making use of precisely this potential. They challenge the Anthropocene’s “simple story” of “naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity’s strategic relations of power and production” (J. W. Moore 169-71) and hope to imbue it with different associative environments right from the start.

Failing to reflect on the initial emotional value attached to it, however, the stratigraphic Anthropocene continues to give way to an anaesthetisation of its broader implications. Conveniently bypassing unequal contributions to it as well as unequal burdens in it, it has not yet overcome an ignorance as to how “we” have become a geological force. In a manner that can be generously called self-centred, proponents of the geological Anthropocene continue to collectively place humankind into a current global condition of climate crisis, reminding that it is now “our” responsibility to “solve the environmental problems that we as humans have created” (Mauch and Trischler 8). Crutzen himself tied an activist agenda to the allegedly objective scientific Anthropocene from the very start: calling for “appropriate human behaviour at all scales” (Crutzen 23), he specifically tasked scientists and engineers with guiding society towards environmentally sustainable management (Crutzen 23; also see Finney and Edwards). Teachers, politicians, or philosophers to discuss and evaluate whatever is meant by “appropriate human behaviour” and envisioned “internationally accepted, large scale geo-engineering projects” (Crutzen 23) are not featured in this technocratic vision of the “new anthropogenic world” (cf. Schwägerl 307) that ethically seems to stand on very thin ice.

Crutzen mentions the possibility to “optimize climate” – the question is, for whom? Planet earth surely has no preferred climate. Butterflies, bees, and other insects, who are objectively probably the most populous life form on earth, might have, but they are unlikely to be included in this vision. It is after all humankind’s survival that is at stake, more precisely, the portion of humankind taken into account here: Underlying Crutzen’s vision is not so much an ecological as an egocentric view. Already, more than half of all refugees world-wide are climate refugees (Jakobeit and Methmann 22-23), and no one has yet cared to optimise climate for them. In fact, some of “us” have been living under “exceptional”, “never before seen” (Bińczyk 10) Anthropocenic conditions for a long time. From a different angle, we are back at this section’s eponymous question. The climate crisis may be a global phenomenon, but the “hit list” it operates from, the “rounds that it makes on earth” start with the most vulnerable (Siagatonu). As disasters like Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Haiti, the floods in Pakistan, the Ebola virus or the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have shown, those who have been rendered most powerless by structural

inequalities and have least contributed to the measurable strata of the Anthropocene are often most drastically affected by its wide-ranging consequences. We may all be in *this* then, but, as Nixon phrases it, “we’re not all in it in the same way” (‘The Anthropocene’), and as far as the burdens are concerned, not carrying them together.

3.1.2 “look what we’ve *done*”: Roaming the Self-Conscious Anthropocene with More-Than-Human Cosmonauts

How to proceed in the awareness of this unfortunate but all too hard to ignore term and the challenges it entails, cognitively as well as materially? Where and how does it meet ecopoet(h)ics, perhaps more than ever in the need to be “thickened by an h” (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 26) and charged anew with challenges of temporally, spatially, ecologically expanded translations? How can it serve as orientation for ecotranslations in attentiveness to the Mitwelt? To return to Nixon’s initial emphasis on the vibrant, unexpected encounters the “Anthropocene turn” has inspired, what does the enmeshment of human being with geological awareness

mean for the stories we tell about our species and our place in life on Earth? What does it mean for the ethics of human actions? What are the imaginative and emotional pressures of opening up the human to geological time scales? We’re simply not accustomed—maybe even equipped—to conceive of human consequences across such a vastly expanded temporal stage. How can we begin to internalize our role as Anthropocene actors, to inhabit that role feelingly? (‘The Anthropocene’)

In this sense, the Anthropocene confronts us and our poesis with the need to inquire into the affective motivations that brought it about in the first place, consequentially entailing increased engagement with the vulnerabilities of our home oikos. Approached with meta-awareness of its own discursive implications regarding humankind embedded in material, historical, socio-political contexts, the Anthropocene further unearths the need to counter its terminology and abstractedness and unfold its pluralised emotional and imaginative signatures. Likewise, an acknowledgement of its generative as well as degenerative potential to collapse borders of all kinds, requires constant (self-)reflective grounding and orientation of looming abysses.

Lynn Keller has coined the term “self-conscious Anthropocene” to distinguish the onset of the stratigraphic Anthropocene from a contemporary moment that began with its introduction at the turn of the millennium. Subsequently gaining mainstream attention, her modification of the term concurrently demarcates a time when awareness of accelerated environmental impact of human actions on earth became increasingly widespread (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 1-2). The self-conscious Anthropocene therefore refers self-reflectively to a “cultural reality more than a scientific one” (2), and as such inspires a search for modes of articulation able to move through emerging conceptual, imaginative, aesthetic, emotional, political, and perceptual challenges at various, ungraspable scales. This is loosely how I understand the term. The self-conscious An-

thropocene is not hypothetical or anticipated: it is here, now; across an interconnected oikos simultaneously entangled with elsewhere, tomorrow.¹²

It is likewise oriented towards interactions with a material, geophysical reality that depicts human influences, although not always in sensually accessible ways reflective of their graveness: the “hyperobject” (Morton, *Ecological Thought* 130) Climate Change is impossible to grasp as a whole, only encountered in its various translations into weather, drought, or extreme temperatures. Emphasising not so much the problems themselves, many of which have featured in the eco-discourse for years, but a wider, deeper awareness of them and their scale, the self-conscious Anthropocene raises their stakes and opens new, intersectoral realms of discussion. It thus layers climate change issues with unfaltering urgency facing expanded, hyperrelated contemporary conditions and concomitant challenges that include a self-righteous, violently homogenous “humanly” dominated Anthropocene as “Exploitocene” at the opposite end. As Chakrabarty phrases it, “[T]he [geological] Anthropocene, in one telling, is a story about humans. But it is also, in another telling, a story of which humans are only parts, even small parts, and not always in charge.” (Chakrabarty, ‘Anthropocene Time’ 29) The way I approach it, the self-conscious Anthropocene needs to attend to this and myriads of other alternative stories within an enlarged ecology.

Such an orientation therefore underlies the writings and poems gathered in this chapter as a whole. Ecopoetical translations are moved into the Anthropocene discourse, converging on the hope to weave plurivocal voices and concerns into a looming singular Anthropocene narrative, (re-)engage with the political, (re-)negotiate problems of scale, find a balance between prospects and elegy, surround a self-congratulatory *look what we’ve done* with a pensive:

It’s like
 the road behind us is stolen
 completely so the future can
 never arrive. So, look at this: look
 what we’ve *done*. With all
 we knew.
 With all we knew
 that we knew.

Tim Seibles, “First Verse” (465-66)

Echoing the discussion of the term’s most recent genesis, “Anthropocene” signals, after all, “what we do with words” (Retallack, ‘Hard Days’ 235), and thus has writing and translating at its core. As Harriet Tarlo has remarked, the seemingly infinite creation of alternative “-cenes” in the respectively emerging “Neologismcene” (Mentz) places creative making, forms of *poiesis* right next

¹² Such a mode of what can be called “polysituatedness” (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness*) will be more thoroughly explored in the final section of this chapter (3.4).

to the sight of the brink of the Anthropocene.¹³ Drawing on posthuman thought via Braidotti, poiesis is of course not restricted to the human but happens across an “enlivened” (cf. Weber) shared ecological habitat. In consequence, as enacted by the poem “We are in this together”, such an awareness requires constant unfixing of the self in its shifting interrelations, from a net of infinite entanglements. In accordance with Kate Rigby, the process of making and creating is neither solipsistic nor exclusively pertinent to the human but “reframe[s] human creative and emancipatory endeavour as a mode of participation in the more-than-human song of an ever-changing earth.” (‘Ecospirit’ 251) If “Anthropocene”, like “climate change”, or “ecological crisis”, offers a highly functional term for everyday use, creative making in the self-conscious Anthropocene is tasked to (re)fill it with tangible, relatable, affective stories: with connections that move beyond an interest in the self. In order to inhabit our role as humans “feelingly” (Nixon, ‘The Anthropocene’), anger, fear, mourning, or frustration in the face of ungraspable events need to be channelled into a dawning compassionate sense of response-ability to and for the “only home our species currently knows” (Skinner, ‘What is Ecopoetics?’).

To orient this line of thinking against human superiority radiating from the “human epoch”, I specifically draw on and co-ordinate the more-than-human in this chapter. Against *ex negativo* definitions such as “non-human” and “other-than-human”, hyphenated more-than-human “speaks in one breath” of all kinds of “things, objects, other animals, living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities, and humans” (de la Bellacasa 1), and by doing so interrogates hierarchical animate/inanimate, nature/culture distinctions. More-than-human is not in opposition to the human but situates them (“us”) alongside a wider ontological scope that shifts issues of personhood, livingness, and corporeality from hegemonic positions to co-fabricated ecologies of matter within a framework of interconnection, intimacy, and affect (cf. Whatmore 602-604; Bristow 7, 12). In a deliberately inconvenient, spell-check resistant articulation, it places the continuous encounter with “more” directly on the page, coupling it always to a comparative “-than-” perspective in order to avoid exposure to a consumer-growth-oriented trope promoting “More!” All three words are activated *in relation with*, never in isolation, echoing an ecological stance to the interconnected oikos. Noting that the human is still part of the constellation, more-than-human eventually signals the need to be aware of harmful erasures of politicised, historicised pasts and presents. To recall Plumwood, being human assumes a certain inevitable “epistemic locatedness” (132), which does not necessitate anthropocentrism but can conversely open a window to humility rooted in self-reflected limitedness.

As Les Murray’s poems have shown, writing can make encounters outside of categories such as human/nonhuman and flora/fauna that likewise motivate us to enter creative modes of translation. The more-than-human thus “places poetry in a far more sweeping context that includes birdsong, insect calls, even the patient shrugs and pulses of geology. And it does so from a place of

¹³ Tarlo addressed this during her keynote at the biannual ASLE-UKI conference *Co-emergence, Co-creation, Co-existence* (2019). In a less positive perspective, one could also point to an academic trend of coining new phrases indicative of institutional conditions in the Humanities.

humility, recognition, and kinship.” (Newell et al., ‘Introduction’) It suggests that there is more to our understanding, more to the world we can know and can even begin to imagine — more-than-one story, more-than-one translation, “more things in heaven and earth, [...] / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” (Shakespeare I.5.) More so, many of these things may never be reducible but are always *more*, thus undetermined and ungraspable. More-than-human is a wager in that regard, it stretches through hyphenated becoming, opening a speculative, planetary roaming. If it points to the realm of the supernatural (Bubandt 3-5), those associations too belong in there, accommodating co-existences with the weird and the wonderful, the monstrous and the uncanny that living in the Anthropocene forces us to come to terms with.

In a humbled spirit of being situated within more-ness — a more useful term doubtlessly exists as well — the more-than-human is informed by its use in various disciplines, including communication, geography, philosophy, literature, and techno-science (cf. Parks). From David Abram emerges an eco-phenomenological orientation within the sensuous world (*The Spell of the Sensuous* 47); the more-than-human as an awakened knowingness of bio-ecological interaction arising from experiencing “the textures, the rhythms and tastes of the bodily world” (x). Geographers like Sarah Whatmore earth a transcendental tendency revolving around the “more” as in “beyond” in geophysical-material “more-ness” of places where environment and human are evidently no longer acting separately (cf. Houston 108). Emphasising the shift from “indifferent stuff” *out there* to an animation of matter in landscapes that are “co-fabricated between more-than-human bodies” (Whatmore 603), notions from new materialism further facilitate “a modality of connection” for approaching the nexus between geo and bio (603, 600). Jane Bennett’s vital materialism particularly informs my thinking in this regard, since it zooms in to the stories of “small parts” (Chakrabarty, ‘Anthropocene Time’ 29) taking over the place of human mastery as we move through the self-conscious Anthropocene.

As a result, previously considered dead, passive, and inert matter is endowed with agency along a more horizontal ontology of energetic thing-force that seeks to counter the image of thoroughly “instrumentalized matter” feeding “human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption.” (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* ix) Recognising the vitality of matter means recognising the capacity of things, such as metals, viruses, and bacteria, acting as “quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own” (viii). By creating different attitudes and attentiveness to these materials, this notion seeks to impact political decisions regarding their use, thus for example influencing food consumption or recycling practices.¹⁴ Recognition of vibrant matter further means acknowledging that “we” as geological agents are among many other agents that roam this earth and affect us in more ways “we” may currently realise. The human body emerges as a symbiotic co-fabrication in that sense, shaped by a multiplicity of relations coming together and interacting more-than-humanly. Translating this awareness into a form of creative making-relations, the words of the poet Adam Dickinson

¹⁴ Section 3.3.3 will exemplify this.

provide an embodied experience:

My gut is a tropical forest of microbes. Their cells, which cover my entire body, are at least as numerous as my own. These microbiota live on and within me as a giant nonhuman organ, controlling the expression of genes and the imagined sense of self maintained by my immune system's sensitivity to inside and outside. It is unclear, in fact, whether the immune system controls the microbes or the microbes control the immune system. My body is a spaceship designed to optimize the proliferation and growth of its microbial cosmonauts. [...] (A. Dickinson 42)

Thwarting the trope of the “spaceship earth” (Fuller), Dickinson invokes the human body as a plurality of biotic systems echoing Bennett’s sketch of an “array of bodies, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes” (*Vibrant Matter* 112-13). Not humans, microbiota are the cosmonauts steering the alien spaceship that is the (post)human body, from which relationships between animated actants are articulated as visceral, affective stories. In an emerging ecology of vibrant matter, neither people nor the places they roam on planet earth can be regarded as products “of solely human actions” (Lynch and Mannion 332) — they are more than that, always in-the-making compositions entangled in more-than-human interactions.

Such a view ecopoethically aligns the more-than-human with a direct critique against the singularity and anthropocentrism of an Anthropocene whose hubristic god species dispassionately probes into its rocky matter. In contrast, to participate in the more-than-human means to both acknowledge a porous body in constant transforming interactions with vitalised matter of a vibrant earth and the earth itself as a site of constant transformations. There is no room for a homogeneous narrative in this indeterminate state of motion that necessarily implicates us as participants in a more-than-human Mitwelt. As the sociologist Bronislaw Szerszynski notes, the earth is involved in the internal generation of otherness, turning through different chemical, physical, and biological states, through vast geological timescales of deep time (Szerszynski, ‘The Anthropocene Monument’ 17-18; ‘A Planetary Turn’ 226). Speaking the more-than-human in one breath simultaneously means to always speak more than one and one as more; more than one tongue; with more than one mouth; the same and not the same, constantly changing, not reducible to the sum of the parts, always plural and entangled in an infinitely extensive net of social, temporal, spacial, material, linguistic relations. “We”, in this more-than-human net of infinite relations, in the self-conscious Anthropocene, are never stable and homogenous, but faced with the task to move, navigate, expansively translate through manifold differences, spatial and temporal distances, views, alterities, emotional, perceptual, and imaginative scales. At this unfixed point, we meet our participatory makings, our more-than-human poiesis, and their expanded ecological translations.

3.1.3 “systems of relation between living things of all sorts” – The Age of Translation?

In more than one sense, translation inhabits a vital role in this self-conscious Anthropocenic time that Cronin concomitantly describes as a “Translation Age” (*Eco-Translation* 7). Driving the “geopolitical economy” (Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism* 78), it plays a very practical, indispensable interlingual part in global sustainability management and international climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement. Additionally, it performs intralingual translations from incomprehensible into comprehensible facts. Embracing and extending both these qualities, translation facilitates cross-cultural and national communication about ecosystems, disclosing information that “we need to know” to “respond appropriately” (*Eco-Translation* 7) to the state of the world. “[O]ur cultural health and survival”, as Cronin writes, “relies as much on our mutual connectedness as our physical well-being relies on safeguarding the planet *together*.” (41 *Translation and Globalization*, my emphasis)

Translation is once again called upon in its relational capacities that have been explored within an ecological zone (cf. chapter 2). Insofar as it practices sensibility not only to a multi-linguistic and multi-species tradosphere but to bodily interdependences, it seeks activation across an expanded political, historical, cultural, ecological continuum. Concurrently, Cronin’s view assumes a resulting response, a transformative translation into action at the end of a successful communicative chain that revolves around a posthumanly embedded subject. Countering hegemonic pulls of translation, the envisioned togetherness is based on mutual, that is, reciprocal connectedness unfolding through processes of translation as transformative relation-making that acknowledges equality between “us”. As a force against homogenisation, it inserts necessary differences, dissidences, and diffractions among us “into the conversation in such a way that rather than different views of a single world (which would be the equivalent to cultural relativism) a view of different worlds becomes apparent” (de la Cadena 351; de Castro 6).

In more than one sense as well, however, the controversies around the stratigraphic Anthropocene posit such a view on translation as yet a utopian ideal. In fact, insofar as it insufficiently negotiates and makes connections across both disciplinary and national boundaries, the scientific term “Anthropocene” itself can be seen as a symptom of an age of no or of failed translation. While cross-disciplinary conversations may be increasingly facilitated in the enlarged framework of many Anthropocenes, the AWG leading the stratigraphic discussion is still primarily made up of geologists (cf. Lundershausen), not to mention that Crutzen’s anthropocentric world view initially focused solely on engineers and scientist. Further, instead of attending to the heterogeneity of “us” as more than a particular privileged group of human beings, the geological framing flattens different worlds into one anthropocentric uni-verse.

Additionally, (and in the danger of activating a “Misanthropocene”) even while knowledge about climate emergency may be more widespread today, it is missing its translation into appropriate action, and often stops even one step earlier, at its transformation from abstract information

into tangible concerns. The full translation cycle between curbing global warming to 2°C (United Nations, *Paris Agreement* 3), the fact that ice caps are melting, the increasing droughts that make Syria uninhabitable, and the necessity for someone (in a sufficiently privileged position to do so) to reduce their consumption and question the decisions of those who have even more power to act adequately is evidently not yet working on a large enough scale (cf. Global Footprint Network). There seem to be missing connections all over the way; gaps between “what we say and what we do” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 183). As the poet Terisa Tinei Siagatonu phrases it, one of the biggest problems is that “[E]veryone is affected by climate change but some are affected first, yet no one cares until it affects them” (‘Layers’). The call “I want you to panic!” of climate activist Greta Thunberg that went viral in 2020 is legible in this sense as a call seeking to set in motion translation of facts into appropriate emotions, echoing further to shape appropriate action.

As Nixon suggests, we are asked to inhabit our roles as Anthropocene actors “feelingly”. The awareness about human-induced changes in the crust of this earth, the information that a Pacific glacier is melting, that 1000 species are becoming extinct, that 200 people died in a flood — they need to navigate *emotional* responses able to disrupt a lifestyle based on self-interest and consumerism. To be oriented towards that, however, such a piece of information also raises the question as to *how* it should be presented. How can it move between ungraspable fact and palpable reality? How does it translate vast temporal scales into everyday sustainable actions? How can it break through a circle collectively upheld by a belief in the pointlessness of individual actions having a collective impact? How does it forge connections that are emotionally painful, unsettling, and uncomfortable? How does it stretch from a remark on melting ice caps to the question “what had it been like for the penguins or the fish?” (Spahr, ‘Unnamed Dragonfly Species’ 77) In sum, how does translation live up to its ecoethical capacity and contribute to the self-conscious Anthropocene’s utopian vision of an age of transformative translation?

Juliana Spahr’s long poem, “Unnamed Dragonfly Species” (2011),¹⁵ addresses and embodies a number of these questions. It maps out a self-conscious Anthropocenic junction where poetry and translation are meeting with more-than-human ecoethics to take the reader on an educational and emotive journey. Demonstrating again her attentiveness to the power dynamics of pronouns, Spahr’s poem begins with a more-than-one lyrical I subsequently referred to as “they”. As it causes the early death of — imported — daffodils and the breaking of the Antarctic Pine Island glacier, “they” make the first connection to the impact of global warming. Woven into their story of subsequent awakening to the climate emergency is an alphabetical list comprising approximately 150 endangered plant, fish, and wildlife species taken from a record by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:

They heard about all this cracking and breaking away on the news
and then they began to search over the internet for information
on what was going on. **Blue Whale** On the internet they found an

¹⁵ An extract of this poem already appeared in 2002 (*ecopoetics* 02 146-49).

animation of the piece of the Antarctic Pine Island glacier breaking off. **Bluebreast Darter**. (77)

Read separately, the list of names, printed in bold, reads like an elegiac lament or victim list that continuously disrupts, runs into, compliments, and provokes “their” story. As “they” begin to understand the magnitude and full depths of the catastrophe, they find themselves confronted with the overwhelming realisation of greater ecological connectedness in a world unfolding as more-than-human:

Unnamed Dragonfly Species They were anxious and they were paralyzed by the largeness and the connectedness of systems, a largeness of relation that they liked to think about and often celebrated but now seemed unbearably tragic. [...]

Vesper

Sparrow The systems of relation between living things of all sorts seemed to have become in recent centuries so hierarchically human that things not human were dying at an unprecedented rate. (92-93)

Against hierarchical tendencies, the list includes “living things of all sorts” that are all interconnected and moves them into the realms of human concerns. In a similar manner, the pronoun “they” remains non-hierarchically inclusive as it opens up to sensual experiences that lie outside the human realm of perspective and outside the normal coverage of factual information. A feelingly stance towards “what it means to be human” (Nixon, ‘The Anthropocene’) opens up, echoing synaesthetic contact with more than one’s own skin.

Bog Turtle They

wondered often about the details. **Brook Floater Buffalo Pebble**

Snail What does this breaking off sound like? **Canada Lynx** Or what it was like to be there on the piece that was breaking off. [...]

Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail What had it been like for the penguins or the fish? **Clubshell** (Spahr, ‘Unnamed Dragonfly Species’ 77)

For a virtual encounter with the listed endangered species, the reader, like “they”, relies on the infrastructure of the internet “they” become increasingly obsessed with. Spahr works through what Lynn Keller calls “scalar dissonance”, the joint “cognitive and affective dissonance between minute individual agency and enormous collective impact” (*Recomposing Ecopoetics* 38). “They” try to translate abstract knowledge into experiential intervals and attempt to make a connection between the apparent paradox that “**Black Skimmer** All of this happened far away from them. **Black Tern** They had never even been near Antarctica” (Spahr, ‘Unnamed Dragonfly Species’ 76), while the heatwave that caused the daffodils to die nevertheless “happened right where they were living.” (75) The coordinates preceding the poem indicate that “right where they were living”

(75) is Brooklyn, Long Island, but the ongoing confrontation with climate change continuously unfixes this placement. Alternating with constantly interspersed endangered species' names, "they" become exposed to and almost subsumed by the overwhelming mass of information on the world wide web. Their perspective subsequently expands and becomes more and more mobile. Initially revolving around the melting Antarctic Pine Island glacier, the poem begins to explore its multiple underlying global causes and ramifications. While a sea level rise by a quarter of an inch initially does not seem to "matter" (82) — a popular justification for ongoing environmental destruction — "they" learn that its global consequences would be catastrophic:

Ironcolour Shiner A sea rise of just three feet in Bangladesh would put one half of that nation underwater, displacing more than one hundred million people. **Jair Underwing** Already on the nine islands of Tuvalu farmers must grow their plants in containers because the rising sea level has seeped into the ground water. **Jefferson Salamander** The four nations of Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, and Tokelau Islands, each made up of many islands, will most certainly be entirely displaced in the next thirty years. (83)

Additionally, they learn about glacier politics elsewhere, in Pakistan, Alaska, or Wisconsin, where glaciers, one of the largest fresh water reservoirs, are entangled in complex political and economic disputes. In a way, the global dimension of the event is already introduced at the very beginning, which explicitly notes that the daffodils perishing in the unexpected hot April were sent over from Rotterdam (75). The poem enacts stories of emerging relations; interrelations; along a global-local axis that encourages a sense of care beyond one's own interests. It reflects an entangled position in an ecology in which "everything is connected to something" (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 31). Planetary changes are juxtaposed with individual stories of "them" who simultaneously learn to make relations between political, economic, social, and ecological developments, to understand, cognitively and emotionally, connections between drinking water and a vegetable garden in rich topsoil, oil drilling and warmer temperatures, fossil burning and the coldness of cracking glaciers. This includes the painful realisation that "they" are inevitably entangled in a destructive system even while remaining unable to fully grasp it:

Northern Harrier They felt they had to say that they knew that they were in part responsible for it, whatever it was that was causing this, because they lived in the place that used the largest amount of the stuff most likely to cause this warming. **Northern Wild Monk's-hood** They lived among those who used the most stuff up, who burned the most stuff, who produced the most stuff, and other things like that. (Spahr, 'Unnamed Dragonfly Species' 86-87)

As “they” are learning to come to terms with “something that mattered so much in everyone’s lives even though so few people had had actual contact with it” (89), the poem effectively responds to and unpacks layers of the self-conscious Anthropocene together with the reader. While communicating straightforward facts, including the acceleration of glacier melting in 1988 (79), it translates abstract terms commonly used in conversation, such as “mass extinction”, “raise of sea level”, and “global warming”, into tangible experiences such as the visible dying of daffodils, the physically hotter summers, memories of no longer going to a beach now awash with medical waste, and the consistent lament of explicitly mentioned animals. The unspecified pronoun offers the reader a safe space from which to reflect on the presented links, questions, and information as a distant observer. At the same time, it draws the reader in, inviting them to participate in the confusion, ignorance, denial, and grief “they” experience in the face of “witnessed” connections of ecological destructions in a *Mitwelt*. More so, even while many of those remain intangible, on virtual screens, they eventually manifest in sensual ways and bodily affects: From constantly reading about glaciers “on the internet late at night”, their eyes get blurry and “their shoulders tight” (82). A friend, who tells them a story of material contact with the otherwise virtual glacier bursts into tears at the memory of emotional connection broken off as the glacier broke off (88). When “they” finally realise they have to continue their lives with the newly found knowledge about “unbearably tragic” events, they do so “while talking loudly” (93), drowning out any silence.

Spahr’s poem makes space for more than one emotion and offers various responses to a world that unfolds as being more than one, more-than-human, more than “they” are able to process overnight, and, as the title “unnamed dragonfly species” indicates, more than the human is able to pin down with words. Chased by a looming mass extinction event, the various endangered species have an organisational, pace-setting poet(h)ic role and eventually even the last word. The poem ends on “Yellow breasted Chat” (93), without any further punctuation, leaving it up to the reader how the lament shall continue. In their feeling of guilt, realisation of their contribution, and ability to be affected by the ecological crisis likewise lies the potentiality for the reader to be equally set in (e)motion, become equally moved, unfixed, transformed, translated into a more-than-human participant in the self-conscious Anthropocene, endowed with agency that matters. Spahr’s poem embraces a mode of ecotranslation that seeks to insert missing connections into a vulnerable multi-verse in the hope it may be eventually “safeguarded”, to recall Cronin (*Translation and Globalization* 41), together.

Read through and with more-than-human awareness, Spahr’s poem thus encompasses a number of pointers that I will explore from perspectives of ecotranslation in the self-conscious Anthropocene in this chapter. It self-reflectively addresses the paradox of being thoroughly entangled in a condition of “more-than” without being able to see, feel, and understand the ramifications of all the connections that are simultaneously far away and close by. It tries to move through the vast environment of the internet, turn abstract information into palpable stories, translate across scales and between events suddenly imbued with Anthropocenic meaning, such

as hotter summers, indicating increasing urgency to engage with the physical-material world. It weaves species extinction exhortations into its form, enacting a mode of documenting, that is, “witnessing”, a local (at least for “them”) event that counteracts the increasingly global meshwork of happenings observed in the poem. In the process, it continuously links back to an unfixed “them”, subtly raising the ever-pressing question of who “they” are, who *we* are, or rather, ecopoethically enacting a way of always leaving this question open to more than one possible answers and more than one constellation of embedded and embodied togetherness. In the end, the poem can be read as projecting ecotranslation’s trajectory from overcoming ignorance, denial, and self-absorption to learning to “stay with the trouble” (cf. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*), wagering on (e)motions into less troubling future scenarios.

3.1.4 The Anthropocene as a Compass Point for Ecotranslation

Moving on in attentiveness to its instigated controversy, the self-conscious Anthropocene can take shape as a compass point for ecopoethics intertwined with translation in response to the vital, manifold, vulnerable and forever ungraspable earth. As previously mentioned, it heightens a number of challenging aspects that ecopoetics and translation have already been addressing but takes them to different scales whilst accelerating their urgency. Referring to a contemporary condition, the increasing necessity and difficulty of relation-making practices in the knowledge of ever-shifting, violent socio-historical and political conditions add further layers. In response to a newly recognised geologic scope of the ecological crisis, the more-than-human, as a relational construct itself, cautions against self-congratulatory anthropocentrism. It implies increased attentiveness to the vibrant materiality of all the other parts of an enlarged, posthuman “we”. In embodied more-than-human connection, our continuously transforming and transformed language-makings can thus attend as well as draw attention to unfolding multi-versal stories. Recalling “our” partaking in an encompassing ecopoietic tradosphere, “texts” are, as Jane Bennett phrases it:

bodies that can light up, by rendering human perception more acute, those bodies whose favored vehicle of affectivity is less wordy: plants, animals, blades of grass, household objects, trash. [...] Poetry can help us feel more of the liveliness hidden in such things and reveal more of the threads of connection binding our fate to theirs. (‘Systems and Things’ 235)

Oriented to the compass point Anthropocene in this vein, I refrain from merging or replacing ecopoetics with an “Anthropocene poetics” that has been ventured by a number of scholars in light of the topic’s prominence (eg. Bristow; Falb, *Anthropozän*; Solnick; Weber; Farrier; Hunter, *Forms of a World*). Some specifically consider ecopoetics in, of, about, or for the Anthropocene (cf. Bristow; Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics*; Solnick; Weber; Ronda, *Remainders*; also see

Goodbody, ‘German Ecopoetry’).¹⁶ However, given the range of the two equivocal, continuously evolving terms, their relation as more than a vague overlapping concern with environmental change remains to be explored, particularly when it crosses different cultural, national, and historical borders.

Contrasting an open ecopoetic edge, narrower approaches to ecopoetry defined as a subgenre of nature poetry thus venture the Anthropocene as a more or less novel set of aesthetic and conceptual demands. Differentiating it from preceding environmental and nature poetry, Goodbody for instance refers to “[P]oetry in the Anthropocene” that recognises “that nature is constantly changing, has history and is subject to human influence on a global scale” (‘German Ecopoetry’ 266). It further “redefines the human subject, not as an autonomous entity, but as co-constituted through its intra-actions with the vibrant matter of the non-human” (266). By poetry, Goodbody presumably means some form of ecopoetically aware writing which is apparently now updated with what has to be the self-conscious or an analogously culturally framed Anthropocene. Since this is not specified, however, it is not entirely clear whether he seeks out a temporally confined genre or a general poetic capacity. Conceived as a geological time unit, though, his definition would virtually comprise any poetry written in the temporal Anthropocene epoch.

The plurality of Anthropocenes, many of which try to challenge the one that yet remains to be officially acknowledged, begins to strike back in this view. This also applies to Daniel Falb’s approach, thoroughly discussed later (section 3.3.2). Opposing Goodbody’s broad view, he argues that most poetry written in the Anthropocene as a time unit is not what he calls “Anthropozändichtung” (Falb, *Anthropozän* 19). He spells out a specific (an)aesthetic and ontological agenda for his envisioned poetics of the Anthropocene, which includes challenging lyrical subjectivity, concerns with scale, and inextricability of human and nonhuman in a digitally hyperconnected present. Although this agenda is informed by the geological Anthropocene and its proposed mid-20th century onset, he otherwise rejects it as a historical-temporal era. In both Goodbody’s and Falb’s view, the Anthropocene — as well as ecopoetics, for that matter — is therefore once more troubled by its convergence of timelines, which significantly contributes to its overall complexity. Particularly in Falb’s approach, it propels a separate poetic mode departing from a correspondingly established, generally underexplored category of nostalgic ecopoetry (24-26) that runs counter to the orientation of an ecopoetic edge I have navigated.

At the same time, the very fact that Falb cared to mention ecopoetry at all in his short manifesto on Anthropocene poetry suggests yet again an underlying relation between the two. My intent behind envisioning the self-conscious Anthropocene as a compass point is precisely to inquire into this relation without rupturing it. Wary of genre, in — a swerving — line with the eco-prefix, my interest remains with the capacities of ecological poiesis as an investigative, ex-

¹⁶ For an overview, also see Quetchenbach, ‘Illuminating the Anthropocene’. A range of various other geologically and materially informed poetics have been advanced as well, including Geopoetics (White), Poetics of Gaia (Moe, ‘Towards a Poetics of Gaia’), unnatural ecopoetics (Nolan), and Archaeopoetics (Bloomfield). From a lens of waste as the signifier of the Anthropocene, Susan Signe Morrison further offers insights into a “fecopoetics” (2).

perimental creative-critical edge (cf. Skinner, Editor's Statement). Since this reinvention of eco-poetics took place after the Anthropocene declaration at the dawn of the 21st century, poets and critics following such a strand seem to be more likely to take on Keller's understanding of the Anthropocene as a term for a present condition to which poetry responds in a plurality of ways and forms (see for example Nolan; Hume and Osborne). Margaret Ronda implies that their connection runs even deeper, writing: "The literary mode of ecopoetics [...] appeared in a moment where planetary crisis had become the new normal and where no countering force for change, whether governmental or communal, seemed in sight." (*Reminders* 118)¹⁷ Co-evolving with the planetary scale particularly channelled by the Anthropocene, this imbues ecopoetics with a specific awareness of it from the very beginning. While I have been engaging with ecopoetics in a more transgressive sense, my approach to the self-conscious Anthropocene in this chapter insofar responds to Ronda as it focuses on poets from the 21st century. This is not to say, however, that the connections disclosed by them and their poems – and by my poems, too – are not stretching much further, back and forth into deep time, adding ephemeral icicles, toxic layers, and virtual permanence to its cardinal direction. Sensitising ecological writing and translating practices to the manifold Anthropocene discourse, the poets and poems that will be discussed thus pluralise the Anthropocene and fill it with affective stories echoing critical awareness of "this barbarous time which denies us our senses" (Kaminsky, back cover of *Gladding*).

In addition to Anthropocene poetics studied under the umbrella of ecopoetics, scholars have also engaged with literary texts anticipating the present condition of the Anthropocene (cf. Solnick; Farrier). David Farrier, on the one hand, is particularly interested in the intimacy of "thick time" enacted by Elizabeth Bishop's and Seamus Heaney's lyric (20-48): Poetry's capacity to "put multiple temporalities and scales within a single frame", he writes, raises to the challenge of imagining Anthropocene deep time as it "thickens' the present with an awareness of the other times and places" (9).

Walt Hunter and Tom Bristow, on the other hand, approach the Anthropocene from expanded spatial concerns tangled up with geological materiality, posthuman affectivity, and global politics. Taking the latter as starting point for a dialogue between global studies and poetic criticism, Hunter's poetics of the Anthropocene examines the complicity of language in destructive systems. He refers to the work of J.H. Prynne to show how radically decentred language can respond to the inextricability of the making of poetry and the human making of the world, which has potentially "created irreversible destruction" (*Forms of a World* 90). Bristow's compressed geocritical study draws on existential phenomenology and more-than-human geography to discuss an "affective geography of poetry, person, place" in Robert Burnside, Alice Oswald, and John Kinsella. In the limbo between a local sense of place and global environmental awareness, his outlined Anthropocene lyric generates an "emotional mode of subject formation and place-

¹⁷ Ronda specifically considers North American poetry and reflects on the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol under the Bush presidency, which launched "a bleak era in American environmental politics, one whose dynamics persisted in the Obama years and have intensified dramatically since Trump's election." (*Reminders* 116)

making” with more-than-human empathy for earth others (2, 7). Affirming the curious relation between the two, he locates an Anthropocene lyric within ecopoetics as “a synonym for contemporary poetry that exhibits a profound sense of selfhood as Worldliness” (6). “Ecopoetics”, he argues, “calls us to reflect on how we imagine spaces and formations beyond the purview of the sense horizon” (9), and this imaginative quality is central to the Anthropocene as a contemporary temporal moment.

These engagements highlight vital points of contact and affirm lines of ecopoetics that have been woven through the previous chapters, orienting it towards a creative-critical edge, a poethic mode, a reflective inquiry, a decentring place(s) practice, and an ecological translation zone now opening up critical directions to the self-conscious Anthropocene compass point. Drawing on this continuity, the orientation seeks mutual enhancement and further unpacking of a term that not only remains problematic but implies more problematic conditions of explosive growth of divisions and exclusions in its wake. Too omnipresent to ignore, and moreover already present in ecopoetics, the Anthropocene debate reinforces the need for a dialogue across disciplines stretching into the public realm, where it already seems to have come to stay (Zalasiewicz et al. 209), for better and for worse.

Against human hubris and homogenising tendencies, ecopoiesis with vitally invoked matter seeks to unravel the multiple more-than-human stories the multi-verse is made of.¹⁸ In a forcefully geopolitical Anthropocene, ecologically-oriented practices search for corresponding expressive forms, aesthetic (e)motions, and relational models of understanding. Thriving on difference, multi-lingualism, and multi-situatedness, they rely on expanded translation in encounters with the multi-verse, where there is always space for more conversations, more translation; as the previous chapter has shown, this does not have to result in constant inadequacy but in a liberating realisation leading to flourishing creativity (Chiurazzi 47).

With its particular attention to the planetary scale of a contemporary, urgently present anthropogenic and sociogenic ecological crisis, the Anthropocene thus propels ecotranslation’s capacity to cross and relate through multispecies, spatial, and temporal boundaries in embodied, psycho-physically connected ways. In an intercultural perspective, the historic dimension of the Anthropocene may further propel a closer look at different ecopoetic traditions and their engagements with the interconnected material earth sustaining “us” all. If we are inevitably roaming *this* together, we need to internalise these interconnections feelingly, as more than “just us”, and transform them into equally feelingly response-abilities towards the Mitwelt. Instead of pushing ecopoetry back into nature poetry, the Anthropocene as a compass point at a literary and translation ecology nexus can further radicalise and move ecopoet(h)ics towards a point where not so much nature/culture entanglements as such but their global entanglements in particular, in tandem with urgent, affective calls for translation into action, inform ecopoethical translations. After all, “[P]oetry”, as Farrier puts it,

¹⁸ This phrase is an echo of Muriel Rukeyser’s line: “The universe is made of stories, / not of atoms”, from *The Speed of Darkness* (originally published in 1968).

can compress vast acreages of meaning into a small compass or perform the kind of bold linkages that it would take reams of academic argument to plot; in can widen the aperture of our gaze or deposit us on the brink of transformation. In short, it can model an Anthropocenic perspective in which our sense of relationship and proximity (and from this, our ethics) is stretched and tested against the Anthropocene's warping effects. (5)

In this vein, the poem proceeding this section takes the symbiotic attitude disclosed in the contention that “[w]e are all lichens” (Gilbert et al. 336) as a starting point for an inquiry into a more-than-human lichen poetics that echoes interconnections across linguistic and literary borders (“Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others”). The poem-translations that follow are particularly driven by multispecies awareness. The final one, “Mothing”, is formally organised around an attentiveness to compound “insectile” eyes that transitions into the subsequent section (3.2). Drawing on Jody Gladding's poetry collection *Translations from Bark Beetle: Poems* (2014), this section explores ecotranslations through her affective, imaginative encounters with bark beetles. While Les Murray's previously discussed *Translations from the Natural World* are motivated by a religious-spiritual view on all-encompassing language (see section 2.4.1), Gladding's ecopoetically, materially oriented work is more attuned to limitations, differences, and forceful lines that render her various translations in humble opposition to Anthropocene arrogance. The poems that follow include two pieces (“pressed yellow wildflower, nightfall, ink” and “Poetica in 3 parts”) that echo Gladding's three-dimensional approach and intertwine words with found objects.

Increased attention to material connections is also present throughout the following third section (section 3.3) of this chapter, which re-emphasises ecotranslation's interlingual capacity. Discussing selected works by the German poets Marion Poschmann and Daniel Falb before attending to Canadian poet Rita Wong's collection *forage* (2007), the aim is to show facets of ecotranslation across boundaries, providing yet again different approaches to the Anthropocene and the ecopoethic forms it shapes. The engagement with borrowed landscapes (3.3.1), Anthropocene (an)aesthetics (3.3.2), and a toxic slow violence (3.3.3) particularly illustrates a multi-layered hyper-related Anthropocene that merges background and foreground into a general condition of “Übermaß” in more than one sense. Additionally, the ecopoetic practices of Poschmann, Falb, Wong, and Gladding as well, revolve around an extensive engagement with more-than-human ecologies that increasingly translates into interlingual references, additions, and marginalia on the page. This lays the foundation for the final section (3.4), which offers detailed reflection on my own poetry evolving in dialogue with theoretical considerations through a drift of emerging ec(h)otranslations. In view of the horizon of the Anthropocene, I retrace my steps back to a sense of place “without fixation on the local” (cf. Hume 764), and I further invoke John Kinsella's “polysituatedness” as an ecopoethic mode of roaming in attentiveness and response-ability to the Mitwelt.

The chapter both concludes and moves further with the poem “The meshwork of storied knowledge” that echoes Tim Ingold’s approach to movement (see 1.4). It reflects on lines that have been spun so far, entangling them into knots full of tension, heaviness, silences that come with feelingly, critical, vulnerable, embodied, and embedded modes of attempts to stay connected with the ever-changing more-than-human earth.

Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others

- i. More plant than beastⁱ (J. Skinner)
- ii. Are all lichens communists? Cosmopolitans?
- iii. Oxygen and fine dust cannot split up on their own.
- iv. Bark fingers / hair corals
pinned bubbles / like punctuation
- v. Manna Manna
- vi. German female French Italian Spanish male. Trans-lichen. Me(a)t in a word
bleeds in radioactive would-be-amber.
- vii. Nature's slowest email, Culture's spam (E.berger, modernised)
- viii. Joint, immured
grey-green hyphen
ated
- ix. They don't like being / no one likes being
stepped on (Barbarossa is dead)
- x. Contribute nothing but the history of colours: almost white
- xi. "I didn't know how to categorise it."
- xii. Entangle a counter-point. Only borders / are written records.
- xiii. Fuelled calcified spines: leafful salted moss
- xiv. "Ordnungsliebelei" ("order flirtation", Google Translate) kills ferns
& forms
- xv. If own defences are weak: becoming fish (writing is *not* like fishing)
- xvi. Silver scent; green-yellow ecometer. Paying rent in sugar, mapping rainbows in braille.
- xvii. Shortcut to Darwin: weave through grouted gaps, through wrinkles & guts of walls.
Glück (Lücke) / Luck (lack) is needed
to flourish
- xviii. be parts of bodies, uncommon & palpable Olson outgrown
- xix. Treed beards. Chewing gum ontology.
Freckled turmeric-mountains
- xx. Do not look / for isolated places times move symbiotically,ⁱⁱ elements
can be combatted
with the right hair waX
ray this. Any fract
ures?

ⁱ Together animalise in failure to plan ahead for the future (not) to come: relatedness in marrow, blood, spit, and consciousness.

ⁱⁱ „Das bekannteste Beispiel für Symbiosen sind Flechten, bei welchen durch die innige Vereinigung von zwei ganz verschiedenen Pflanzenformen ein völlig einheitliches und neuartiges Lebewesen entstanden ist. [...]“ (Linder 31)

Transport

mid-beating towards truck's loading ramp
injection of heart drugs against
heart attack on the way

Politics of the Conveyor Belt

THEREISONLYSPACEFORONE .

Marienkäfer, flieg

there have been instances where
 tumours grew out of people's mouths unnoticed
 babies grow & die unnoticed
 watch your belly move up and further up
 babies grow & are consumed unnoticed
 let every breath become a little longer and a little deeper
 babies never grow & are consumed unnoticed
 release every bit of tension
 In the house of being
 Unnotice means Being for some
 babies are consumed & never grow to have to be unnoticed
 #gohumble toothbrush bubbles a poem into the night

Cow slips tears
 radioactive mushroom
 war-torn wings
 of a ladybird

There have been instances where
 tumours grew out of human mouths unnoticed
 So frail my hand so useless

Mo

cloud-light touches:
are you similar to those
once made
dust of the big bang

extend, multiply your
e y e s
drinkable horizon
cellwards

pierced through
Sarah Kirsch

Silbermönch,
Zimtbär, Achat
eule, Kupferglucke

our name an action to
gather world
up, earthface, spread out,
fractalled

before night cease to be an
epigraph for individuals lost
can't read
like dustbirds can

are you only here
because of
your sound

do you still work
when carried across

pupated

sometimes
imagination takes over
do you leave it
fluttering
here
and there

bye
Biotec Klute tm

no one will care about
mothball
what is left out

green silver-spangled
shark Ruby tiger
Angle
shades,
lappet

name,
capitalise,
human
ise me
when touched
light
wing breaks, life breaks
so ashen, so radical

recover from nightmares
needles,
red lists
projected
into any
of the fields

via skin-
sleeping noticed

glue glyphs
to your many limbs
weighing but desire-lines
you fly unabashed
una bridged

misreading
turns into litter
dispersed and less
fixed light enough
susceptible to automated air

am
eye
part of
any

you were back.
mugwort feeler
scent came from
wallpapered verses
not matching

moth beats or
you've seen one
you've seen (n)one
(at)

all

is [ðee]
language deep
enough

thing

3.2 Insectile Ecotranslations

As previously discussed, the term Anthropocene and related “-cenes” that have emerged in its wake can be seen as poetic instances of “what we do with words” (Retallack, ‘Hard Days’ 235). Jody Gladding’s collection *Translations from Bark Beetle: Poems* (2014), which will be explored in this section, shows what a posthumanly expanded “we” does with words (235) in an ecological translation zone shaped by Anthropocene precarity. At the species border, engagements with insects prompt ecopoetical swerves away from perceptual certainties and linguistic control. As “our” human words run danger to be complicit in attempts to “name, capitalise, humanise me” (cf. “Nothing”), they stretch towards the more-than-human: “the words”, writes Gladding, “we don’t want them jumping to safety” (20). Featuring rubbings, pictures, and object poems in addition to beetle translations, Gladding’s innovate forms generate plenty of room beyond safety. Words are charged with limitations as they participate in emerging, materially embedded more-than-human poesis and embrace always-shifting indeterminacy in order to begin to “imagine *that* species and the violences and elegances of *its* language” (Gladding in Bervin, emphasis in original). Along a line of ecotranslation, I will inquire into Gladding’s decentring relation-making practices shaped by the vibrancy of the oikos and the insectile call to “extend, multiply your / e y e s” (“Nothing”) while engaging with the micro-stories of a multi-verse.

Of all writerly engagements with animals that are not humans, the engagement with insects deserves a little more attention at this point. Already featured in Murray and Spahr, they take on a central role in Gladding. The sheer number of insects embodies the more-than-human in terms of magnitude and diversity. It is estimated that more than 90% of all known living organisms on earth are insects (Royal Entomological Society). There are approximately one million different types, and these include only the ones humans managed to identify. Spahr’s title “unnamed dragonfly species” has already implied what the overwhelming variety means for language: if we were to name all insects, we would run out of words very quickly (Fragó 232; E. C. Brown xiii). Further pressuring the act of naming with an allusion to the violent act of piercing butterflies, my poem “Nothing” takes this up when it asks “is there enough language to pin them all”. Collectively, insects have been on earth before the human and are likely to be here after them — subject to a nuclear disaster previously imagined in the poem “Poor Parasites”. Radically autonomous from “human will and control”,¹⁹ they intrude human spaces with their stinging, humming, fluttering, crawling, multipart exoskeletal bodies that lack flesh or skin and challenge human superiority and knowledge.

Contrasting their collective endurance, however, the brief lifespan of insect individuals seems equally unsettling. In some instances not longer than a day, it raises uncomfortable questions about concepts of individuality and meaning of life. Likewise, the scale at which insects repro-

¹⁹ Stephen R. Kellert lists this autonomy among the reasons humans are often repelled by insects. Others include their “radically different survival strategies”, their unimaginable multiplicity, their perceived “monstrosity” and their apparent mindlessness and absence of feeling (852-53).

duce and the scale at which they are exterminated unfolds their status as a pest roaming even below a human/animal hierarchy. While other animals are also still decades away from being acknowledged as grievable instead of consumable bodies,²⁰ insects are usually not even granted the status of an animal. The growing market of insect nutrition often advertises them as a protein-rich, environmentally and ethically friendly alternative to meat, reinforcing the idea that they are not sentient. From the lack of a recognisable face to their numerous transexual body parts, their radical alienness usually evokes little empathy and much dislike on the one hand and violently detached piercing admiration on the other. One of Gladding's prose-poems, namely "LOOK INSIDE TO SEE IF YOU'VE WON" (18), written "on a box", can be read as illustrating the disconnection and neglect of ethical attention towards insects in this regard.

The poem's title appears to be a comment on a sales promotion designed to convince supermarket customers to make more purchases in order to collect images: "We drove our inflated cars to our box stores and filled our giant shopping carts. Give us the images, we cried." (18) During the car ride to the supermarket, butterflies get caught between the cars and add to what the apparent oblivious narrator perceives to be a beautiful drive: "That summer, butterflies flew regularly into oncoming traffic. We had become a race of giants and could not stop for them." (18) The humans are repeatedly portrayed as a monstrous race of giants, "every generation outgrowing the last", driving huge cars with the "blunt, aggressive faces of tanks" (18). Bordering caricature, this portrayal may invite critical reflection on how humans look from the outside, how they appear to small animals. In contrast to the negatively displayed growth-oriented evolution of those comprised by the "we" in this poem, insects simply do "what they've always done, which is to flutter" (18). Through ongoing growth, the dominant human species in an Anthropocene as a literal "Growthocene" (Chertkovskaya and Paulsson) seems to have become almost unadapted to their surroundings, with "fists too big for our forks" (Gladding 18). Reversing a self-congratulatory narrative, the poem highlights a destructive disconnection across a more-than-human ecosystem.

This is emphasised in the final lines, which read: "The butterflies weren't trying to tell us anything and anyway we wouldn't have noticed. It was such a pretty drive." (18) Drawing on the common desire to interpret animal signs to anthropocentric ends, the poem suggests an autonomous value of butterflies whose presence is not dependent on their readability for humans. At the same time, there is a resulting lack of relation on either side: Driven by the desire to collect images awaiting at the supermarket, the "race of giants" does not acknowledge the butterflies as more than mute — though aesthetically pleasing — decor whilst contributing to the destruction of the very same. In the light of this ignorance, the possibility for any interspecies communication is foreclosed from the start "anyway". The first part of the sentence can thus also be read as a derisive comment on naive attempts to try and imbue butterflies with meaning, as it happens for example in poetry or literature. With that in mind, the poem simultaneously aligns with an eco-

²⁰ Departing from Judith Butler's use of the term (Butler 2009), I extend it to the more-than-human realm here. For further discussion, see Taylor, Oliver, and Stanescu.

poethic critique of unreflective art or literature revolving around the beauty of butterflies while ignoring the destructive circumstances — in Spahr’s sense admiring the beautiful bird without acknowledging the bulldozer (*Well Then There Now* 69). In either case, the poem exposes failures of listening and appropriately respecting the full animacy of what only acts as background environment. It is thus rather disillusioned and disillusionary in terms of engagements on behalf of both sides, the butterflies and the giants. The relation between humans and insects, or rather, the lack thereof, is permeated by a “violent silence” (Ralph Angel, qt. in Gladding 81) in this view. It is this silence into which bark beetle ecotranslations are inserted to enact different ways of co-habitation.

Gladding’s delicate collection is printed in half letter format in landscape orientation and uses old typewriting throughout. It opens like a “specimen box”, as Gladding says, appearing “provisional” as a whole, “like field notes” (Higgins and Gladding). Beetle translations make up about six of approximately 40 poems that are organised across four interconnected sections and an additional illustrations section. All of them share an interest in the dynamics of the more-than-human. They engage with trees and rocks, attend to the lives of creatures, and offer perspectives on language, place, and experiences that are connected to a specific material object, for instance stitches or a change-of-address form. Indicated in square brackets in the lower right-hand corner of the page, many poems have an off-page partner poem written on a different type of material (e.g. egg shell, stone, an old window, an X-Ray) that appears as a photograph in the “Illustrations” section (Gladding 72-79). As I will explore in the following subsection, the shape of the page poem often mimics the form of its physical off-the page partner poem. Each beetle translation is accompanied by a rubbing Gladding made of the beetle engravings, which shows the tunnels they have gnawed into wood. Gladding calls them “original bark beetle text” (80) that “appear as graphite rubbings” (80) next to their respective word-based translation. The expression “appear as” suggests a certain underlying changeability, implying that they could have taken a different form as well. Once again, the ecological translation zone is shown in its many layers, encompassing the material world. Even the rubbings are translations, in that sense, presenting one among more possibilities to partially generate the bark beetle’s lines in a different, more accessible way — at least for humans. Gladding’s eventual beetle poems can thus also be read as translations of translations, which adds to their multiple layers and their itinerant openness.

Additionally, the word “text” emphasises the beetle as creator of a source, if not so “wordy” (Bennett, ‘Systems and Things’ 235), text that becomes legible only through various translations. Text-making is no longer assumed to be an exclusively human endeavour but expanded again to the beetle, who uses wood as a language — in more than one way. In contrast to Murray’s fairly abstract beetle, Gladding’s translations stem from specific bark beetle families. Her section “Bark Beetle Fragments in Regional Dialects” (61-63) even suggests variance among different local beetle vernaculars. For instance, the tunnels of the “lightivore” red turpentine beetle seem to be vertical and parallel, writing lines that are turned skywards, seeking the “boredom of heaven” (63). The beetle’s text translated in “Pacific Northwest Sonnet Fragment” on the other hand seems to be

coloured by a different environment in which they have “gnawed back and fir” (62). Beetlespeak for “back and forth”, this phrase can be seen as integrating the embodied, symbiotic beetle contact with fir trees into the poem, stretching towards their lines through the world. Other words can be read as indicating the specific area of the Pacific Northwest as well; the proximity to the sea, the mountains, and the wind, merged with the beetle’s tunnels direction that are “most vertical among rock gulls” (62).

Puns, wordplays, and neologisms not only register a rich vibrancy of the multi-faceted bark beetle and their complex textual ecologies. They further show Gladding’s attentiveness to the more-than-human, extra- and intratextually, that gives rise to her translations as eco-poetical wagers. Countering anthropocentric writing traditions that employ animals as poetic devices or stand-ins for human purposes, Gladding’s project is driven by a curiosity for insects and makes a detailed description part of its process. Asked in an interview if she could walk the interviewer through her process, Gladding replies:

May I walk you through the bark beetle’s process instead?

In summer, an adult beetle chews a hole through the bark to create a chamber for mating. After mating, the male leaves and the female chews a main tunnel, depositing eggs at notches all along it. The eggs hatch into larvae that chew their way from the notches, making tunnels that get wider as they grow. They overwinter at the end of these tunnels. In spring they form pupae, then hatch into adult beetles that bore holes straight through the bark and fly off to repeat the cycle. (Bervin)

Like Murray, Gladding uses translation as more than a trope. Initially it requires a stepping back on her part and a willingness to engage with another species. Entering into translation as a sense of expanded relation, attentive interaction culminates in recognising the beetle’s process as a poetic form of expression. When subsequently connecting these forms with her own poesis, this connects to a serious desire to let the bark beetle gnaw holes into her language. This manifests visually on the page and in the grammar Gladding invents to approach bark beetle texts through eco-poetical translation. A professional translator between English and French, she explains in a translator’s note accompanying her introductory beetle translation:

Certain elements of the grammar make translating Bark Beetle problematic. There are only two verb tenses: the cyclical and the radiant. Prepositional phrases figure prominently and seem necessary for a complete syntactical unit. The same pronoun form (indicated as •) is used for first and second person in singular, plural, and all cases. (7)

Pointing to a certain amount of inventive playfulness that permeates much of the collection in general, this approach simultaneously undergirds Gladding’s acknowledgement of the beetle’s complex language and her willingness to participate in a more-than-human poesis. The beetle’s language in the poems is made (up), mixed with components usually not part of the English

alphabet. A second translator's note accompanying the final beetle translation tells the reader that this one follows a looser approach to the "original" (69), which conversely suggests that all other translations refrained from taking such liberties. They can be consequently understood as attempts to make otherwise incomprehensible beetle source texts readable on a wider level, for humans. The poems cast the material beetle texts into a form on the page; a form that is ecopoethic in experimentally echoing an attentiveness to the micro-scale of the oikos and translational in its interest to the language of an-other.

On this basis, the poems can be conceived as ecotranslations that embrace foreignising strategies to alienate human language and make it more beetle-like. The beetle's pronoun indicates the presence of the beetle's tunnel and visually creates a small hole on the page, as the first part of the first poem demonstrates:

•'ve learned through wood
yo• can only travel in one direction
but turn again with m• there love
sap in the chamber
red the friable
taste of yo• •'ve learned
there are other ways in the wood's
growing
if not for m•--
find hollow
find spell (6)

Pushing the reader away from habitual linguistic encounters, the beetle's pronoun disrupts language with the "more" that exists in other forms of expressions and in other experiences. The dot not only digs tunnels into the English language, showing up paths to wider linguistic multiplicity. It also results in a grammatical openness that allows for multiple meanings: The line "•'ve learned through wood", for example, can be synchronously read as "I've / you've / we've / they've". The beetle's whole life is encapsulated in wood, shaped by co-existence with other beetles, and orientated towards mating in caved out chambers. Overlapping lines conjoin the beetle's growth with the life of the wood that is either in the process of growing or addressed in the possessive as "the wood's growing". Seemingly aware of a limited action scope within a similarly limited life span, the beetle nevertheless knows that there are "other ways" in the wood, if not for them then for their ancestors. The bark beetle's existence displays a sense of being embedded in an expanded, posthuman time frame as part of a larger beetle family, where the "I" always encompasses more. The pronoun fosters a sense of subjectivity and a shifting sense of self reaching towards a decentred perspective in line with the more-than-human. Language is dehumanised to make space for the presence of the beetle who cannot be fully grasped but conjured up by imagination. Using the unfixed beetle pronoun throughout all poems, the reader similarly

needs to actively learn to make room for a creature that appears as radically other. Their intricate beetle world may remain largely incomprehensible, but it can still be understood as belonging to a more-than-human earth that becomes shareable in its radical difference through ecotranslation. Questioned about the resistances of the source texts and the potential untranslatability of bark beetles, Gladding responds:

You see, that's the mystery—how can we even know what's untranslatable if we can't translate it? But in undertaking these bark beetle translations, I can begin to discover what's untranslatable. I can begin to imagine myself as a tiny cylindrical creature chewing my way through wood, elaborating patterns some other species may find compelling enough to want to read. I can begin to imagine *that* species, and the violences and elegances of *its* language: I can begin to understand what is untranslatable about my own kind. (Bervin, emphasis in original)

This insight speaks directly to the heart of ecotranslation, not as an endeavour seeking to produce homogenous language in one *universe* but as the opposite — as an inquiry into an emerging “reciprocal alterity” (Retallack, *Poethical Wager* 5) that shakes up the view on the self and the view on what is other. It is less driven by the idea of giving a voice to someone else and more by the desire of letting an-other in, making room inside oneself for a whole other voice. If to a lesser degree, this is also happening in interlingual translation, positing untranslatability not as an absolute barrier, but along a vector of translatability within an ecologically interconnected tradosphere (cf. 2.1.1, 2.4). Insects and human, in this case beetle and human expressions, may be seen as incommensurable but that does not make them untranslatable. On the contrary, it is through translation that a relation can be established and the differences between them can be investigated, appreciated, and communicated, resting on ethical attention.

As my “Mothing” poem preceding this section states, “no one cares about what is left out”, and before there can be care for the other, it is vital to notice them as a sentient, grievable body rather than background decor. Presumed untranslatability comes close to violent silence, to a refusal of engagement, in this sense. Opposing the attitude of the “race of giants” discussed earlier, the ecotranslations attend to the micro-stories of those around them. They operate on the assumption that the beetles, even though they are not trying to explicitly “tell us anything” actually have something to express, and that it is necessary to attune the senses in order to enter into relations with smaller presences. The makings articulate ecopoethic attention that recognises beetle expression as part of a “more than •” (Gladding 63) mode of receptivity and response-ability. They articulate a process of moving the radical other into the sphere of consciousness and pushing language toward “becoming / some kind / of other” (5). Shifting the human self away from its centre, they can be seen as articulating the beginning of a fragile process of becoming ethically more aware, of becoming aware of one's own otherness in relation to a vibrant multi-verse. Moving towards that which is often left out, Gladding's ecopoethical translations establish relations other than exploitative ones with forms of life pressured by the sharp cleanness of a windscreen

after a road trip in high summer. The precarity of this move deserves further discussion.

3.2.1 “I’ve grown from apart of speech” — Anthropocene Losses and Beetle Love Poetry

In contrast to Murray’s spiritual holistic view of language, which is able to reach into every corner of creation in his collection, Gladding seems to embrace a more radical approach, both formally and conceptually. While Murray’s beetle asserts that “nothing is apart enough for language” (*Presence* 54), Gladding’s opening beetle poem includes the phrase: “I’ve grown from apart of speech.” (5) The subtle ambivalence suggested by “from apart” implies a constant movement within speech that is knowingly othered from itself as it hinges on becoming more. This process is linked to a spatial movement: the lyric I remembers the ocean and “home a place / in France” from which it seems to be moving away. However, the home is simultaneously present “here”:²¹

I’ve been so
 at home
 here the ocean close
 then farther away
 home a place
 in France
 a preposition
 I’ve grown
 from apart
 of speech (5)

Without any punctuation, the poem moves diagonally in increments across the page, from the upper left-hand corner to the lower right hand corner, enacting its fitting title “Toward”. The reader learns on the next page that prepositions are idiosyncratic for beetle speech (7). From this angle, the phrase mentioned above is preceded by “a preposition” that the lyric I has “grown”; a preposition that is coupled to a material place in France and simultaneously pulls at speech from the inside and the outside. As someone who is radically different, the beetle inserts a dynamic towardness into speech, thus exposing it to a series of translations, spatially, perceptually, grammatically.

A number of Gladding’s poems offer explicit reflections on language (5, 20, 35, 36, 45, 67). Across the collection, there is little doubt that language, words, and also translation, in all their disclosed wonders, are connected to forceful splits, breaks, separations, burnings, and violent choices that include one and leave out the other, that make visible and invisible. Drawing on a quote from the poet Ralph Angel, the poem “Art is an act” suggests that sometimes “silence” may

²¹ This can be framed as a condition of “polysituatedness” (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness*), which I will explore in section 3.4.

be “the most beautiful word” (45).²² The latter reading is however only one of many possibilities encompassed by the open form poem that spreads its relatively few words across the small page. Other combinations include “not self / violence”; “the most beautiful (word) / is / trespass”; “the violent / word”, and, read diagonally, “silence / against / violence”. Working towards many different directions and always incorporating multiple meanings and connections, Gladding’s poetry evokes a sense of careful attention, situated along the lines of its etymological stretching towards (from Latin *ad tenere*). The various materials of the object poems add to the emerging fragility — a window pane, a glass shard, a broken eggshell. They suggest that language happens in spite of itself, that it needs to be handled with care, in a way that “a verb / slows enough to hold that / glass” (24), permeated by “the wound” it seeks to “(ad)dress” (46), if only, as the brackets surrounding this poem “(lucidity is the wound)” suggest, provisionally.

Much of the emerging vulnerability seems to be connected to an expanded, planetary sense of Anthropocene precarity. Where Murray primarily emphasises the diverse abundance of a natural world prior to the self-conscious Anthropocene, Gladding’s poetry is increasingly engaged with loss and grief in the face of destruction, of what “has been / here the old bones, the fossils, the remains of” (44). The bark beetles are a central part of this, since they, too, can be violently destructive. While there are more than 6000 different bark beetle species with vastly different habits, many types feed on wood, destroy entire trees, and transmit the detrimental Dutch elm disease fungus.²³ In the Western part of North America in particular, bark beetles are considered a “pest” that destroy large portions of the forests. However, there is of course a larger story around the sudden beetle infestations, and it is the story of climate change in the self-conscious Anthropocene. Whereas healthy trees usually have defence mechanisms against bark beetles, trees stressed from draught, diseases, smog, physical damage, or lack of space can be easily entered by bark beetles. Mono-cultures are generally much more prone to unwanted insect activity. The bark beetle can thus not be all too easily dismissed as an evil destructive force but is one line in a series of intertwined ecological losses in a net of infinite relations.

In a moment of reflection, the beetle themselves seem to question their corrosive implication in the short column-shaped poem “Habitat”: why / am / i / like / this / place / is / beautiful / and / cold /. (66) The enjambments and overlapping syntax merge the beetle’s existence directly with their place, making a connection to the poem’s title. Written on an icicle, it offers a specific link between global warming and the proliferation of bark beetles, in tandem with the concomitant loss of habitat. This can not only be referred to the tree, the home of the beetle that is destroyed precisely because it serves as a habitat, but also to the larger habitat earth endangered by global warming. On the page, the words are arranged vertically, resembling the shape of an icicle or a beetle’s tunnel that is translated into one line. The illustrations section shows a picture of the cor-

²² Angel’s aphorism is included in Gladding’s notes section and reads: “Art is an act of violence against the violent silence.” (81)

²³ The bioacoustician David Dunn also engages with the bark beetle; he has produced recordings of the sound they make inside trees and used sound waves to dispel them (‘The Acoustic Ecology Institute’).

responding object poem, or rather, the absence of it: incised on an icicle that has already melted, the image appears to show a piece of paper into which the icicle has melted, leaving dots of yellow ink and a wavy texture (77). Resisting fixation in the present moment, the poem already echoes its future loss. Translated from the icicle to the page (cf. 80), it involves both its continued existence and its radically transformed appearance as residue in another medium. The poem stretches toward its own un-making, which is likewise the making of something else. Evading a dualistic good/evil portrayal of the beetle, Gladding complicates the “relationship between beauty and destruction” (Bervin) that is situated in the larger ecological framework of destructive systems and Anthropocene precarity.

A number of poems surrounding the beetle translations bear further witness to the ambivalence of ecological transformation embedded in a wider sense of place and time. Among the various trees recording forms of violence and decay in the eponymous section is the “witness tree” who knows that “a forest is storied” and that each pile of tree-limbs forms little “shelters” that become the home for a new form of life (Gladding 51). In other places, trees are reduced to logs and ashes (e.g. 21, 26). The latter serve as one of the multiple writing mediums mentioned in “Gris-gris is a powerful charm” — which as a whole is eventually written “on/in stone” (Higgins and Gladding).²⁴ Responding to the two lines stating that “this is written on the night sky / this is written in the rain” is an apocalyptic prognosis from the future:

In geologic time, the days were getting
longer, .002 sec./century. As Earth ground
to a halt, humankind was a violent
force that destroyed the living
face of the planet. (26)

Immediacy clashes with deep time in Gladding’s experimentally open poems that “witness multiple realities inside and outside time”, as Cecilia Vicuña observes (backcover of Gladding). In one moment, the reader looks at lawn furniture that in turn “looks out to stars / so far away / they’ve long stopped burning” (70). In another, they are sharing the lyrical I’s journey through time and space “among light years”, where “I am / this / moment / of / perception–” (17) among matter. Complementing these perceptual leaps are direct references to political events, places, creatures, or personal experiences that continue to earth the poems in a tangible here and now shifting toward a more-than-human perspective. Among the many voices included in the collection are a phonetic translation of raven calls (10), an insight into the internal perspective of hardwood (21), the register of trees, and the playful double meaning of “swallow”, written “[on a tongue depressor]” (20, 74):

the words

²⁴ Gris-gris is French for gray-gray; the “first and most basic meaning of this incantation,” as Gladding notes (80). The poem was written shortly after the Bush election. Gladding talks about the political context in an interview (cf. Higgins and Gladding).

he said
 [...]
 we don't
 want
 them
 jumping
 to

safety (20)

The subsequent transcription of this poem onto the page mimics the formal constraint posed by the small width of the object, quite literally inserting a mouth text between an unsettling “swallow” prompt at one and a realm of “safety” at the other end.

The material dimension of the poems off the page adds to their multiple existences across spatial and temporal scales. Sometimes tangible stone or glass, the material is sometimes also as abstract as “bravery” (27), generally exposed to un/expected transformation, or even subject to disintegration, like the icicle. In Gladding’s words, the object poems, which are in many cases the initial source texts, can show, “how poetry operates in physical acts, in three-dimensional space, in the world at large” (Higgins and Gladding). It seems fitting that one of the site-specific pieces at the edge of the Great Salt Lake includes a reference to Robert Smithson’s earth-art piece “Spiral Jetty” that anticipates its own disintegration: “*a terrain of particles / each / containing its own void*” (Gladding 37). Change, metamorphosis, decay are not mere unwanted side effects but basic premises of the poems’ eco-poethic praxis with the oikos.²⁵ Embracing translation as a form of transition from material to material, their ephemerality emerges as a substantial component of their eco-poethics. Hardly any of them are meant to last; even the page is not their “final home.” (cf. Higgins and Gladding) In direct contrast to an anthropocentrically framed endurance of legible human strata marking a new Anthropocene epoch, the poems embody an anti-monumental fleetingness of all “our” roaming makings. They enact encounters with a much more expansive geological time and place, where things are eventually simply enmeshed with star dust, particles, salt grains. Even when they are immersed in a particular moment, the poems seem to lean toward other moments in a bigger continuum off the page. “Toward” is again the keyword here, the preposition of the beetle insect intruding a human-centred life with an uncontrollable buzzing. In this sense, “toward” can be regarded as a translational preposition that moves language toward new points of contact pervaded by indeterminacy.

Language is decoupled from human superiority, carried into the muddy, buzzing, unsettling more-than-human world, where it is shaped and joined by makings of the earth and immersed in a greater sense of poiesis of matter. Gladding shows that there is more to the beetle than a pest and more to poetry than the human. Her illustrations at the back make it clear that “objects

²⁵ This echoes Cecilia Vicuña’s practice of weaving everything in, including the indeterminate and unexpected, see 1.3.1.

themselves” (Higgins and Gladding) can be considered poems as well, thus dissolving their own assigned status of an allegedly inanimate object in an ontology of enlivened matter. Entangled in a mutually connected, vibrant meshwork of generative creation, each participant, from particle to bark beetle, is involved in creative processes of more-than-human poiesis. In exchange with other participants, their makings leave some form of translatable traces that weave a line into the net of relations. In the case of the bark beetle, this happens through the lines they dig into trees. On the one hand, the making of this source text is inevitably linked to the creation of loss. On the other hand, it is prone to loss itself, a highly unstable source indeed, entangled in an ecological flux, where it is forced to continuously re-create and re-translate itself, travelling through continuous forms and appearances “through air to ground” (Gladding 55); “through think on thin” (61). Gladding says about the bark beetles’ creations:

My feeling is that they are love poems. Like many of our poems, they speak of longing. It takes many bark beetles, developing through many stages of their lives, to complete a bark beetle poem. Often they are working parallel to one another, making lines that never cross, though they can sense one another’s vibrations through the wood. (Bervin)

Through her ecotranslations, bark beetles are granted agency, intentionality, vulnerable bodies, and feelings. They make their presence known by poiesis, by their makings, by their poems. These are not isolated creations but communal endeavours embedded in a wider dynamic conversation. The fact that beetles communicate through vibrational signals inside and outside the tree tissue is based on scientific insights (cf. Hofstetter et al.); that they display emotion can be seen as an ecopoethical wager offering a point of interspecies connection based on identifiable feelings. In a wider sense, it provides a window into a more attentive mode of existence based on compassion and more-than-human care.²⁶ Rooted in a polylogic openness toward the oikos, ecotranslation embraces a mode of response-ability here: Taking more-than-human poiesis as a common ground, it opens up to the vibrations of the beetle.²⁷ The affective response to their elaborate making is yet another making, emerging from an indeterminate space of a/partness from language; an ecopoethic connection based on (e)motion; registered on the page whilst indicating a path to an indeterminate “more”:

- through work the quietly
 puncture begins in a dark (Gladding 8)

That said, the open pronoun in beetle grammar seems all the more fitting given the collaborate aspect of their cyclical poems, in which the presence of another beetle is always less than a line away. Translation is a similarly communal activity, a conversation across texts and mediums that

²⁶ Such a mode as the basis of an ethics is for instance explored by de la Bellacasa.

²⁷ Jonathan Skinner explicitly discusses a vibrational communication model for ecopoetics, see ‘Vibrational Communication: Ecopoetics in the Seismic Channel’ and ‘Stirrup Notes: Fragments on Listening’.

embraces the dark as an insurmountable obscurity hiding more. Playfully inventive, it is linked to labour nonetheless. Digging and gnawing their tunnels through wood, the beetles are working on their source texts as well, since “there’s no telling” (8) without this work, as the ecotranslation puts it: The beetles’ tunnels not only visually signal their presence, they are also vital for their continued existence, for nourishing and mating, which in turn results in further lines with the capacity to tell something. Analogously, the work with language enables many kinds of telling, despite the forceful punctures vividly disclosed in accompanying poems. In the face of the larger face of the planet earth, translation is pressured by the response-ability to more-than-human stories whose ungraspability is disclosed, not overcome. Standard human linguistic conventions are challenged, language has to be learnt anew, on more-than-human conditions.

Navigated by the insectile pronoun and surrounded by a vital material world, the beetle grammar can thus be seen as creating “a mirror for seeing the animacy of the world, the life that pulses through all things” (Kimmerer). Keller’s suggested connection to the anthropologist Robin Wall Kimmerer who penned this “grammar of animacy”, seems fitting given Gladding’s elaborate study of the lives of another species (*Recomposing Ecopoetics* 145). Based on their texts and materials, her inventive makings give an insight into the world of the relentless beetle with its three-part body, wings, antennae compound eyes, and many legs. The innovative forms ask the reader to also embrace an uncontrollable, indeterminate moment of darkness: to start in a tunnel where there are botanically shaped “rue mores”, that is, “rumors of flight and fungi”, and come to an open end, to “the death of a tree’s” (Gladding 8). Either read as the possessive case of tree or as a contraction, the last line of the “Engraver Beetle Cycle” leaves at a space without words, open to a continuum and further, mutual transformation. It underlines again the fissure between the inevitably destructive presence of this type of bark beetle and their simultaneously declared love for the tree, phrased in beetle speak: “m•y sweet m•y rolled / m•y x as in xylem” (8) Expanding language beyond the habitual, propelled by an innovative grammar, ecotranslations are in (e)motion towards the insectile sphere, dedicated to showing them as sentient creatures full of life that can buzz “into the sphere of our nervous systems” (Skinner, ‘Poetry Animal’ 97) and potentially leave an ecoethical sting.

Gladding’s collection shows another facet of the rich symbiosis between ecopoetics and translation oriented towards the more-than-human strata of the Anthropocene. Fully decoupled from a right/wrong binary, it moves through creativity, transformation, and reciprocal alterity that tears apart anthropocentric views on language. Her poems as ecotranslations offer a glimpse on insects as more than a nuisance with which companies such as “biotec klute” (“Nothing”) make profit. The materially-oriented work finds the vibrancy of a more-than-human poesis that allows making connections through and with unfolding differences. Approached from a non-anthropocentric stance, poetry turns into a “multispecies event” (Moe, *Zoopoetics* 24) shaped by attentiveness towards more than language, by traces more beetle than human, by places more surmised than experienced.

The innovative forms that echo other forms and other presences therefore give rise to an

“ethically disciplined imagination of otherness” (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 142); disciplined insofar as it is ecopoethically rooted in a reflective, observational inquiry. Gladding’s poetry makes suggestions, creates alternative lines, shows up interconnections, and opens spaces for unexpected encounters across an ecologically interconnected Mitwelt. The constant potentiality for transformations, including possibly fatally ones, emerges as an undercurrent in her makings that resist stability and a dominant singular voice with every hole in their multiple layers. Across an underlined material dimension of an interconnected ecological translation zone, ephemeral works counter eternal persistence promised by the geochronological Anthropocene. Even “original” texts are simply makings that can be lost, and are continuously transformed and constituted through others. Attention replaces early judgements and assumptions, resulting in engagement through ecotranslations to appreciate makings that are commonly ignored or violently dismissed without even recognising the possibility of connection. To show fragments of them in “our” wider human conversation is an act of ecopoethics, which opens the possibility to an attentiveness beyond the page that embraces potentialities of being translated into physical more-than-human care.

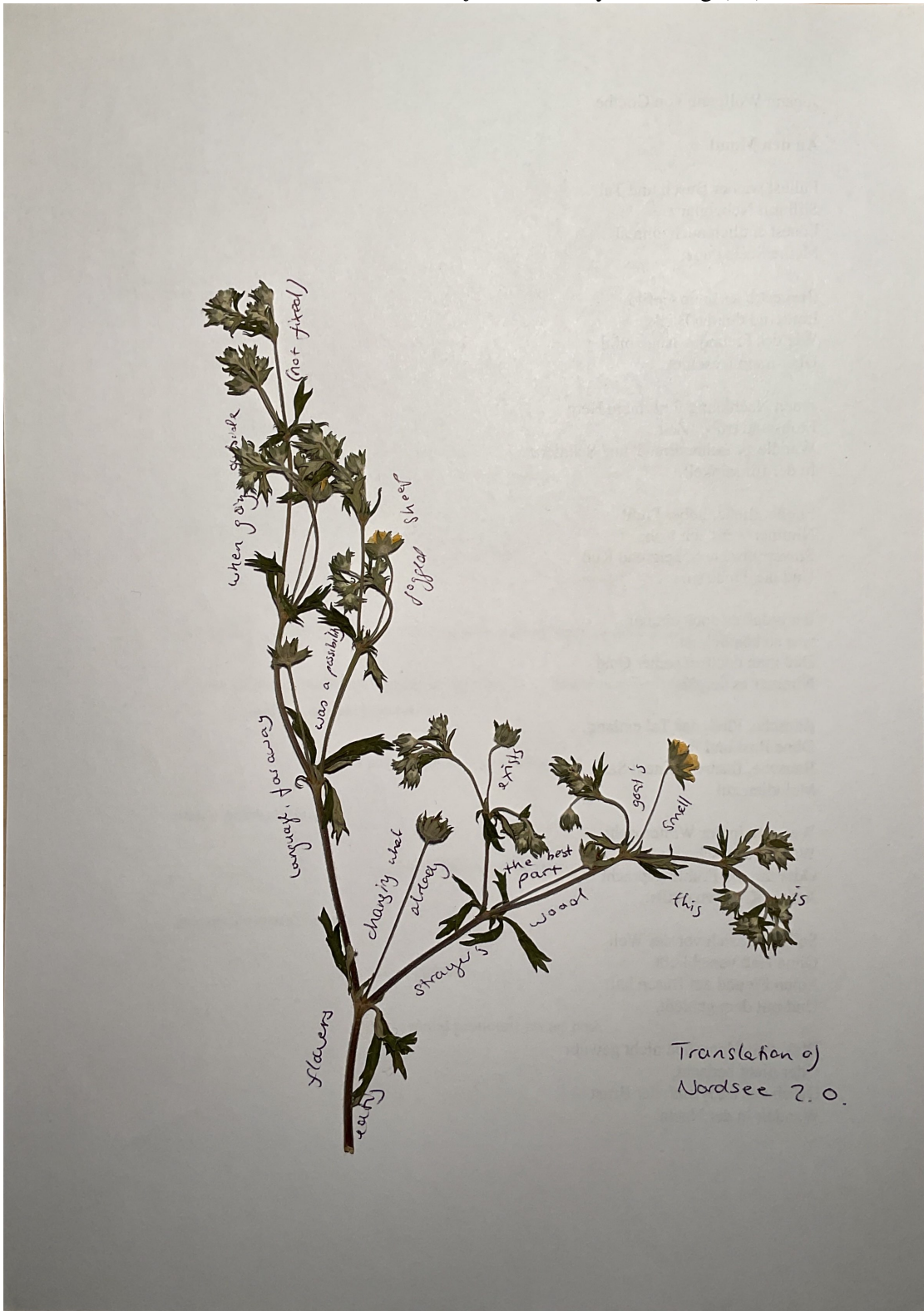
As a poet, I take from Gladding’s work the courage to make translation yet more multifaceted and direct it straight to the question of “how to make it”, rather than asking “but is it possible?” The emphasis on more-than-human poiesis, in which poetry and translation participate together, unearthes more, ecopoethic inclusive approaches wagering on “crazy equivalences” (cf. 2.4) and thriving on an attentiveness to enlivened, dynamic matter. Responding to the complicated interrelations of an oikos preceding and succeeding us humans, the emerging compositions recycle all their concerns into their structures and bring out forms that stretch “toward” whilst being powerfully here, “there / everywhere” (Gladding 47). The poems that follow echo Gladding’s engagement with material objects and subsequently lead ecotranslation across linguistic, spatial, and temporal borders in the section that follows (3.3). Moving on from a focus on multispecies encounters, its capaciousness will be explored in relation to geopolitically inscribed landscapes, conceptual Anthropocene poetics, and global movements of language, materials, and more-than-human bodies, under always present, unequally distributed burdens in the self-conscious Anthropocene and the excesses it holds for some of “us”.

Animal Mass Production

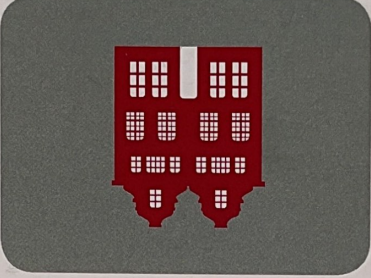
in the feed mixture for porkers
psychotropics blend into blooming meadows

pressed yellow wildflower, nightfall, ink

“Floral sources include wildflower.” Jody Gladding (23)



Poetica in 3 parts



I know them
though not
their
name //
by name only
though

Sprache und Dichtung
Deutschen Akademie für
Morphomata und der
Internationalen Kollegs
Eine Veranstaltung des

Writing poetry
is not like
fishing. i try to
use paper. Talent
shave a sharp nail
Kommende through
Veranstaltungen: the
skin of an
Terézia Mora innocent
body
Mittwoch, 29. Januar
19.30 Uhr i don't
Literaturhaus Köln wait,
Großer Griechenmarkt 39
— I write.
That's why it's
Georg Stefan Troller called
writing.

Sonntag, 02. Februar
18.00 Uhr
Literaturhaus Köln
Großer Griechenmarkt 39

This
could be
your poem

Cologne in Pieces

#wirsindmehr

to your right

Britishness stuck

double-glazed windows

[Nero stamp card]

no longer rhetorical

[no] longer im

polite

Fabrik terrain

to your left

setzt sich in der sprache fest

nichtwunsch, parkplatz

zererdete glückskekse

paint with potato colours, Kran

farben, Schlossbrücken un

betoniertes bauland / ho-me

is where

[the dönermann knows your name]

Schiffschaukel

Thinking tar. Tar paper. Flat roof tristesse.
Foundations drowned by water cloths,
whose wrinkles hide shadows
opposing everything that is. Night ride
of solar barge: the eye sinks.
Delivery and disposal ramps,
rollable room device. Monster waves,
pushed down, then upwards again
Hands trying to reach
oil film of theory
grasping only underground car parks from object-
less We-feeling. Fleshing darkness.
Cold glamour, repainted glass panes, excess(ive) Übermaß

3.3 Three Different Lines through Ecotranslations: “make us larger than the / sum of the individuals”

“Übermaß”, in German meaning “beyond measure; excess; out of proportion”, seems to be a suitable final word for the source poem “Schiffschaukel” by the contemporary German poet Marion Poschmann. To create an echo of the source, I therefore decided to include it in my translation, also called “Schiffschaukel” (pirate ship). In my reading, Übermaß not only refers to a moment-oriented lifestyle of excess commercialised by the amusement park in which it is set, namely Luna Park in Coney Island, Brooklyn, New York. It also self-reflectively implies the difficulty for the poetic eye to enframe its object and fit it into a condensed lyrical form, thereby resisting a traditional view on landscape (cf. section 1.2). Behind the pirate ship, a cityscape comes into view; other images in the poem, such as obscure intangible shadows or the inability to grasp a slippery theory, suggest more-than-human dynamics hovering in unexplored wrinkles and darkneses. Against the background of a hurricane that flooded the amusement park depicted in the poem, Übermaß further invokes the continuous failure of human attempts to precisely measure that which is more-than-human and inherently beyond total control. This relates again to the signature of the self-consciously perceived Anthropocene in its ungraspable scope, incomprehensible scale, and untameable repercussions, multiplied by the indeterminate interactions with vibrant matter that includes oil films, chemicals, and viruses.

Beginning with Poschmann’s place-driven collection *Geliehene Landschaften* (2016), this section seeks to explore different facets in and through ecotranslations that move further away from a focus on interspecies encounters towards engagements with a more-than-human earth charged with self-conscious Anthropocene layers. Across national borders, it draws on ecotranslation’s relation-making capacity to group together three contemporary poets whose writings and thoughts contribute to it as a critically and sensually engaged poetic practice. Poschmann’s intricately relational, “enlivened” (cf. Weber) landscape immersions (3.3.1) build on previously established connections to contemporary German ecological poetry now facing unsettling Anthropocenic changes. Daniel Falb reveals an “Anthropozändichtung” (3.3.2) that is also fundamentally relational as it adds controversial considerations to an intercultural Anthropocene debate nevertheless echoing a specific literary context. Finally, Rita Wong’s *forage* (2007) particularly advances the political density of the Anthropocene as an imminent climate emergency whose burdens are manifold and in its omnipresence unequally distributed (3.3.3). Her poetry, which will be discussed at greater length, particularly moves ecopoethics through instances of an uncontrollable Übermaß-Anthropocene that may be incomprehensible in its entirety but has nonetheless tangible violent, physically embodied effects. Additional links uncovered through the three voices explored here continue to thicken interconnections and interdependencies between textual and other realms, jointly embedded in geopolitical, socio-historical, and ultimately uncontrollable more-than-human environments. Navigating towards a capacious poetic ecotranslation woven

through expanded, feelingly human-(kind)ness in the Anthropocene, the multiple echoes and relations resounding from symbiotic dynamics between place(s), languages and cultures, bodies and more-than-human matter look forward to the topic that will conclude this chapter, namely ec(h)otranslation.

3.3.1 Borrowed Landscapes

Poschmann's collection borrows its title, which also frames her collection's final section, from traditional East Asian garden design called *shakkei* in Japanese. In English known as either "borrowed landscapes" or "borrowed scenery", I follow the German title's reference to landscapes, which places Poschmann in a wider context of nature poetry and radical landscape poetry. Building on the comparative view on ecopoetry outlined in the previous chapter (2.3), I will explore how Poschmann drafts a German ecopoetic place practice that approaches landscapes as produced, ecologically connected, multiple, and more-than-human.

Shakkei describes an ancient gardening technique that integrates ("borrows") elements of already existing landscapes into a garden composition in order to complement and virtually enlarge the garden setting (Itoh 15, 20).²⁸ In turn, the view on the already existing landscape is altered by the designed garden, which creates a continuity between background and foreground, external and internal landscapes. Additionally, the integrated element as a fourth plane of the garden generates a tension between assumptions of artificiality and naturalness: If the garden integrates a city's skyline, the cultivated garden space appears to be natural; if the borrowed element is a mountain, the garden emerges as a sculpted miniature version of the natural space. Situating her poetry in analogy to this concept, Poschmann's collection suggests to revolve around a poetic borrowed landscape technique that sets up the poems in response to original that is, source landscapes; in other words, as potential ecotranslations grounding a dynamic relation premised on processes of transformation.

The source landscapes in this sense are nine real-world American, East Asian, and European gardens and parks in a broader definition, including a kindergarten ("garten" is a German word for garden) and an amusement park.²⁹ Landscape is thus already steered towards a post-natural,³⁰ human-shaped conception, complicating the relation between the poem, in a borrowed landscape relation rendered as artifice, and the correspondingly natural landscape borrowed from, in this case "artificial" park space as well. Structured into nine sections consisting of nine, mostly one-page long poems respectively, each section is dedicated to at least one particular park or garden, including for instance classical gardens in Shanghai, Amber Park in Kaliningrad, and Coney Island's Lunar Park, which I will discuss in more detail at the end of this section.

²⁸ According to Teij Itoh, the *shakkei* garden originated in Kyoto (30). One example would be the Entsu-ji garden, which borrows the Mount Hiei (215).

²⁹ Poschmann received a travel grant in 2013 and visited these parks (Bahners).

³⁰ By post-natural I mean: bound up with observations of environmental destruction on the one and recognition of the imaginative loss of nature as a central cultural, historicised concept on the other hand.

In accordance with her subtitle “Lehrgedichte und Elegien”, Poschmann borrows not only landscapes but formal poetic elements from classical elegies and didactic poetry, as well as Japanese Nō Theatre and Haiku elements. Descriptive observations interchange with subjective impressions and a frequently employed second person pronoun that acts as a reflective, mobile observant throughout her collection. In the poem “IX” (loosely translated as “Poplar Row” in chapter 1) from the second section “Kindergarten Lichtenberg, ein Lehrgedicht” for example, the addressee collects leaves at a more-than-human edge, speaking simultaneously to the lyric I, to the reader, and to the poplar row: „Laub. Laub, das du ansammelst Jahr um Jahr, umständliche Kopien des Tages“ (*Geliehene Landschaften* 29) (“Leaves. / Leaves you collect year after year / inconvenient copies of the day [...]”, my translation). As the perspective expands to first person plural shortly after, the following self-remiscing question can also be read as a general inquiry into “our” nature: „Aber wer sind wir, daß wir das Laub, das uns / nächtlich durchzittert, nicht unterscheiden können, [...]“ (29) (“but who are we unable to distinguish leaves / trembling through us by night”, my translation) Perceived as a borrowed element, leaves, residue of autumn signalling the cyclical change of nature, extend metaphorical internal leaves as memories of childhood. The result is a more-than-human view on nature forming a continuity between personal remembrance and a larger nostalgia for a lost intimacy with a realm now lying behind fences in impenetrable darkness.

Formally diverging from an experimental radical landscape mode influenced by Olsonian spaciousness, Poschmann’s borrowed landscapes technique introduces a sophisticated ecopoetical awareness of the self-conscious Anthropocene into a tradition of German nature poetry. The lack of nature as an untouched outside realm is present throughout the collection, as the addressed landscapes are mowed, raked, watered, concreted, crossed by smoke detectors (76), industrialised by diggers and conveyor belts (108). Lines noting that people think it should have been snowing already (96) imply one of the more subtle ways in which the omnipresent climate crisis finds its way into everyday life, namely in the tendency that even small talk about the weather suddenly becomes urgently imbued with meaning (Morton, *Ecological Thought* 28). Industrial, humanly shaped spaces repeatedly prod at and subvert idyllic dreams of pure, wild nature conversely manifesting as synthetic turf and blocks of concreted wind (*Geliehene Landschaften* 25) instead. The poem “Jülich – Grevenbroich – Erkelenz”, which borrows the strip mining at Garzweiler situated between the three mentioned cities in North Rhine-Westphalia, almost crudely explicitly describes the geopolitical aspect of extensive coal mining during which both the mantle of the earth and the people have to move:

Absetzer schoben das Erdreich zur Seite. Die Unveräußerliche,
die Leere, gähnte gelangweilt. Wir standen am Rand
vor vernichteten Flächen, vor der Gewaltenteilung
in Bagger und Bänder (die größten der Welt).

Machtvolle Kohleflöze noch einmal in Hoheitspose:
Was Wald war im Tertiär, stand schwarz und schwieg. (108)

Spreaders pushed the soil aside. The inalienable,
the emptiness, yawned boringly. We stood at the edge
of destroyed areas, of trias politica
into diggers and belts (the biggest in the world).

Mighty coalbeds in king's pose one last time:
what used to be woods in Tertiary, stood black and still. [my translation]

Economic rhetoric is recycled and juxtaposed with majestic images subverted into violent destruction stretching through geological time and affecting more than the human. Recalling the debate on German ecopoetry (cf. 2.3), Poschmann designs a poetic Anthropocene landscape that is inevitably intertwined with the political. Tying the destruction of the earth to the people, it motivates a critical mode expressed through an eco-lyrical narrative. A shifting, heterogeneous we, „die kurz eingeglimmerten Sedimente / der Erdgeschichte“ (108) (“briefly sparkled sediments in Earth’s history”, my translation) becomes matter, breathes dust and eats curtains of dust (108). Chambers filled with black sun, „leicht zu verheizen“ (108) (“easy to burn”, my translation), described in the final stanza paint an almost apocalyptic image of a disfigured landscape that may be cautiously understood as a “sacrifice zone”: a geographic area permanently impaired by corporate business practices – in this case conducted by the energy company RWE – tied to extractivism that render it and its people as worth sacrificing for economic progress and growth.³¹ As observed in the poem, the consequences ramify to a scale that affects the entire interrelated, more-than-human ecosystem earth, while the visible harm itself leaves “us” speechless (108).

An apocalyptic tone is also present throughout the narrative in section 5 titled “Kyoto: Regional Excavation Site”, set in Japan. It uses as one borrowed element the work of the Japanese monk Kamo no Chōmei who lived in the 12th century and decided to lead a hermit life in a hut secluded from the many natural and social catastrophes witnessed in his essay *Hōjōki* (*An Account of My Hut*) (118). In line with its title, the section clashes a romantically inscribed solitary “hut life” (cf. Thoreau, *Walden*) with a survival portrait informed by the volcanic activity of Japan, one of the countries most prone to suffer from climate crisis. Borrowing batteries, helmets, or drinking water supply, the poems draw on a second person perspective, respectively suggesting what to do in a “Worst Case Scenario” (*Geliehene Landschaften* 62):

³¹ With regard to Naomi Klein’s notion of the sacrifice zone, I use the term cautiously, as it particularly refers to “[H]istorically marginalized people in the Global South, as well as communities of color in the Global North” (271); people who are considered to be less than fully human and therefore disposable, “deserving of sacrifice” (149; also see Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*). However, as Klein observes, against a backdrop of growing social inequalities within countries, sacrifice zones are increasingly located in some of the wealthiest countries in the world: in “the era of extreme energy, there is no longer the illusion of discreet sacrifice zones anymore.” (271)

Dieser Park ist aufzustellen im Falle des Falles. Im Falle, da sich die
Landschaft verabschiedet hat. Hinlegen, ausrollen, Bäume hochklap-
pen. Schatten aufsuchen. (62)

Set up this park if the worst comes to the worst. If the
landscape has made its fare-wells. Put down, unroll, un-
fold trees. Seek shade. [my translation]

One park anticipates another; a foldable park eventually replaces the extinct one. Poschmann's poems write glimpses of the Anthropocene entangling a series of borrowings from something ultimately escaping ownership.

Across Poschmann's collection, eco-poetic landscapes may be carefully framed by metal fences, measured lines, and rhetoric devices, but instances of lost control in the face of climate catastrophes already well underway come into view at every corner. Norway's idiomatic, now radioactive reindeer ("[D]ie verstrahlten Rentiere Norwegens") (100), for instance, invoke an invisible layer of anthropogenic toxic waste in and around more-than-human bodies, while the poem enlarges a sterile view on a lake borrowed from the Sibelius Park in Helsinki to present a counter moment to human's perceived taming of the oikos (100) (cf. my poem "Living deep in the wasteland" in chapter 2). Moving the poem's triplets into enjambments, nature's inherent wildness (cf. Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* 15) comes in form of a fatal bear attack on a runner near the Russian border:

nahe der russischen Grenze ein Bär eine Joggerin
anfällt und frißt. Man verliert sich im Glanz der Werbe-
broschüren, wiegt sich im schimmernden Wahn des Sees. (*Geliehene Landschaften* 100)

near the Russian border Bear attacks
Runner, eats her. Losing oneself in shiny advert
ising brochures, swaying in the iridescent craze of the lake. (my translation)

Propelled by a borrowed element, the poem expands the view beyond its own confinements, engaging a specific site to then show further entanglements as it stretches towards other places.

Generated at the edge of places as part of an extra-textual ecological continuum from which they borrow, the ecotranslations interact with a number of intertextual references as well. Scholarly work, books on gardening, novels, and poetry establish additional borrowed elements that echo through the pieces and create friction between different materials. Perhaps characteristic of its German literary context, the poem "Päonienschnee" from the section "Matsushima, Park des verlorenen Mondscheins" (67), for instance, subtly integrates a fragmented line from Goethe's classic nature poem "An den Mond" (1789):

Du wartest vor leider geschlossenen *scenic spots*

vor tiefschwarzen Kalligraphien, vor Busch und Tal.³²

Sapporo. Sendai. Noboribetsu. (80)

This reference joins the travel writing of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), the renewer of the Japanese Haiku, who prefaces the section.³³ As explained in the collection's notes, his book *Oku no Hosomichi, or The Narrow Road to the Deep North* on a journey to Japan's wild North is in turn influenced by another Japanese poet, Saigyō (1118-1190) (118). Dreamily expanding through these interconnected threads, the poem composes a complex knotted view partly based on Japanese calligraphic writing, partly based on impressions from northern cities in Japan. Ecotranslation works here as an encounter between different ecopoetic traditions that interfere with the German language and interrupt the regular couplets. Contrasted with an urban landscape scattered with warehouses and TVs, motives of introspective nature writing generate a reflective post-pastoral mode. It culminates in three attempts at Goethe's apostrophe from "An den Mond" that is nevertheless left unfinished and turns into a plea to the – not explicitly mentioned – moon to finally "fill again":

Füllest wieder
Füllest du
Fülle doch (80)

The final couplet turns almost abruptly outwards to the material reality of the mentioned source place borrowed from, seeking to ecopoetically "figure out", as Sarah Kirsch did, an exact view on pine trees first described as "growing from moonlight", then modified into growing "from snow" („Hier wachsen Kiefern aus Mondschein, aus Schnee“, translations are my own) (80).

Given the German context, the relation to Kirsch's synaesthetic figuring out of a landscape in all its facets seems to suggest itself here. This is all the more the case considering that Poschmann participated in the previously discussed interview during which Kirsch provided a rare insight into her work (cf. 2.1). Belonging to different generations, Kirsch's and Poschmann's ecopoet(h)ic practices were further shaped by different literary contexts informing a very different poetic perspective in turn, „ein ganz anderer Blick“ ("a completely different view", my translation), as Kirsch phrases it: In resistance to an erasure of individuality in the GDR, Kirsch embraces the subjectivity of the first person in her poems, whereas Poschmann is more suspicious of a subjective lyrical I, which explains her repeated use of the second person. Both poets, however, express their critical awareness of the implications surrounding the term "nature" and seek a more continuous

³² The German line referenced here is: „Füllest wieder Busch und Tal / Still mit Nebelglanz, [...]“ In English, it reads: "Once more you fill bush and valley / With your misty light" (translated by Scott Horton); or: "Once more you silently fill wood and vale / with your hazy gleam" (translated by Richard Wigmore); or: "Bush and vale thou fill'st again / With thy misty ray", (translated by Edgar Alfred Bowring (95)).

³³ Bashō had a great influence on Ezra Pound and the Beat Generation and has recently been rediscovered in ecopoetic context (cf. Elder 106; D. Gilcrest).

earthly witnessing, if only momentarily, perceived as a constant translational “coming closer, moving away” (Radisch).

In view of the ecological translation zone between Japanese, German, and English activated here, textually as well as extra-textually, a closer look at Poschmann’s poetic translation of the concept of *shakkei* as such seems to be called for. Deriving from the term “*ikedori*” (Itoh 16; Nute 21), the essence of *shakkei* is, as Itoh argues, to “capture alive”:

In its original sense, however, *shakkei* means neither a borrowed landscape nor a landscape that has been bought. It means a landscape captured alive. [...] Its implications run more or less like this: when something is borrowed, it does not matter whether it is living or not, but when something is captured alive, it must invariably remain alive, just as it was before it was captured. Gardeners and nurserymen of former times, when they constructed borrowed-landscape gardens, never spoke of *shakkei*, for they considered the term inappropriate. From their point of view, every element of the design was a living thing: water, distant mountains, trees, and stones. [...] Understanding of the term *shakkei* does not mean a true understanding of the concept unless there is an actual sensation of what it signifies. (15)

Unveiling another dimension of the totalising force behind the verb “capture”, previously discussed with regard to Kirsch (see section 2.1), the emphasis on “alive” reinforces ecotranslation in its poetic creativity: rather than copying, reproducing, or creating a lesser version of the landscape in the shadow of the original, the emerging landscape is vibrantly alive because it thrives on a dynamic, sensual connection to an external landscape that shapes its form from the very beginning (21-24). The ecopoietic garden does not turn outward for the pretty view but for a transformative relation moving it beyond its own internal confinements; towards an ecopoetical wager embracing indeterminacy. Similar to carefully capturing and releasing an insect that got lost in one’s living room, for instance, capturing landscape alive emerges as an active process explicitly defined by assuming responsibility and care for its continuous aliveness. Echoing Kirsch’s desire to immerse in the landscape with all senses (“[...] I want to capture exactly what it looked like. What effect it had. What I felt. How the wind sounded. What the colour was.” (Stokes xvii)), *shakkei* requires not only rational understanding but emotional connection. It enacts, in this sense, a feelingly encounter with place.

At the heart of this lies an appreciation of “water, distant mountains, trees, and stones” as “living things” – in other words, an interactive, ethical appreciation of a more-than-human world full of vital matter whose existences makers of gardens or poems ultimately have no control over, despite “all intentions to capture and preserve them alive” (Itoh 31). Interacting with such a living world, ecotranslations can be likewise articulated as compositions built on a vital connection to their transforming borrowed element, their source. They emerge not as second-order reproductions but as responsive and responsible partakers in an *oikos* resisting conflation into a fully

domesticated, controllable Anthropocenic garden.³⁴

Reading Poschmann's poetic shakkei in this view therefore emphasises the dynamic ecopoethical relation-making underlying her vivid descriptions, formal variety, and lyrical ruptures. Pressing against a hubristic, unified path down the geologic age of human dominion over landscapes, her poems can be oriented towards an enlivened poetics of the Anthropocene as sketched by the German philosopher and biologist Andreas Weber. In Weber's eyes, idealised scientific objectivity, rational dissecting, outsourcing of emotion, and all-encompassing economic monetisation have led to an anaesthetised sense of what it means to be alive, to feel, embody aliveness (24, 30). Amidst allegedly dead matter, this has resulted in a global crisis of aliveness, manifesting itself not only in the climate collapse but in an increase in mental illnesses with a concomitant decrease in happiness in oversaturated countries (22). Drawing on vital materialism and Gary Snyder's deep ecology, Weber's tentatively titled *Versuch einer Poetik für das Anthropozän* (attempt at a poetics for the Anthropocene) expands a literary poetics to a more-than-human poesis anchoring a socio-cultural reform. In opposition to Enlightenment, it celebrates an "enlivenment" ecosophy as a politics of life combining scientific rationality with subjectivity, emotionality, and embodied affect (28). Reclaiming life's inherent indestructible wild nature and poietic expressiveness in every creature, Weber follows Snyder's argument that the Anthropocene as a human era heralding full control over nature and planet will never exist (11-12).³⁵ To be living means to be full of being, to be creating utmost aliveness with utmost care to others, even if that eventually entails one's own destruction. It means furthering imagination, empathy, subjectivity, affectivity, and freedom through mutual connectedness in an interdependent more-than-human world (cf. 34-35).

It is through an aspiration for mutual connectedness that ecotranslations can be seen as following a strand of enlivenment of their own, and that the desire to figure out landscapes, that is, to capture them alive corresponds to the placing of poetic landscapes in an enlivened, interconnected ecological net. Ecopoethically conceived as a poietic stream of ever-changing relations, an enlivened vision overcomes inanimate matter as it seeks to weave a viable, affective continuity through an all-encompassing nature, encompassing everything that is assumed to lie outside as well as inside. To activate as many relations as possible across this net, to multiply points of contact thus multiplies aliveness and responds to ecological practices of connection-making.

Alerted to the nature/culture dualism that Weber sets in enlivened reciprocal (e)motion, Poschmann's poetic shakkei expands through tensions of artificial and natural, animate and inanimate. Landscapes of all kinds are cut in half, condensed, renovated, branded, folded, painted, concreted, imagined, torn apart, repeated. This comes particularly through in the section "Coney

³⁴ Undergirding the notion of the human epoch, the vision of the human as a gardener controlling the entire planet as a "global, half-wild rambunctious garden" (Marris, *Rambunctious Garden 2*) is popular among new conservationists (cf. Marris, 'Ecology Without Wilderness'; Kareiva et al.). For a critique, see Wuerthner et al.

³⁵ Gary Snyder phrases it as follows: "'Wild' is process, as it happens outside of human agency. As far as science can reach, it will never get to the bottom of it, because mind, imagination, digestion, breathing, dreaming, loving, and both birth and death are all part of the wild. There will never be an Anthropocene." (Wuerthner et al. 3)

Island Lunapark” built on a relation to the eponymous amusement park in Coney Island. The park can be seen as the pinnacle of an Anthropocene envisioning an engineered planet shrunk in scale and devoid of poietic aliveness: in exchange for money, it offers a time-limited escapism into a tamed world of candyfloss and manageable thrill, in which nature’s exploitation for human consumption is complete; in which “paying for breath” („Den Atem bezahlen.“ (*Geliehene Landschaften* 37)) is normal, while replacement suns are engineered (35), artificial light fabricated, and seagulls halted mid-flight on rides modelling the sea (37). Many rides borrow their names from natural forces (e.g. “Thunderbolt”, “Wild River”, or “Tornado”), expressing the park’s intrinsic utopian longing for an Edenic space on earth, as Poschmann observes (Kramatschek). Emulating controlled enlivenment, they can be seen as indicating its fundamental lack, an an-aesthetic.

Ironically, however, many of the rides in Luna Park were flooded by the force of their original vital counterparts in 2012, when the poems were written. They thus echo again Weber’s and Snyder’s assertion of the chaotic, uncontrollable element of the wild that weathers a humanly controlled Anthropocene. In the wake of hurricane Sandy, the borrowing of the pirate ship in the eponymous poem (“Schiffschaukel”, preceding this section) shifts the view to register flooded houses (Poschmann, *Geliehene Landschaften* 34). While the lyric I is distant, the inevitable human perspective on the source landscape is in turn carried by movements of the swing, giving rise to a more-than-human momentum shaping the poem. The very beginning introduces a reorientation towards living matter: “thinking tar” („Teer denken“(34)) is ambiguous in both English and German, referring to a view from outside focusing on tar as well as endowing tar with the ability to think.

The line between animate and inanimate material is further renegotiated between wrinkles of water cloths and ambiguous “fleshing darkness” in my translation. Interleaving “flashing” with “flesh” („Finsternis blitzt“ in the source text), it reinvents language in orientation towards an enlivened sense of the material world. Riding the pirate ship, “the eye sinks” („das Auge versinkt“ (34)), shifting the view. Since eye and I are not homophones in German, a welcome layer of reflective ambiguity is added to the English poem here. Background and foreground blur into a dense block of twelve lines in the source text, as the pirate ship swings up and down, carried by a reference to the hurricane’s “monster waves” („Monsterwellen“), washing up fleeting views on brittle human constructions dressed in an industrial register (flat roofs, parking storeys, delivery ramps). They complement the “capturing alive” of the borrowed element that expands the poem and therefore stops an immersion into the thrill ride from confining the view. Grouping together the park’s hedonic escapism with shallow, cold expressions of excess instead, the poem also links its final comment “Übermaß” to the failure of the formation of a tangible “we”: hands fail to reach theory, only grasp car parks that create an unsubstantiated, illusive community held together by nothing except a common tristesse amidst a flooded, fallen Eden.

Composed of close place-bound observation on the one and expansion through borrowed elements partaking in an ecological continuum on the other hand, Poschmann’s poetic shakkei assumes ecopoetical stretching and a constant potentiality for change. Language arises in con-

versation with its multiple surrounding mattering relations to navigate the reader's eye to the endangered material world. Integration of borrowed elements moves the boundaries of confined spaces to enlarge the view and generates the poem as an eco-poetical translation holding a relation to a particular source landscape. The vibrancy of this relation turns into a textual experience for the translator-as-reader, who then — as a writer — re-creates this now mediated second-hand experience by introducing new connections. I have never been to Luna Park in Coney Island myself, but the modern technological infrastructure of the Anthropocene helped to envision the landscape related to in the poem. Similarly, research around various technical rolling devices significantly contributed to my reading and writing of the poem, re-orienting it towards a new element of an altogether different borrowed landscape, while the old one, in a Benjaminian sense (cf. 2.1.2), remains still in view, hiding behind the use of slightly alienated or unfamiliar expressions, for example “Übermaß”. Not fully measurable, as unexpected views from elsewhere expand it, the source landscape is always in flux, composed of millions of interacting particles of vibrant matter. Swinging against a controllable Anthropocene, they seek encounters with inevitably changed natural landscapes shaped by contradictions, animating the park to “talk that I may see you” („rede nur, daß ich dich sehe“ (10), my translation, see my poem “Bones” in chapter 2). In place of destructive disconnection, shakkei embraces a psycho-physiological (Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 285) engagement with the oikos through translations into eco-poetic form. Consequently, ecotranslations in Poschmann emerge as creatively, sensually, and critically engaged layers of relations maximising aliveness.

3.3.2 De Quantificatione, Anthropozändichtung

Read in the context of enlivenment poetics, Poschmann's landscapes as experiential ecotranslations with the oikos highlight a viable connection between eco-poethics and Anthropocene embodiment informed by more-than-human matter. They thus echo the critique of a hubristic Anthropocene envisioning a humanly controlled planet. The latter is the basis, however, for a very different poetic line that juxtaposes Weber's enlivenment with a call not against but for an “anaesthetic mode” framing an unknown, ontologically invisible, human-less, and language-less Anthropocenic future. Fundamentally different from other Anglo-American Anthropocene poetics (cf. Bristow; Hunter, *Forms of a World*; Farrier), the Anthropocene poetics outlined by contemporary German poet and critic Daniel Falb thickens the conversation between German and English eco-poetics. His Anthropocene poetics arguably echoes the trajectory of Ökolyrik, yet directly opposes German lyric traditions and conventions. Revealing the foundation of Falb's work as ultimately ecological, the aim here is to further orient and ground ecotranslation in relation to a manifold, controversial Anthropocene at a vibrant cross-cultural eco-poetic edge where different opinions are allowed to enhance and also to complicate each other (cf. Skinner, *ecopoetics 016*).

Falb presents his case for „Anthropozändichtung“ in form of the short, dense, and rather pro-

vocative booklet *Anthropozän. Dichtung in der Gegenwartsgeologie* (2015), which is the cornerstone of this section. As previously mentioned (cf. 3.1.4), he argues that the majority of poetry written since the beginning of the geological epoch Anthropocene is not actually Anthropocene poetry (*Anthropozän* 19). In so doing, he rejects the Anthropocene as a temporal era or self-conscious mode concomitant with the onset of its discourse (18). He focuses instead on inscribing the Anthropocene with a specific ontological and aesthetic agenda nevertheless shaped by the choice of its temporal, historicised onset. This echoes the implications associated with the convergence of human and geologic time discussed in the introduction to this chapter (section 3.1). Dating its beginning to the 1950s (8, 18), in accordance with the most recent formal proposal, Falb aligns the Anthropocene with the Great Acceleration, the hegemony of the US, and the expansion of the technosphere to the entire planet. Particularly emphasising the latter, he draws on Buckminster Fuller's emblematic metaphor of the earth as a spaceship (18-20), whose flight management system is the internet, so Falb (45).

Requirements for his *Anthropozändichtung* thus unfold along a technology-driven vector pressured with a cognitive challenge: According to Falb, the promise of eternity that is attached to the notion of a perennial human strata marking the Anthropocene poses an epistemological rupture. Since the full impact of the human era can only be determined retrospectively, it projects into an unknown era in the future. However, since this future is envisioned after human extinction, the geologic evidence for the Anthropocene can never be fully measured or known (10-13). *Anthropozändichtung* is thus tasked with representing this hypothetical earth scenario from the future. Following this thought, Falb contends that poetry has to deal with the paradox that the Anthropocene constitutes nothing but a conceptual object: in contrast to embodied experiences in an already present, precarious self-conscious Anthropocene I have focused on thus far, the corresponding sensual, physically tangible reality of Falb's hypothetical geological Anthropocene unfolds in a distant time (13). According to Falb, it thus shapes a poetics that is exclusively conceptual, incorporeal, subject-less, anti-literary, not green, and not singular (25).

In line with this, Falb further argues that Anthropocene poetry is internet poetry („*Anthropozändichtung ist Internetdichtung [...]*“ (43)). It needs to learn to dwell in masses of data and make the internet of things its habitat, so Falb. In line with its activated German term „*dicht*“ (close to; dense; thick; leakproof; impermeable), *Anthropozändichtung* in Falb's vision observes how everything comes close together, how eventually materialities of the earth and the internet of things converge (45), long outlasting the human. Alive in form of a cognitive entity (45), *Anthropozändichtung* represents a material realm, where outside and inside, fore- and background merge into an inescapable hyperconnected hot present (14, 19). Stressing a resulting rejection of subjective, emotional poetry, Falb finally argues that poetry needs to learn to quantify at last („...dass sie [Lyrik] endlich anfängt, quantifizieren zu lernen“ (29, my comment)), although how

exactly this should be achieved remains largely unexplored.³⁶

Falb's provocative claims and his convoluted, erratic writing seem to take on a different meaning in the context of a German lyrical-aesthetic heritage heavily influenced by the Romantic period. His use of the German term „Dichtung“, which historically emerged in relation to the *belles lettres* in the 19th century, posits conceptual Anthropozändichtung in opposition to traditional lyrical assumptions: rhymes, metre, verses; artificially fabricated, condensed („verdichtet“), and artfully shaped writing escaping reality, relying on subjectivity, and allegedly bearing the imprint of the genius. Further situating his poetics in the context of ecological poetry, Falb draws on Gary Snyder's ecopoetry and German Ökolyrik, particularly Helmut Salzinger. Indicating it as a forerunner of Anthropozändichtung, Falb primarily understands Ökolyrik in its historical context, driven by a political impetus shaping activist forms such as chants and songs (23-24, 26). Without fully clarifying its relationship to Anthropozändichtung, Falb argues that an anachronistically utopian longing expressed by German ecological poetry, combined with an essentially traumatic mode in the face of unprecedented extinction loss, inevitably inscribes Anthropozändichtung with a mode of Freudian “mourning and melancholia” (26).³⁷

Nevertheless, since it is primarily driven by the realisation that its material object is not lost but more intangible still, Anthropocene poetry pushes away from subjective accounts, activist ideals, and singular first-hand experiences with and of such mourning, turning towards abstract poetic quantification instead (29). Having identified the dilemma, namely that the full ramifications of the Anthropocene are unknown and that its physical reality is, and by his definition of the Anthropocene always will be, imperceptible and invisible, Falb argues that the invisible has no aesthetics – and therefore Anthropozändichtung can have no aesthetics either (29, 34). It is, so Falb, „anästhetische Dichtung“ (34), anaesthetised with regard to an aesthetics taking language as a medium to invoke an experiential world (34-35).

Again, Falb opposes traditional lyric features by using a term that can be seen in relation to his outlined requirement for poetry to inhabit the technological infrastructure of the Anthropocene: contrasting aesthetics, an-aesthetics in this reading calls to mind the medical technique of anaesthesia. With regard to an entwined geo-historical timeline in the Anthropocene, anaesthesia constitutes a revolutionary development marking the modern times, in turn marking a number of developments paving the way for the Anthropocene. Following this association for a moment, the

³⁶ Falb's brief comment regarding the mathematical illiteracy (*Anthropozän* 29) of the genre poetry is hardly more than a claim, and, in view of poetic metre, line lengths, forms, and rhythmic structures explicitly based on counting and numbers, arguably an untenable one.

³⁷ Falb's reading is informed by Margaret Ronda's essay *Mourning and Melancholia in the Anthropocene* that borrows Freud's distinction between conscious grief over a specific object (mourning) and grief for a not fully comprehensible loss taking place unconsciously (melancholia). Exploring Juliana Spahr's poem “Gentle Now, Don't Add to Heartache”, Ronda outlines an elegiac mode of ecopoetics. Since it revolves not only around the loss of nature but around the absence of its availability, its elegiac task of mourning can never be fulfilled and overcome. It thus verges on Freudian melancholia where the sufferer is entirely absorbed by an object-loss whose absence is at once omnipresent and simultaneously intangibly “withdrawn from consciousness” (Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ 257). The difference with unprecedented ecological loss is, however, that it is not the melancholic which is outsized and therefore pathologic, but the loss itself, leaving the work of the elegiac forever inadequate and incomplete, so Ronda.

philosopher Peter Sloterdijk views the introduction of general anaesthesia in 1846, also known as “ether day” (Sloterdijk 600), as the introduction of an altered relation to the modern human self. It signifies the first instance where humans were no longer expected to experience any possible condition of their time on earth in a conscious state. Referring to the early expression “suspended animation” (601), anaesthesia releases the patient from their obligation to animate passion and thus establishes a human right to unconsciousness („Menschenrecht auf Ohnmacht“), the right to not be fully present in extreme situations (601).

Calling to mind Weber’s metaphorical engagement with the very same term, the latter’s identified “anaesthesia” (Weber 30) of the senses shows an exploitation of this exclusive right to suspended animation, which turns into a necessary mechanism upholding an ecologically destructive system that would not be bearable in a constant state of animate passion. In his critique of the Anthropocene, Jürgen Manemann also analyses the lack of affective consciousness and sensuous perception as a central problem of the current times (48). According to Weber, the global crisis of aliveness (22) can therefore be seen as being fuelled by “anaesthesia” as a promoted “mode of choice” one is implicitly forced to adapt in order to successfully participate and benefit in a profit-driven system. In exchange for numbing the senses, anaesthesia promises freedom of responsibility and responsiveness to an otherwise unbearable state. This is a development Weber’s ecosophy specifically refutes by invoking the enlivenment of senses whose anaesthetisation otherwise contributes to relentless destruction of the planet that is increasingly rendered less and less alive as well. Where do these related Anthropocene considerations, very much going against feelingly roles of more-than-human-ness, leave Falb’s call for a poetics that so explicitly propels an anaesthetic mode?

Although composed as a general approach to *Anthropozändichtung*, a glance at Falb’s poetry collection *CEK* (2015), published the same year, frames his booklet as a poetological scaffold for his own avant-garde work. Blocks of text with no formal structure, printed in A-4, seem to be arranged in line with his often rather abstract requirements for an *Anthropozändichtung* without necessarily clarifying it. 41 poems, organised into numbered sections following the style „FÜNF TEXTE EINS“(FIVE TEXTS ONE), „VIER TEXTE ZWEI“(FOUR TEXTS TWO), „FÜNF TEXTE DREI“(FIVE TEXTS THREE) appear to heed the call for quantification. They introduce *CEK* as „Terrapoetik“, breaking *CEK* down to the obscure slogan „COÖPERATION est KOÖRDINATION“(Falb, *CEK* 3), which mixes Latin with English apparently translated into a German version mirroring the defamiliarising diaries. The poems use a language that is equally alienated, fragmented, agrammatical, orthographically incorrect, and heterogeneous in its ruthless merging of multilingual letters, numbers, symbols, and abbreviations. As language is increasingly pushed towards mere data, it looks for instance like this:

"Nec, aion urbana an ayAi –

1) may we live long op ajan, and

die out – oup ekan , 3

ekan en Landec oup Antökumein

*periökumené , es oup dei Leichen-
scohkoladé, as Archontenkontinent
Cedorum If Eien ...im Rhombengewand*

Fa sdk ou0p Kas/ kaas up § 7

op o u p o

u p...

(8)

Almost translanguistically moving beyond and drawing from various languages, I will not provide translations. In line with poetry that is conceptual and anti-subjective, as demanded by Falb, the wild conglomerate of findings draws attention to its own textual materiality rather than to any extra-textual relation; to a riddled message or a hidden truth (34). The poem may be seen as operating under an anaesthetic mode insofar as it resists an emotional reading experience and is fundamentally unresponsive to external stimuli. This includes attempts at making meaning of it, external assumptions of what poetry should be, should be about, and should look like; attempts at being summarised or used as a projection zone for emotions and experiences. In addition, the near to undecipherable anaesthetics prompts the support of other devices, thus partially following Falb's emphasis on „Internetdichtung“ (*Anthropozän* 43). Research on the internet may indeed occasionally illuminate some of the fragments, abbreviations, or references, which indicates an otherwise invisible procedure underlying the texts. Throughout the course of the book, the reader is able to learn decrypting some of the inaccessible language, for example that the repeatedly occurring „Lsx“, probably refers to the grammatically gender-neutral x-form in German and thus stands for „Lesende“, the reader, who is directly addressed, involved, and occasionally fiercely insulted:

Und insgeheim damit werde ich Dir, Lsx, mit der zusammenlaufenden Tinte,
den Pixel und dem Klang
dieses Wortes Dein Gehirn versauen, direkt da drin, du Lyrik-
Spast
bei deiner allereigensten Datenportion, Obstgarten, die, MOTHERFUCKER
DIE
(CEK 17)

Fundamentally unsettling notions of poetry, reading, and communicating via language that jumps between contexts and abruptly moves through various registers, the poems emerge as Falb's en-

visioned “panorama” of an inexistent physical Anthropocene (12-13 *Anthropozän*) – Anthroposcenes, in a sense – with seemingly no purpose other than embodying its unreadability and impossibility to generate a coherent, experiential, accessible realm. In contrast to borrowed landscapes, they assume no external world. *Anthropozändichtung* already is expansion to the fullest, modelling integration of everything there is, a fully converged in-outside. Instead of stretching elsewhere, thus imagining there is a way out of the Anthropocene, *Anthropozändichtung* in Falb’s view replaces possibilities of fiction with a self-sufficient conceptual model synthesising an experimental praxis (36). In an anti-human future, it is engaged only with its own form, its own in/ability to express, write, and produce itself as a meta-poetics, from text from text from text.

I sympathise with what I primarily understand as an anti-aesthetic, “anaesthetic” attack at long-standing literary expectations, canonical assumptions, and lyrical rules. Given the absence of an experimental push across cultural and institutional practices in the German poetical landscape, pressuring the lyric I and decoupling environmentally engaged poetry from its Romantic baggage seem generative moves. As a poet working between English and German, such moves ultimately correspond to radical strands of my own ecopoethics, in which I nevertheless aim for an unquantifiable language oriented towards innovation and emotional connection. Respecting Falb’s work as an innovative wake-up call to a new avant garde, as an intentional challenge and perhaps even mockery of the literary critic in search of style devices and a deeper meaning, I will nevertheless briefly make two critical observations with a view on transboundary ecopoethics and a relational Anthropocene:

Referring to traditional poetry, „Dichtung“, Falb claims that *Anthropozändichtung* stands on different, on its own feet: „Ihr geht es um differentielle Selbstproduktion auf dem Weg der parasitären Einverleibung von allem und jedem Neuen, was sie nicht.“ (33-34) As he argues here and earlier, the fact that *Anthropozändichtung* produces itself from already existing text and data suggests that it actually stands on more than its own feet, that it is ontologically produced from and in relation to other material. Falb himself places it in relation to many other feet already, when he surrounds his poetological notes with various poetics, among them *flarf* and post-internet poetry, and writers, among them Eugene Thacker, Juliana Spahr, Evelyn Reilly, Michael McClure, and, as previously mentioned, Gary Snyder and Helmut Salzinger. His poems also heavily draw on other materials, including novels, paintings, and newspaper headlines, which suggest connections to an extra-textual realm after all. Falb’s approach is fundamentally embedded in numerous aesthetic traditions and draws on a range of textual practices borrowing from different poetic movements. The echoed notion of producing text from text is at the core of the “uncreative writing mode” characterising 21st century Conceptual Poetry (associated for example with Kenneth Goldsmith) and partly also its precedent OULIPO. *Anthropozändichtung* further echoes found poetry and procedural practices, not to mention that Falb’s concept of poetic examining and describing invokes Lyn Hejinian’s poetic inquiry (cf. 1.1.1). As a whole, the experimental push against subjectivity relates to the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poets and is additionally not far off from sur-

real and Dadaist tendencies.³⁸ My intention in unearthing some of the layers composing Falb's geopoetics is to show how it is fundamentally ecological and prompts a closer connection to the many facets of ecopoetics he is quick to reduce to either melancholic or activist poetry. Anthropozändichtung is not produced in isolation, it exists through relationality and is propelled by a recycling practice. Since this is basically already indicated in Falb's booklet, it stands to question why Anthropozändichtung is still framed as something fundamentally novel allegedly setting out to finally teach poetry which spaces to inhabit, how to quantify, or where to begin to be (cf. 29).

This is closely related to my second observation: Falb outlines a normative approach to his poetic anaesthetics, which ultimately reproduces restrictions his work arguably seeks to overcome. Assumptions concerning poetry and aesthetics of the lyric are eventually only replaced by different, yet similarly absolute assumptions rather than dispersed at a more pluralistic, less rule-based poetic edge. In this perspective, his work seems to be less radical than it may initially appear, and it eventually conforms to a scholarly aesthetics: numbered text boxes provide keynotes of his Anthropocene poetology, references and footnotes accompany the texts, and traditional notes sections close both booklet and poetry collection. As previously observed and as Falb's conglomerate language also exemplifies, the Anthropocene is heterogeneous, which suggests that the makings created in response to it are heterogeneous as well. Leaving space for other approaches, for "more", is a task they are thus faced with. If Anthropozändichtung is oriented within the wider ecological translation zone it implicitly anticipates already, then it situates itself among other poetic approaches to the Anthropocene. It then interacts with poetry that may have no intention to finally learn to quantify – perhaps because it conversely finds poetry's micro-structure a particularly suitable form to offer a personal lens to map the invisible version of the Anthropocene to a material reality. Given the increasingly visible vulnerability of the planet that has instigated discussions about the Anthropocene, poetry in the Anthropocene may also feel that the presence of such a material reality is more pressing than its hypothetical human-less future.

Thus focusing on poetry's potential to make relations, I want to connect generative and productively challenging aspects in Falb's Anthropozändichtung to a different ecologically informed approach to the Anthropocene. In so doing, I return to Falb's emphasis on a textual recycling practice and a contemporaneous technological affinity, which takes into account masses of data produced by an information society, scientific research, resolution papers by activist groups, NGOs, or environmental decision-makers as poetical habitats. My understanding of what this could look like in relation to ecopoethics furthered by Anthropocene awareness is enacted by the formally and linguistically innovative poetry of Rita Wong. In contrast to Falb's approach to language as data, I turn to her plurivocal, emotionally engaged poetics to illustrate some of his claims, now expressed in an ecopolitical embedded language disclosing its slow violences in the Anthro-

³⁸ Given the offensive attacks on the reader and the use of vulgar language, I would be inclined to further relate it to Peter Handke's equally experimental play *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (*Offending the audience*), which, in its dramatical immediacy, draws on pronounced first-hand-experiences Anthropozändichtung otherwise seeks to resist.

pocene. Moving on in provocatively informed distance from lyrical nature aesthetics, Wong's work shows how such a distance is not at all exclusive of enlivened, embodied more-than-human modes that live on and off and between the pages.

3.3.3 Into the Toxic Anthropocene

Rita Wong is a contemporary poet, academic, and activist who grew up and lives in Canada. Her discursive, formally innovative poetry makes visible the "entanglement of economic, subjective and ecological exploitation" (Walton 263) across global systems of oppression, injustice, and value exchange. The collection *forage* (2007) in particular traces the "movement of materials around the world" (263) while enacting a material focus to languages constantly in (e)motion. Marginalia, Chinese characters, footnotes, links, and references compose a "foraging poetics" (Bates 199) written through various materials and writings of others. In this perspective echoing Falb's call for an Anthropocenic recycling practice, Wong's relational approach is further profoundly political. Leaking through matter, "from soapworn hands to toxic coughs" (*forage* 22), her ecopoetical inquiry into a poisonous strata of the Anthropocene makes not for a decorporal poetics (Falb, *Anthropozän* 24) but can be seen as ecotranslating its "psycho-physiological" (Scott, 'Poetics of Eco-Translation' 285) burdens into a spatially and temporally expanded "now". Bodies are rendered as porous; unforeseeable more-than-human in their inextricable interconnectedness with a vibrant Mitwelt. Linguistic shifts and the tangible work implied in language as "habitual placement of the tongue" that "changes the mouth" (Wong, *forage* 58) enrich ecotranslation with a somatic density across multi-relational encounters with language, ever entwined in global negotiations of power, for better and for worse.

Wong's stance to the Anthropocene appears in her words as much as in her actions. She writes: "We are in imminent peril if we consider the rate of change we are currently experiencing from a *geological* perspective. We are losing species at an alarming rate and facing mass extinctions due to the climate crisis that humans have caused." ('Lessons from Prison' 260) That this imminent peril is affecting some communities more than others in the shadow of corporate structures, unequal economic development, and a systematic failure of environmental governance forms the backbone of her work on and off the page. The statement above is part of Wong's reflection on her time in prison: one year after peacefully protesting in front of the Trans Mountain Pipeline in August 2018, she was sentenced to 28 days in prison. Despite large public protests and legal action by environmental and First Nations groups, whose land is crossed by the pipeline, a massive expansion was approved by Canada's prime minister in 2019.³⁹ The tripled daily capacity of an expanded pipeline causes a major increase in greenhouse gases, oil tanker traffic through the Salish Sea, and risk of oil spill, which would result in a collapse of the marine ecosystems. Justification for the pipeline project operates once again under the pretence

³⁹ The pipeline transports oil from the Alberta tar sands to the British Columbian coast and was bought from Texas-based oil company Kinder Morgan by the Trudeau government in 2018.

of a “we are in this together”-logic, in which “public benefits” largely translate into profit distributed among fossil fuel corporations while harmful consequences are carried by marginalised communities. Reflecting on a systemic political unwillingness to adequately respond to imminent peril, Wong reasserts the responsibility of the individual and the powerfulness of peaceful activism as a gesture of hope:

It’s surprising to find myself in the unexpected position of having spent time in a Canadian prison as a political prisoner, punished by the petro-state for asserting our responsibilities to care for the health of the land and water. The state is failing in its responsibility to protect the well-being of current and future generations, so it’s up to everyday people to step up.⁴⁰ (261)

The Anthropocene as a current condition of peril viewed from a geological perspective, as it is put forward by Wong, is thus simultaneously acknowledged as inherently political. It relies on sociogenic mechanisms that accelerate vulnerabilities of the earth in conjunction with those considered collateral damage, “less than fully human” (Klein 268) during the constant accumulation of wealth of the few. Exploring these vulnerabilities, *forage* is concerned with corporate violence, environmental pollution, consumer culture, identity, and gender, asking “ethical and political questions about the land, water and lives that have been sacrificed for the sake of capital [...]”(Milne 68).

The front cover of *forage* shows a mountain of e-waste in the village of Guiyu in Southeast China, at the time the largest electronic waste site in the world, where the “copper oxide of rusting motherboards [is] shining greener than the green of the ‘real’ mountains that rise up in the background.” (L’Abbé) Another “sacrifice zone” in which people and land are considered disposable, Guiyu embodies the unsolved consequence of endless extraction that usually remains hidden from the consumer. Approximately 100 000 workers, among them many children, “process” cell phones, batteries, computer monitors, and TVs imported from Europe, US, Canada, and other parts of Asia. Wong depicts this toxic process in haunting detail in a poem that can be described as taking Guiyu as a borrowed element, corresponding to a borrowed landscape technique. The workers “sort by day, burn by night”, using their hands to “‘liberate’ recyclable metal / into canals & rivers, / turning them into acid sludge / swollen with lead / barium leachate, mercury, bromide.” (Wong, *forage* 46) Guiyu is an “electronic graveyard” (Yeung) only insofar as the buried toxic chemical elements are beginning a poisonous afterlife here. Many children suffer from lead poisoning, and miscarriage among women is disproportionately high (Grant et al.; Zheng et al.). The dumping and burning of e-waste not commercially viable contaminates the soil, rivers, and air, causing health damage not only to the workers exposed through direct contact but to others in the community, “magnifying their way up the food chain / into my mothers thyroid / my neighbour’s prostate / my cousins’ immune systems” (Wong, *forage* 57). Wong

⁴⁰ Although the intricate relation between oil and water politics is not the explicit subject matter of *forage*, Wong frequently addresses these topics, specifically in her collection *undercurrent* and her community exhibition project *beholden: a poem as long as the river* in collaboration with Fred Wah.

discloses the toxic consequences of an out-of-sight out-of-mind life style, where both disposal and process of production are excluded from the product's ontology. Her poetry wavers ecopoethically between depicting the fatal physical impact of "circuit boards / most powerful & most dangerous" (46) and posing reflective questions regarding the inevitable interconnectedness in a global trading system:

where do metals come from?
 where do they return?
 bony bodies inhale carcinogenic toner dust,
 burn copper-laden wires,
 peer at old cathay, cathode ray tubes.
 what if you don't live in guiyu village?
 [page break]
 what if your pentium got dumped in guiyu village?
 your garbage, someone else's cancer? (46-47)

In addition to spatial extension, a singular sense of time is transgressed and expanded as the poem glimpses into ancient China, whose archaic name "Cathay" leads to the alliterating cathode ray tubes predominantly recycled in modern day China. Tracing the poisonous sides of a profit-oriented digital age, the use of the second person addresses the reader's complicity in a harmful system of cheap production. My very laptop on which I am writing this may end up in Guiyu or Nigeria or one of the other waste sites to which Europe regularly ships its waste regardless of official bans and laws. The line "o keyboard irony: the shiny laptop / a compilation of lead, aluminium, iron" (46) fittingly expresses the dilemma the poet faces as well, reminding that access to cheap luxury items actively builds on someone else's sacrifices, even if those are temporarily hidden from sight. As the geological scale of the Anthropocene reminds us, there is no exit from the "systems of relation between living things of all sorts" (Spahr, 'Unnamed Dragonfly Species' 93); a net of infinite connections has no realm "over there". From an ecological point of view, the stable unity sold as a "laptop" is decomposed into its individual material components, all of which have an afterlife as they end up in someone else's blood, in the soil, in the water. Increasing the self-reflective irony of an inescapable technical infrastructure even more, the poem itself was written upon watching a documentary about Guiyu (Wong, *forage* 47). It thus reasserts the dependency on electronic devices but simultaneously extends an ecopoetical invite to the reader to use the poem as a jumping point for further environmental education beginning with the provided link to the documentary "<http://www.ban.org>" (47). The use of Guiyu as a borrowed element here is layered with the digital infrastructure of the Anthropocene through which it is accessed, in this sense echoing internet poetry (cf. Falb, *Anthropozän* 43).

Wong shows how the "economy of scale / shrinks us all" (*forage* 47) and reveals the interconnectednesses in a hotly connected deep time present. As background and foreground, inside and outside merge, the Anthropocene takes away any illusion of spaces that remain immune from a

global climate emergency. Sacrifice zones increasingly generated in the wake of unsustainable consumerism are increasingly hard to ignore, not only given their growing number. The caused damage is often less controllable in spatial range and more temporally lasting than anticipated. Chemical toxins travel in an interconnected ecosystem, water and air circulate globally. Products are produced, packed in more than one place and flown elsewhere for sale; pollutants, bacteria, viruses do not stop at geographic borders. The image of the Anthropocene is one without an escape, one with multiple overlapping realities interconnected through time and space. Although the life of someone who lives in Guiyu village will in most cases be radically different from someone whose laptop is dumped there, the overarching problem is ultimately “global whether / here or there” (47). Chased by the echo of “weather”, the two lines contain yet another link to the inescapability of climate change’s imminent peril. Nevertheless, the poem resists a universalising “we are in this together” assertion by observing the poisonous harm to those immediately affected from a self-reflective empathic, critically engaged distance. Translating media information into ecopoethic form, the poem asks us, who do not live in Guiyu, to reconsider our relationship with everyday objects whose quick disposal on our part is not the end of their journey. Enmeshed with more-than-human environments, their toxic constituents seep through the skin of the planet and other vulnerable bodies, residing there well into the uncertain future.

As Wong put it during an interview as part of the annual CBC’s Canada Reads Poetry competition in 2011, “the history of what we use, wear and eat in our daily lives matters – it’s part of us, whether or not we know it, and we, in turn, are embedded in systems shaped by an international economy and a political landscape.” (cf. Zantingh 630; Kabesh 155) Interrogating the more-than-human interaction with matter, the link to Guiyu channels a number of crucial ecopolitical concerns that run through the entire collection. The damaging effects of global supply chains are made visible in the transpacific relation between China, North American, and Canada – a relation that is charged by movements of migration, shipping of toxic waste, and industrial production. Through a recurring racialised figure of the Chinese migrant worker, *forage* registers the material “body burden” (22) of exploitative labour exchanges upholding a multinational capitalist system where “people walk around in various states of damage. damaged goods. / mismanaged funds.” (Wong, *forage* 45) Unveiling the “red earth, / bloody earth, stolen earth” (12) under Vancouver, a city built on First Nations land, *forage* pressures links between capital, labour, colonialism, and environmental justice. It weaves through hyphenated Asian-Canadian identities (cf. Kim; Milne 69), gender narratives, diasporic subjectivity, indigenous and scientific knowledge (cf. Follett 50), while politicising a toxic discourse that attends to the materiality of things in their more-than-human interdependencies (cf. Zantingh; Walton 81), “larger than the / sum of the individuals” (Wong, *forage* 12) in their uncontrollable effects, in an immeasurable Übermaß. Unpacking various ecopoethic forms to communicate across omnipresent issues of scale, Wong’s poetry can be seen as generating a nexus between a mode of enlivenment and a technocratic affinity of Anthropozändichtung. Falb’s demand for poetry to incorporate data and inhabit the cyberspace resounds throughout a collection that constantly reveals the larger

network behind and around the words it borrows, conjures, reverses, morphs, and transforms.

This seems particularly evident in the prose-poem “the girl who ate rice almost every day” (16-19). Two narratives, presented as blocks of text divided into two non-flush columns, run side by side over four pages. The left column tells the story of a girl named “slow” (16) and the fatal effects of genetically modified food:

the beets had infused her
excrement with a permanent
red glow, but she still used it
as fertilizer. the rice that grew
from this experiment was
rouged by the fertilizer, and
became a sweet, rosy coloured
grain that spread like a weed
through the urban catacombs.

Karl M. (Millbury, MA.

*Assignee: Alexion Pharmaceuti-
cals, Inc. (Cheshire, CT).*

*A transgenic large mammal is
produced by a method includ-
ing the steps of obtaining one or
more early embryos, selectively
preparing an embryo having at
least three cells, and preferably* (19)

The right column, printed in italics, provides facts, numbers, data, and further instructions for the reader on how to conduct research on patents, scientifically modified food, and transgenic experiments with mammals. In the first stanza, the reader is asked to “go the US patent database, <http://www.uspto.gov/patft> and do the following search: search term: monsanto / search field: assignee name” (16).⁴¹ If the reader follows this request, they will see that the number of patents for items (eg. corn, wheat, potato) listed in the following stanza is significantly higher now, as prophesied by the poem. Meanwhile, the girl slow realises she “did not have long to live on this earth” and sets out to grow a crop of rice “on the land where she lived, the land of salish, musqueam, halkomelem speakers” (18). Juxtaposing impenetrable legal language of patenting with a more accessible literary story, Wong activates the larger spectrum and action scope of language that is alive in the world and moves from historical tensions to virtual spaces to material places. Literary and scientific discourse interact; regardless of genre expectations, poetry is oriented along an ecotranslation axis, where it combines registers and connections on and off the page. It seeks an ecopoethic form to grapple with expanded knots of the everyday in the Anthropocene, building a bridge between abstract and sensual information.

Multiple scholars (eg. Boast 11; Beauregard 572; Walton 275) point out how Wong’s poetry speaks to Richard Nixon’s concept of “slow violence”, as it makes visible “a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, [...]” (*Slow Violence* 2). Slow violence gradually manifests in fairly imperceptible ways that commonly affect the most vulnerable communities and are wilfully ignored by the “spectacle-driven corporate media” (6). Repeatedly arresting what Nixon calls a “toxic drift” (2) in contaminated food that accumulates to a “science lab in my esaphagus” (*forage* 29), Wong’s poetry further begins to show a slow violence pertaining to

⁴¹ The reference to Monsanto is repeated in “canola queasy” (*forage* 36), a poem dedicated to the Saskawetchan farmer Percy Schmeiser who was sued by them after genetically modified crops blew into his field.

language. Growing up to immigrant parents, Wong is acutely aware of linguistic discrimination and unspoken barriers posed by accents. In *forage*, trails of Chinese characters and Indigenous languages in tension with hegemonic English are intimately associated with the discerning of colonial violence and late stage globalisation not only as economic but also as language imperialism. Against this backdrop, historicised, physically embodied language often feels alien, uncontrollable in Wong's work; words are moving through the body like neurotoxic chemicals, while the absence of another language appears as a "silent letter that alters the / sound around it" (35). With regard to Anthropocene orientation in ecotranslation, the intricate connection between movements of languages and movements of matter deserves a further look, travelling "from the cellular to the transnational" (Nixon, *Slow Violence* 46), from subjective modes to grand narratives, co-text and big data, in which Wong's poetry not so much dwells (Falb, *Anthropozän* 43) but through and with which it weaves its lines in response to a global climate emergency.

Foraging "all our relations"

Returning to the excessive Übermaß of a consumer society, whose slow violent waste the cover of *forage* can be seen as depicting, the spatial meaning of the noun is embodied by Wong's "poetics of supplementation" (Beauregard 573). Incorporating marginalia in the form of handwritten notes and Chinese characters, the poems stretch beyond their own demarcations. They include occasional pictures, statistics, and quotes from scholars, poets, musicians, newspaper articles, and websites that expand the reading experience. The poem "nervous organism" (Wong, *forage* 20), for instance, is entirely enframed by a handwritten quotation from Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye, asking the reader to turn the book in a 360° circle to decipher it.⁴² "forage, fumaage", a poem that jumps "from the georgia strait to the florida strait" (30) is followed by a quote from the author Marwan Hassan in which he outlines the link between place names and their colonial history, noting that "[T]he political economy of conquest and trade can give more detailed answers than philology." (107) Running around the outer margins of this poem are English translations of province names from their respective Indigenous languages, including "Saskatchewan: Cree for swift flowing river" and "Kebec: Algonquin for where the river narrows" (Wong, *forage* 30-31). These names are echoed in the poem which further borrows a phrase from the author Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta to stage a classroom "in the united states of amnesia":

[...] two-legged
 creatures from bangladesh, holland, jamaica, cuba, china, england,
 trinidad, colombia, peru sit together in a circle, carrying personal
 hells & rebel yells (30)

Going beyond gendered and national identities, the poem acknowledges a dynamic multiverse in which personal stories resist a singular dominant narrative, like the one imposed by the officially

⁴² A detailed reading of the poem in relation to the quote can be found in Milne (69-71).

proposed Anthropocene time unit (cf. section 3.1). This is further reinforced by the personalised handwriting that opposes the implicit authority of standard typeset text with a touch of intimacy. Every stanza in the poem seeks to “begin again” – to make an effort to “curl” the tongue in order to learn foreign languages, “listen harder” to unfamiliar sounds, “lament, foment, reinvent” (30), and map a plurality of historical narratives of more than one culture in more than one language. The included lyrics from Laurie Anderson’s song describing “walking and falling at the same time” sounds a hyphenated condition of being between languages and between cultures, always in a precarious state in a “cavernous continent” (31).

By drawing extensively on not only academical but pop-cultural and personal co-text, Wong adds to the eco-poetical approach to language and enlarges the space her poem touches. As a consequence, the critical discourses and supplemental material included in her poems on the page are reoriented and expanded beyond the page. In that sense, the poem above can be read as performing the didactic task of decolonising the envisioned classroom, starting to “verb the ottawa” (30) and thus providing a more ecologically connected view that understands – and likewise makes, that is, brings into consciousness – connections between geographies and oppression of language, factory farms and colonial violence. Reminiscent of an eco-ethical recycling technique (Tarlo, ‘Eco-Ethical Poetics’) that invokes a sense of collaborative writing (cf. section 1.3), Wong gathers a chorus of voices that interact, respond to, and carry her poems into other realms while speaking through and conversely re-inventing and echoing writers as varied as Rachel Carson, Edward Sapir, Vandana Shiva, Donnell Meadows, alongside dedications to and memories of local people. The reader is encouraged to think about texts in less compartmentalised ways and understand poetry more broadly, precisely as a meeting point where various lines of thought can gain additional creative depth. Providing an alternative life style to *Übermaß*, excessive consumption, foraging involves a scarcity practice feeding on already-existing materials, which, if translated into a poetics challenge genre assumptions and traditional lyrical expectations.

While *forage* thus partially responds to Falb’s requested technique of producing text from text, it does so in a tentative, transparent way that brings different voices into a political conversation rather than fully assimilating materials and thereby quantifying language as a flux of data. In contrast, reflections and handwritten notes in various ink strengths personalise the poems and connect writing as a manual activity to the body and thus to further exchanges with more-than-human matter. Sometimes running over multiple pages to connect two single poems, the marginalia almost form an autonomous undercurrent which consistently draws attention to less linear forms of reading and orientates the formal unit of a poem in response to a greater relationality.

To that end, the two poems “reconnaissance” (Wong, *forage* 58-59) and “reverb” (60-61) are stitched together by an extensive quote from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* addressing the interconnectedness of nature as an ecological system and the resulting omnipresence of pesticides. Referring specifically to the water cycle, Carson notes that once added to the water cycle, they are no longer controllable; therefore “pollution of the groundwater is pollution of water everywhere”

(42). Through the layer of Carson, incidentally also a key figure in Nixon, the poems are charged with the presence of water and an inquiry into slow toxic violence. The first poem moves these issues into a larger time frame by referring to settler colonialism on Turtle Island (“the mountain was a turtle” (Wong, *forage* 58)) and Chinese migratory movements. A foraged entry from the *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English* and an extract from ethnographer Pun Ngai’s study on women factory workers in the global workplace introduce issues of gender and foreign language learning. Already foreshadowed in the first line “habitual movement of the mouth changes the tongue” (58), the latter issue is in particular aligned with the slow violence of English language hegemony. The second stanza asks:

when the tongue is still, are you quiet enough to hear the
dead? quiet enough to hear the land stifled beneath massive
concrete? quiet enough to hear the beautiful, poisoned
ancestors surfacing from your diaphragm? (58)

The loss of indigenous turtle island is interwoven with the need to learn to move the tongue in formerly unusual and unknown ways until it gradually changes the female gendered body. In the face of the interconnectednesses of nature as a whole, as recalled by the Carson quote framing the poem, the “poisoned ancestors” are entangled in a larger cycle of pollution running from the past to the future generation, though not commonly listened to since they are drowned by a different tongue.

In contrast to the physical component of speech, the dictionary entry provides a statistical account of the occurrence of verbs, which is taken up in the second poem “reverb”. While resounding references to colonial history, it is more focused on the contemporary impacts of the global economy. Carson’s remark on water is surrounded by loosely interconnected single lines offering fractured associations with industrial production, environmental justice, and “hyper-capitalism” which “is not just annoying but deadly” (60). In this perspective, the line “i counted sweatshops in vancouver’s eastside until I got dizzy and / fainted” can be read in connection with the fast fashion industry, its toxic production — often outsourced to Asian countries — and its pollutant effects on organisms, particularly water. Changing register and perspective with each line, other phrases hint at other dynamics of “obscene wealth” (60), including the unfulfilling, unsustainable “trance of consumerism”, oppression of First Nations and their land as well as politics’ failure to create a more diverse, vibrant, and idealistic “imagi-nation” (61). These fairly heavy topics are presented through situated snapshots, allowing the reader gradual access to the internal interconnections. In relation to the title, the final line “think potlatch” (61) offers a perspective on a potential reverbing that bends towards a spiritual mode of sharing and reciprocity based on a renewed value of indigenous practices. Here, “reverbing”, framed as an active change in language, is opening a window into a potential change in attitude that offers a vision of hope.

Attuned to the necessity of Anthropocene poetry to travel between various scales, Wong’s experimental ecopoethic foraging resists a singular voice and a singular perspective. Subjectivity

is charged with multiple selves that roam multiple more-than-human poetic modes. Fragmented as the physical, posthuman body is also fragmented by toxins and external interventions, the lyrical I splices into “me auto poietic me diverse / trans over genic harassment” (37). The sketched Anthropocene panorama is one that is always in the making, vibrantly criss-crossing through global economy, language, environmental pollution, oppression, injustice, and violence whose embodied effects are enacted on the page, in the ways “she whistles the street’s poverty to unpracticed ears” (41), in the ways “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” (11), a line from Shakespeare’s canonised Macbeth “takes me back hundreds of years” (11) to meet *Silent Spring* further down in Wong’s literary value chain.

Heather Milne suggests that Wong “treats language as a system akin to an ecology that she pollutes and modifies in order to reflect her ecopoetics and ecopolitical concerns.” (69-70) Continuing this line of thought, ecotranslation emerges as a poethical relation-making, -tracing and -breaking at various levels in *forage*, as language is splintered and spliced, clashed against itself, and laid bare in its violent roots that loosely relate to other forms of violences. Wong notes that there is a “sense of mingling and interaction between languages that keep moving, refusing to remain still.” (‘Re Languages’) This can be referred to movements across different registers by inclusion of various textual material and to movements across different languages: interlingual translations from Chinese poems expand the linguistic range, while the incorporation of handwritten Chinese characters reinforces the material focus and grants a spatial dimension to language. The foreign feeling they convey to the English reader distantly echoes the alienation of the English tongue to mouths unused to it. In a decentralising motion, it draws attention to other languages and other knowledges beyond the border of English.

Nevertheless, since they rarely provide new information but repeat titles, names, or words romanised into English in the poems they accompany, the violent silences conveyed by the Chinese characters are even stronger. Read in conjunction with the first poem, specifically with the line “they take your culture away from you: you cannot sing your own / songs anymore” (Wong, *forage* 11), the poem translating the already gloomy “Laundry Song” (22) after Chinese poet Wen I’to for example echoes an even darker tone. Tying unequal exposure to toxic chemicals to unequal economic structures, the song once more shows the slow violence of toxins leaching from laundry detergent into the body of the female migrant worker; the “water turned profit margin / laundered in endocrine disrupters” (22). The name of the poet, written in Chinese characters, links back to structural racism and economic injustices that naturally affect language as well (“*Wash them (for the Americans), wash them*” (22)). While toxic contamination particularly affects vulnerable groups, Wong’s ecopoethical translation once again includes the larger frame and points out how the poisonous chemicals inevitably travel through water in an interconnected ecosphere “from contaminated basin onto tampered scale” (22). The pollution of the planet takes on unknown and uncontrollable more-than-human forms that eventually affect us all, in “body burden times” (22), times where every person alive today, including newborn babies, carries toxic chemicals within their bodies – in medical terms the chemical, toxic load, or “body burden” of

the Anthropocene (Nordberg et al.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Environmental Working Group). “We” are partially in *this* together, but then again, not really — as *forage* shows, exposure to slow toxic violence often corresponds to poverty and precarious living conditions of marginalised communities, whose access to medical care will probably be restricted as well.

In that sense, and in line with an ecological view on language as vital, variable, plural, embedded and embodied, the culturally dominant English language is disclosed in its pollution by corporate forces. English itself is constantly more than one language, abridged and othered, ricocheting off the inevitably fused Anthropocene background-foreground. This is perhaps most overtly enacted in the poem “identification/recognition test”, which can be read as a violent ecotranslation process from 19 botanical names to brand names, exemplified by the first three lines here:

crocus	nike
holly	pepsi
bamboo	BMW (Wong, <i>forage</i> 32)

As “crocus”, “holly”, and “bamboo” are converted to “nike”, “pepsi”, and “BMW”, this ecotranslation depicts a direct link between ecological loss, multinational capitalism, and language. The relation between those companies and their detrimental ecological impact, as shown throughout the collection, reinforces the poem as illustrating a transition into a fully commercialised, ecologically illiterate world whose reign, as the final transition from “blackberry” to “blackberry” (32) somewhat comically shows, is already well underway. To this end, language can only “(in)habit” (34) tentatively, always alert to the signals, the surrounding pressures that charge it with the necessity to poetically re-create itself in awareness of and in resistance to pollution and exploitation with which it is entangled.

The link between a physically incorporated slow toxic and slow linguistic violence that both have externalised tangible effects, eventually changing “the body’s alphabet” (35) is unearthed in and likewise orientates ecotranslation towards the Anthropocene. Across “all our relations” (42), it is articulated as a global, plural emergency, without automatically homogenising individual burden. Political realities are interlinked with the vital forces of materials disclosed in tangible, often toxic effects linked to language as an ecological matter, a “psycho-physiological” (Scott, ‘Poetics of Eco-Translation’ 285) relation-making. It is registered as it moves off the page, through various materials, through the body, through the world, often detrimentally, as part of hegemonic systems and value chains currently determining its course.

To the extent that it acknowledges the omnipresence of economic interests and pitfalls of corporate languages, Wong’s work not only shows up the need to rethink our relationship to materials and consumption, as well as our responses to exploitative structures. It also asserts a radical, superseding responsibility for the “bloody earth” (*forage* 12) and a more egalitarian “union of the living, from mosquito to / manatee to mom” (52). Language is set in (e)motions through

ecotranslation, alternating between large scale events and dedications to individual people who became victims to systems of oppression. It communicates differences and barriers, resisting unification, investigating power dynamics, and opening room for reflection and critical engagement with the current self-conscious Anthropocene. As they are torqued into new sets of relation that offer sensual, subjective, and embodied connections, Wong's formally innovative foraging poetics offers globally infused personal spaces and eco-poetical languages to "arm yourself with" (58). It unapologetically unpacks piles of "unbearable waste" (54) alongside small gestures of hopeful communal transformations, calling the "housewives of suburbia" to "unite" (43), wagering on the rearrangement of "molecules through thought not genetic engineering" (61).

Perhaps more than any other poet discussed so far, Wong's poetry engages with socio-political issues in the knowledge that they inevitably "come up because they're embedded in the world around me" ('Re Languages'). Her various poetic modes read as inquiries into this world, which is more than one and more-than-human in unexpected, interrelated, and dynamic ways. In an expanded here and now, *forage* thus signals eco-poetical ways of "intervening in social and environmental injustices through consciousness raising, activism, boycott and protest" (Walton 289). Wong herself, as a poet-activist, embodies and communicates translations into actions, writing from prison after protesting at the pipeline:

People have asked me: what can I do? I say: don't give up. [...] Spend time with and protect sacred places like the Burrard Inlet, the Peace Valley, your local creeks and forests. Our future depends on these acts of care and attention. Don't look away from the violence that Trans Mountain is inflicting. At the same time, keep an eye on the solutions we need to build together, the lifeboats that are in the making. ('Lessons from Prison' 262)

I draw the discussion to a close on this hopeful assertion of individual actions that is perhaps the backbone of all eco-poetically oriented work. While Wong's politically engaged poetry went furthest in this regard, all three poets discussed in this section, adding to the poets discussed in this chapter as a whole, offer creative and critical ways to attend to "the crucial, all-encompassing task of recalibrating how we think, feel, and experience the numinous totality that enmeshes us" (Quetchenbach, 'Illuminating the Anthropocene' 335).

Marion Poschmann, Daniel Falb, and Rita Wong are arguably too different in their approaches to be comparable in any distinctly measurable sense, but they nevertheless relate in ways that contribute to transboundary frictional eco-poetic nodes. In view of an Anthropocene signalling *Übermaß*, cognitive impossibility, and imminent peril on ungraspable scales, they have different answers to what it means to write in the awareness of such a view, what it means for "the stories we tell" (Nixon, 'The Anthropocene'), for the languages we speak, for the lines we make; what it means to be (more-than-)human on an interconnected earth on which, however, the "ecological fates" 'we' experience, are "very different" (Whitehead 7). Ecotranslation is at work as an investigative, relational mode of thinking that continuously lights up ecological connections be-

tween and across textual borders, but in the process is likewise enlarged in practical senses: as an emerging attentive capturing device of enlivened landscape escaping ownership, as a materially focused recycling procedure converging background and foreground, as an embodied geopolitical resistance moving through its own entanglements in global networks of relations and material connections in violent value chains. Every component of the phrase “we are in this together” is once again charged, emphasising the need to make space for multiple stories and multiple approaches, lyrically, conceptually, ecopolitically, sensually, that challenge a uni-verse and can be translated into “acts of care and attention” (Wong, ‘Lessons from Prison’ 262) towards the Mitwelt. In this sense, all three poets have contributed to my navigation of the Anthropocene in relation to ecoethics and its various, capacious ecotranslations across time, place, texts, and languages that will be further explored below.

I actually wanted to be a singer/writer/actor/painter/journalist, but I thought it was too insecure - OR:

Fears First

All this talk about Security

Being secure: belonging somewhere in the middle,
being mainstream-alternative, being naturally against

climate change; not to an extent it actually means
cutting down meat or diesel, or cancelling the surfing trip to
California, or not joining in with the popular bashing of veganism

doesn't change anything, and "anyway *I* only eat a little meat once a month on Sun
days from the butcher next door, and I *do* know where my
doner comes from, and what's next then, you want me to feel bad about
dairy, chicken, pigs, plastic, clothes, women – and what about children in Africa?
Do you help them, too? Well, can't help everyone. I have no reason to feel bad. Darwin already said –

every time I go shopping, I give money to the Accordion Guy. I'm not saying things shouldn't be more
equal, I'm not – but nowadays you can't say anything out loud without being called racist,
egomaniac, or anti-feminist by those linksversiffen Gutmenschen protesting at every corner for
ecological justice, equal payment, earth day, what have you. *I* always separate *my* rubbish. There are
even companies that don't have enough men now, did you know? All I'm saying is – not
everyone can live here, that's simply impossible. What about us, what about our lives?
Excuse me for wanting a secure job *and* children, a house *and* health insurance. A nice and
easy tax declaration form at the end – that's not too much to ask, considering my CV and everything."

Fighting for ideals is really out; better be
flexible and not too vocal; pick a proper job from the career's guide, always brush your teeth with
Fluoride, remember to carry two euros with you, one for the trolley one for the homeless, stay away
from lists other than the EinwohnerInnenmelderegister and the vaccination record and the
flight check-in list, don't forget to have an opinion on the latest fake news,
follow the Fb algorithm. Individually. In times like these, you need to look after your own
fence before helping others. Brother/Sisterhood. Life is not easy between Monday and
Friday, between low-fat Flat White in the morning and Merlot in the afternoon, between A
FDP and CDU, or whatever mask Big B wears in your country to feint with
freedom! free choice! Freie Fahrt für freie Bürger! Dig! Out! Archetypical! Fears
First! Tell us gender inclusivity disrupts the status quo and doesn't change anything; there is no
fashion without Heidi, no taste without steak, no fun without flags, no Net
flix without coal, no cars without global warming. Heimat! Werte! Rinderbraten!

Security, the new sexy.

Home is where the WiFi connects automatically

everything measures its value
 by its adaptiveness to
 small and portable
 shooting on your first day I heard.
 Fb advises to pack an umbrella. scroll down
 to see what's next

with
 all those rainbows here it's easy
 to lose sight of the ground
 when walking wobbly milk teeth cobblestones
 stretch long-distance
 from within one calling code to two nodes of
the world

is only a giant landing strip floating on water.

days of peppermint. less paracetamol.
 wishes change owners via email.
 1,50 gets you everything you want
 and a liquorice stained copy of "acid pollution"

sand mirror
 for the flying sky.
 malty sweetness spirals upwards where eyeprints look easier.
 echo of the wind in relation to everything else dismantles all remainders
 write until fingers winter-branch-stiff it's not enough.

everything measures its value
 in relation to landing strips lines
 into mucosa like dental floss

jersey dries quicker
 than petrol pools in alien green
 if this is friendship I
 don't want to be shipping

Trash

[after Plymouth]

traffic cones zone
burning rubber
half-digested plankton
dolphin-pile
drown the drain
makes nothing happen

disrupts nothing

is lost
in the seas
only dispersed
and rearranged

“Arranging nature in the interests of capital requires a mass simplification: the reduction of all life into the categories of resource or waste.” (Farrier 52)

Corona Cycle, 16.03.2020

I. Going extinct

is not so easy
after all: some will
have to learn
how to live
without
toilet paper
first

II. Please

put on your own mask
before helping others

III. Hope

is a used needle
with an unknown error rate

IV. Niemand

nimmt uns die Spargelzeit
Mallorca, Grillen
oder das Recht
einander an
zuschwärzen

V. Times

are always
uncertain
only
we
live now

Poetic Reflections, November 2017

- I'm trying to dive into the moment ("your shell on acid") whilst remembering the bigger picture.
- I'm thinking about the self in the poem, the subject / object, self / other separation.
- I'm thinking about the Anthropocene, how humans are becoming another great geological force.
How chicken bones are one of the layers to be found hundreds of years into the future.
- I read newspaper articles, every morning I read all that nonsense, how shitty everything is, and I don't know what to do, and I just try to carry on, whatever, when I do too much research, just cannot deal with it, and that's when I write, and I try, through poetry get to the fine ends of that feeling and . . . it's like squeezing pus out of a wound.
- I'm thinking about recycling and pollution, the sea as a massive bin for everything that floats around.
- I'm thinking about places that extend beyond the horizontal boundary (junkspace) and hyperobjects (Morton).
- I'm thinking about the impossibility to perceive. How everyone sees so differently. And what it means to capture a moment. Can you ever capture anything at all? I don't think so.
- I'm thinking about the difficulty of the word landscape, as an aesthetic concept, as a constricting term, perhaps.
- I'm thinking about the natural and the problem that everyone still separates Nature in conversation.
- I'm thinking about language transitioning between moments, minutes, zones. How words become different words in different languages. How my brain suddenly seems to be fine with switching back and forth, as if it has lost its roots, or maybe is rooted twice. How words have several lives.
- I'm thinking about time. I don't understand time, I don't understand how it is a different time somewhere else, and then you get on a plane and your time is different, although it is the same for the people waiting for you.
- I'm thinking about bodies. A lot. About skin, and different layers of skin, and the mouth as a border for speech to come out (Vicuña) and teeth as showing the lives (articles).
- I'm thinking about poetry as resisting, somehow, all that. Commodification, the consumerist society, the awful advertisement language. I don't want my poems to be completely inaccessible. I want images and hope and fear and disgust. I want to associative chains, things happening between the lines. I want the political and the personal to merge, as it does in everyday life. I cannot write entirely hopeless poetry. It works as a form of empowerment for me. I think, it needs some sort of message, no, just the idea, the echo of perhaps hope in the future. It's one of the reasons I don't like purely theoretical subjects — I think I'm waiting for the "do something" shout in the end and it never comes. That's why I (retrospectively: used to) like Morton, he shouts. I want my poetry to shout. To have that shout somewhere, hidden. If not in every, then in all of them together. To believe that they can shout, at least.
- I'm thinking about pretending. Hiding. Things that come up, always, again and again. I'm so sick of that. Things unsaid. Interactions.
- I'm thinking about how travelling makes me really happy.
- I'm thinking about longing, sea, Meerweh.
- I'm thinking about scale. How little, how small. How little I know, all those books I need to read. How less it matters though. What does matter? I'm trying not to think too often about it. I think, can you really blame anyone for getting depressed? But then, what difference does it make? Who profits? I always ask myself that. Profit. Outcome. Efficiency. Beurgh.
- I'm thinking about control and market research and how I now need to scan my student card to get into the library, only so that they can collect data, and also how I can no longer go shopping because I can't say no and end up with lots of different cards and advertising.
- I think, private and public, ownerships, and the big questions.

3.4 On Ec(h)otranslating, Polysituatedness, and Roaming (A Retrospective Moving Forward)

By way of drawing this chapter to a close, this section is dedicated to reflections on my writing in interaction with poetic influences and critical notions. Throughout the development of my research project, ecotranslation evolved as a relational interface in both practical and theoretical terms. Introduced by the preceding poetic reflections, I seek to look back on my poetic research practice and move into a concluding inquiry of more-than-human makings with the home planet earth in the self-conscious Anthropocene. I thus wish to consider ecotranslation in relation to echoes, across places, across texts, across languages, across the body. Echo, autonomous yet fundamentally ecological in its dependency on an environment embodies a relational interest between things that is subsequently translated into eco-poetic forms.⁴³ Beginning with a close-up retrospective on my poem “Meerweh”, I move on to the notion of roaming that “polysituates” (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness*) my poetry as it is shaped by concerns, questions, and contradictory (e)motions in the face of our vulnerable communal planetary home. As the self-conscious Anthropocene takes the ecological crisis to more urgent scales, not least pressured by a sharpened consciousness of the production of its own discourse, it becomes more pressing to underline that while “we” are not in this together equally, “we” are also not in this alone: from an interconnected position, ec(h)otranslating is an orientation towards a sense of response-ability to more than one’s own skin.

A re-occurring “we are in this together” is therefore joined by “we are always too late”: As mentioned in the previous chapter (2.4), I initially found the term ecotranslation through a poem that emerged from a particular engagement with place spatially extended via the body. While echoing an in-situ moment, the poem also interacts with critical material I read at the time: my ideas around engagement with place and being place-based were complicated by Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic ethics, Jonathan Bate’s eco-poetical “song of the earth”, Timothy Morton’s ecological, interrelated spacious thinking (*Ecological Thought* 26-28, 44-52), and David Dunn’s emphasis on the perception of sounds pertaining to “a necessary epistemological shift in the human relationship to our physical environment” (‘Nature, Sound Art’ 3). The latter in particular steered my thought process away from a common bias towards the visual.⁴⁴ It inspired me to consider sound waves in relation to motion and conceive listening as a relational, whole-body experience. This was a starting point for sounding my poetic practice in connection with echoes and exploring engagements with places as *ec(h)otranslations* that fathom listening and responding foundational elements for respectful conversations setting in (e)motion a heightened mode of attentiveness for living in interdependencies with others.

⁴³ My thinking here is influenced by Evelyn Reilly’s “relational poetics” (‘Eco-Noise’ 258), underscored by Charles Olson: “At root (or stump) what *is*, is no longer THINGS but what happens BETWEEN things, these are the terms of the reality contemporary to us — and the terms of what we are.” (Olson, *Human Universe* 123)

⁴⁴ The visual is also the first sense mentioned in Sarah Kirsch’s synaesthetic eco-poetical approach (“I see something [...]” (Stokes xvii)) that became a cornerstone on my way to a multi-faceted translation of place.

Moving away from a notion of place-based, I interrogated a dynamic notion of interrelated place-knots open to constantly shifting, relational lines of belonging that began to give shape to a mode of *roaming*. Away from stable safety of “here” and “now”, “out there” and “over there”, my engagement with the multifaceted Anthropocene added an expanded deep-time rocky geological layer to a sense of place as a plurality whose split between global and local connections has already been investigated (cf. 1.4). I thus began to view place poems as registering a tiny fraction of an ungraspable, manifold source, an echo of impressions, sounds, and smells we are always late to perceive and limited in receiving. An echo further of other sensations and other experiences and other places mingling with the current one(s), never existing in isolation from others. In line with Tim Ingold (*Being Alive* 148-49), place as a knot of transgressive life-lines intertwines “not just where we are, but where we have been and where we can perceive ourselves as having been, or imagine ourselves being.” (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 91) This is part of what John Kinsella explores as “polysituatedness”:

This is polysituatedness, a process of growth of perception and a sense of multiple belongings that enhance our understanding and respect for the *here* and *now* by creating a comparative model we can use for decision-making and reflection on our condition of being, and the impact our actions might have on other people and the environment as a whole. (91)

Kinsella was not included in my reading material back then,⁴⁵ but I turn to his self-reflective polysituatedness as a measure of our being, acting, and experiencing now, as I tie together notions of echotranslation and roaming through the in-situ poems “Sand tongue / Echo translation” and “Ec(h)o translations” (see 2.4) that eventually sparked the poem “Meerweh”. In addition to concerns about notorious perceptual time lags coupled with an illusive immediacy of place, the poem considers echoes of other languages surrounding us. This is particularly the case for my work, which continuously hovers between German and English (cf. 2.2). Eco- as ec(h)otranslation channels an ecological approach in a participatory, interrelated continuum shared by all more-than-humans and their various forms of poiesis. We are in conversation across time and space, cultures and histories; when we are translating, we are never alone (Cordingley and Manning 23). Poems, too, do not exist in isolation; they are always surrounded by other words and other languages and other poems. As Jack Spicer phrases it: “Poems should echo and re-echo against each other. They should create resonances. They cannot live alone any more than we can.” (Gizzi and Killian 163) From a posthuman Anthropocene perspective, this echoes our itinerant partaking in a shared ecological continuum that enmeshes us with vital, more-than-human matter. An acknowledgement of the fundamentally relational capacity of writing as an eco-practice in this sense can thus meet Anthropocene precarity and the awareness that “[N]o species, not even our

⁴⁵ Neither were Tim Ingold, whose concepts of projection, belonging, and passing through are echoed in Kinsella (*Polysituatedness* 92), or Doreen Massey, whose concept of place informs the discussion of ecopoetic place practices in 1.4.

own arrogant one, can act alone” (Haraway, ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene’ 159). We are symbiotically embodied and embedded in *this*, the manifold, incomprehensible, multi-scalar, vulnerable planet earth.

As my initial poem (“Ec(h)o translations” cf. 2.4) suggests, however, we are also “always too late”, in many senses. The multi-verse has already made history before the humans showed up at the eleventh hour to produce an uncontrollable mess that they now fail to adequately respond to. Whilst desperate to conquer and possess places, our perceptibility of them remains highly limited. Even if we are actively paying attention, we are only ever able to see, hear, smell, understand, or touch fragments, faint echoes of the places we pass through as we weave our lines during our time on earth, “the only home our species currently knows” (Skinner, ‘What is Eco-poetics?’). Places happen as encounters with the more-than-human, as more than one, as constantly changing and always in motion. From a circular position of infinite entanglement with no centre (cf. Reilly, ‘Eco-Noise’ 257), elsewhere is also here and here is elsewhere, at once foreign and familiar, the same and different (cf. Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 129), like a translation. Sarah Kirsch, who has been a vital influence for me, aptly expresses it in her poem “Der Meropsvogel” that grounds a feeling of paradoxical immediacy of the oikos recorded in a motion of “coming closer, moving away” (Breinig and Power 197).⁴⁶ Places are thus strangely close and distant from us, known and unknown at the same time. We are connected and disconnected, *polysituated* just like the languages and sounds that surround us, flowing into other languages and other sounds (cf. Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 181).⁴⁷

Often we not only struggle to understand but fail to hear or take a moment to actively, voluntarily *listen* —⁴⁸ which is not overly surprising given the current state of the earth: anthropogenic pollution includes noise pollution, with detrimental effects on earthlings. In-between air and street traffic, oil drills, ships, compressors, or gunfires, we, more-than-humans, can only absorb so much. A sensory experience, hearing is not confined to the ears. We can feel sounds vibrating across the whole body. From Latin “nausea”, noise literally means “seasick” (‘Noise’) — we cannot actively take in everything, otherwise we have to vomit.⁴⁹

Our body with inevitably missing “earlids” (Schafer 11) is effectively a resonating body between a place and its ec(h)opoietic composition, carrying further the vibrations that resounded. Sound waves literally translate vibrations until reaching a receiver. They need the interplay of molecules to travel; they are slower than light; they are fundamentally relational and take on the “dual role” of both communicating and echoing back (Skinner, ‘Stirrup Notes:’ 262), indicating

⁴⁶ For full discussion, see 2.1.

⁴⁷ Kinsella explicitly relates polysituatedness to language, writing: “The polysituatedness of language is in constant evidence as it changes, feeds into other languages, and also colonises, hybridises, rejects, deletes, is reconstituted, adapts, ‘evolves’, is manipulated through political and social control, resists oppression, meets needs, reclaims, creates an aesthetics, maps and unmaps land, is made by land.”(181)

⁴⁸ My writing here is informed by Pauline Oliveros’ outlined distinction between hearing as an involuntary act and listening as an active, cultured skill that follows hearing (cf. Oliveros; Alarcón and Herrema).

⁴⁹ See Michel Serres on this, who was also part of my reading material at the time and poses the question, “Do we get seasick from hearing?” (Serres 8)

infinite intertwinements and interconnectedness. An ec(h)opoetic practice therefore assumes being attentive to the interconnectedness and carries this attentiveness into a writerly commitment “to witness, to translate, to understand” (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 26). Listening not only with the ears becomes part of a psycho-physiological engagement with a more-than-human, enlivened oikos overwhelmingly full of voices and sounds and other sensory stimuli.

The inevitable fragmentariness of the place poetically registered is implied in the term ec(h)otranslation. It articulates relations in terms of affective, visceral movements within an emerging ecology of matter (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* ix). Respectfully acknowledging the necessary incompleteness and constant transformation of a derivative, yet autonomous echo, listening enters place from a different angle that can help to reinvent hierarchical boundaries. We can hear things we do not see and we cannot necessarily hear the things we see. As an embodied practice, listening recasts ec(h)opoetic witnessing again as “withnessing”, by which we are always implicated in the *Mit*(=with)welt: we are involved in what is going on between things. Revisiting Dunn, he further points out that we do not discriminate as much in listening as we do in seeing (‘Nature, Sound Art’ 95): While we see land and sea and tree separated from another, we can hear the simultaneity of the sound of cars and waves and the rustling of trees in their interrelation; “we hear how it [something] relates to other things.” (96, my comment) As we thus carry our sounding into language, ec(h)otranslating with place can generate a tangible response to the multitude and connectedness of things evoked by a moment of immediate presence in which we are situated yet at the same time polysituated: aware of our passing through, elsewhere, here, here too.

Whilst being in one place that is already more than one, my mind wanders off to different places still, I occasionally get lost in thoughts, memories, imaginations, and dreams. Places spread vertically, horizontally, imaginatively, virtually, visibly, invisibly, audibly, and inaudibly. I carry Google Maps with me. I pocket places. My mobile tells me my home is Dublin, and it is raining there. I wonder why so many people around me speak German. I am home, and the sun is shining here.⁵⁰ My mobile tells me I am roaming. I am in different places. As I try to make sense of a nomadic feeling of being at home everywhere and nowhere, my body resounds with and echoes the experience of connecting with other places, touching different languages, being in other conversations. I *am* different places: the poem is a map of where I have been (Kinsella, *Disclosed Poetics* 71).

In “Meerweh”, the memory of having „Brackwasser“, literally “brackish water”, the name of a cocktail that used to be sold in a bar (which no longer exists) near my home town in Northern Germany, becomes unhooked from its source location and is infused with experiencing a British landscape that initially inspired the poem. A shabby pub in a South English seaside town (which is actually part of a bigger chain and can be visited anywhere across Ireland and the UK) mingles with Frisia, a North German region. What connects them when listened to through my ears is the rhythm of ebb and tide, the way water and land flow into one another, the way

⁵⁰ I am sitting in front of my laptop in Düsseldorf, it is raining outside and the pandemic lockdown continues, which means there have not been any other people around me for a long time.

Meerweh

*[Meerweh: sea/sore; Meer = sea; -weh = longing, aching, woe;
longing for the sea; similar to homesickness, but the home
one misses is the sea; in many ways the opposite of seasickness]*

Come, let's
have a pint of brackwasser cobblestone down
 the water road

watch our breaths mingle
at the draught of Frisian wood

Let's link fingernails

pretend
your bra clasp
isn't clutching
at your spine

We can talk books if you like
or how the weather acts weirdly

We can laugh

We can skip things
we don't talk about

(I'll pay for your second pint
don't
worry)

Before our eyes darken we
leave walk up the heads-of-cats
stop when polish finds gummy lines

—

Do you think sometimes
you say let's

go back.

the ocean seems to in- and exhale, synchronising with the breaths meeting the material wood. Or, in a more intruding way, the way a plastic bra clasp clutches into human skin, holding a tension between natural and artificial matter. In response to multi-layered, more-than-human interconnections, the ec(h)otranslation roams an expanded sense of space and time to figure out „meer-als-menschliche“ interstices.⁵¹ In accordance with the atmosphere, it finds a fairly free form on the page that coheres through repetitions and leaves spaces to generate a slow tentative pace.

Words are echoed and re-echoed during the journey, leading to borrowings and literal translations such as “water road”, and “heads-of-cats” from their German neighbours „Wasserstraße“ and „Katzenkopfpflaster“. My resonating body echoes not only my perception of external places but my inner places, my polysituatedness in the world, my voice that is more than one, polyvocal, pertaining to language that is polysituated, too. The impressions collected during the full-body listening process activate words meeting at the intersection of different languages, sometimes half-way, waving from afar, sometimes resting in one before carrying on or going back — or not, like the title. Meerweh, literally “sea sore” (which then also echoes “sea saw”: movement; a hopping; playfulness; keeping balance; tension), implies a painful “longing”, “aching”, or “woe” for the sea. If one imagines the sea as the home that is missed, it is similar to “Heimweh” (homesickness). As included in the poem, „Meerweh“, an infrequently used poetic neologism in German is quite the opposite of seasickness. The line “I’ll pay for your second pint” has probably mingled with the German language at some point and displaced a more natural sounding utterance such as “I’ll buy” or “I’ll get you a second pint”, which therefore keeps a potential subtle oddness at this point. However, the line “We can talk books if you like / or how the weather acts weirdly”, has never mingled with any German friends. I would not even spontaneously know how to express it in German, which makes the line, thinking more intensely about it, slightly uncanny. A reflective, polysituated (m)other tongue is at work here, expressing the relation between German and English, the shimmering between familiarity and foreignness that is the pivotal element of ec(h)otranslation prompting us to listen further when knowledge is fading.

Adding to the instability of one singular place and language, my poetic practice often entails a rather long time span and a lot of work in-between the first scribbled note and the eventual poem. Words hitch-hike through different mediums including receipts, sticky notes, stones, tissues, and various text editing programmes on my laptop. All of these influence the poem’s spatial and visual enactment. With an increasing time span often come further different places; the poem becomes saturated with echoes of libraries, streets, trains, buses, shops, and their respective plurality; the vibrations they potentially bring to the text as well, including other texts and other experiences. In contrast to confining a poem to a fixated place or to one moment, ec(h)otranslation articulates the poem’s exposure to knotted polysituatedness; through the poet it becomes “embodied, embedded, and in symbiosis” (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 99) with an ever-changing continuum. It is

⁵¹ The invented term „meer-als-menschliche“ draws on the homophony between „Meer“ (German for sea) and „mehr“ (German for more), forging a relation between more-than-human and, in direct translation, sea-than-human.

thus not necessarily “environmentally *based*” (99, my emphasis) but roaming and witnessing; roaming with and through that which we are a part of, not the Umwelt (environment) but the Mitwelt. Like the mythic goddess Echo,⁵² the poem is relational, shaped by context though never fully congruent with it, as it constantly transforms its source, turning into an ec(h)otranslation.

In this perspective, Walter Benjamin’s discussed notion of the echo of the source coming through in the mouth text comes to mind again (16). Adding to the connection to translation, the author and translator Tony Barnstone invokes the phrase of a “poem behind the poem” (Balaban et al. 72), where a poem not only refers to textual poesis but is expanded to include “the urgent image, the quiet mood, the sound” (72). If this is related to a more-than-human Mitwelt, a poem is not only behind but all around and in and through another poem, thus shaping it as an ec(h)otranslation. In order to “discover itself”, Barnstone further argues, “the poem in translation must carry on a conversation with other poems.” (71) Again, “poem” here can be understood both in an expanded poetic and a more literal sense, making me not only think about places but other poems echoed in my writing: communicating with Dorothee Sölle, Marion Poschmann, or Mikael Vogel while formally indebted to an experimental branch of anglophone ecopoetics, my poems polysituate themselves in a transboundary eco-conversation.

Paul Celan, who has been an accompanying echo in my poetic practice, talks about „Dichtkunst nicht als Wortkunst“ but as „Horchen and Gehorchen“ (*Der Meridian* 147). This suggests that poetry is not the art of words but a process of listening and obeying, or hearing and taking heed, or, in a more loose sense, listening and responding. In German, „horchen“, a rather old-fashioned word, potentially comparable to “hearken”, denotes an intensified activity of listening, of being attentive, of listening to something. It further connotes the act of secretly listening or eavesdropping. Sharing one root word, the aspect of paying attention is conveyed in „gehörchen“, a prompt to obey and take orders. Beyond an implied element of disciplined work that necessarily underscores writing and translating processes, there is a dialogic component here, one that can imply larger relationality through embodied listening practice as well as intimacy with the poem, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Through a journey of mutual shaping, the poem is witnessing, always in change, always in relation, staying connected, never alone.

Emerging in ec(h)otranslation from place(s), languages, other poems and other materials, the writing eventually forms an organic entity itself. In accordance with its etymological Greek root meaning sound, the echo embraces translation’s paradox of being likewise close and distant, relative dependent and independent from its source text — it becomes, “to some extent, an original sound” (Thoreau, *Walden* 168-69) (found in its echo in Morton (*Ecology without Nature* 39)), at once an autonomous creation and a version of its source, flowing into a mouth-text. “Meerweh” takes on a dynamic of its own that helps sounding out the position of words on the page and timing the lack of punctuation between breathless, pint-infused enjambments. The synergy of words

⁵² In Greek mythology, the mountain nymph Echo was punished and deprived of speech by Hera. Unable to talk, except for the ability to repeat the last words of another, her hopeless love for Narcissus made her fade away until she was nothing but voice which she left behind in the world.

creates resonances, dissonances, and assonances; for instance “pint – I”, “eyes – finds – lines – times”. Its rhythm emerges as a meandering between the repeated hopeful invitation “Let’s”, which, extending into the self-consciously futile anaphora “We can”, finds its continuation in the ambiguous “go back” that both refers to the scene in the poem and in a wider sense to a different state of things. As the poem is exposed to the dynamic earth, it cannot escape the omnipresence of a climate emergency in the age of the self-conscious Anthropocene, which comes through in the no longer superficial small talk about the weather acting “weirdly” (Morton, *Ecological Thought* 28). The reader, too, is drawn into the poem’s echoes, invited to join a fragile moment of being entangled with more-than-human matter.

Emerging from a listening experience, the ec(h)otranslation turns into a separate listening experience, itself “woven of echoes, reflections, and the interaction of sound with meaning”, to recall Octavio Paz (155). From here, from there, it can travel further into various directions, always susceptible to change and context. Echo emphasises the relational element in ecotranslation taking shape as an extension of connections and interdependencies listened to in other work, in other languages, in the plurality of places, and, finally, in more-than-human matter that ecologically forms the composite “place”. The polysituated making of echotranslations happens through shared extra-textual and textual ecologies that are infinitely entangled and self-reflectively open space for multiple conversations with a polyvocal source echoing many more. Coming inevitably after, coming inevitably late, ec(h)otranslation acknowledges necessary belatedness as a sign of limits of perception, fragmentariness, and an always shifting indeterminateness that grounds close listening to the possibility of multiple meanings and further transformation. Like the more-than-human goddess Echo, whose limbs eventually turned into rock though sometimes still appear to be human, the ec(h)otranslation has an ambivalent shape-shifting quality. Surrounded with different contexts, each listening reader will bring different associations to it, and it will likewise generate different reverberations. The echotranslation turns outwards, humbly, to resound a polyphonous response-ability through witnessing ethical, socio-historical, linguistic, and political dynamics.

3.4.1 Working Notes on Roaming Homes

From the perspective of an all-encompassing ecological continuum, all writing can be arguably examined for elements of ec(h)otranslation. Considering yet again the underlying foundations of an imbrication between translation and ecopoetics, ideally -poet(h)ics, the vital question remains how the poem negotiates this broad sense on a micro-scale that is concurrently echoing a macro-scale, thus embodying polysituatedness. All poems are sustained by our home the earth, but how do they translate the increasing precariousness of this sustainer, specifically with regard to the self-conscious Anthropocene and its concomitant accelerations? As it were, it stands to question how poetry finds innovative forms of response, how it commits to an embodied sense of local place (e)motioning to the global, how it takes manifold echoes as a challenge to re-invent

terms and conditions of language, how it turns into ecopoetical translation as a “conduit” of and potentially also for change (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 5). As home emerges as a plurality, roaming articulates an openness towards indeterminate encounters across various borders.

The poets I have discussed in this chapter have not only addressed but poetically enacted aspects of ec(h)otranslating with different languages, critical and artistic materials, and more-than-human sufferings on a planet that is more than itself. Explored in the first section, Spahr’s elegiac “Unnamed Dragonfly Species” weaves intratextual connections between its rhythmic repetitiveness as it expresses the difficulty of coming to an awareness of being polysituated in the overwhelming, ungraspable interconnected ecosystem. Her poem moves between different scales, following an ongoing extinction event whilst developing a response-ability to a local place that is globally oriented, allowing no distinction between inside and outside. Finding a protagonist that is many, the inclusive pronoun “they” confronts the reader with climate emergency in a way that is both educative and affective. As shown in the second section, Gladding inquires into the twists of a limited human language that echoes the existence of a species a/part from speech. Across a common ground of ecopoiesis anchoring attentiveness and respect, she invents a new grammar for beetle language that takes the written page not as a given but as a particular constraint among other potential makings. Her engagement with various materials and objects shows a strong interest in the poem as a collaborate creation with multiple, spatially and temporally expanded presences. Embodying polysituatedness in that regard, her work is conceived as a continuous process susceptible to transformation rendering it ephemeral and versatile, fragile and durable at once.

Exploring contemporary ecologically inclined poetry in yet again different forms, the discussion in the previous section (3.3) further emphasised the poem’s participation in a literary, socio-historical, economic continuum, not alone but always “in relation to”, even if less consciously so. Marion Poschmann’s, Daniel Falb’s, and Rita Wong’s poetry enact extensive engagement with critical material that adds to their composed echoes of landscapes, Anthropocene realms, and toxic lines of slow violence. Wong’s foraging for all our more-than-human relations unleashes her poems as sites of resistance and particularly made me reflect on echotranslations with specific events as peaks of always present environmental concerns. Her political engagement off the page yet again inspires considerations pertaining to activism, poetry in interaction with activism, and poetry explicitly directed to be activism, like the poems “„Sage nicht mein. Es ist dir alles geliehen.“ (Mascha Kaléko)” and “Schienenersatzverkehr” discussed in the first chapter (1.2). Linger on these earlier chapters for a moment, Harriet Tarlo’s work surrounded my practice with radically open forms echoing the dynamics of enlivened landscapes. Another source of inspiration, Cecilia Vicuña’s multidisciplinary art exemplifies a mode of deep compassion and ruthless critique that manages to formulate big, hard questions in small and beautiful, simple and multilingual words. Sarah Kirsch illustrates close detail and a synaesthetic ecopoetics in which my thinking about translation has so many starting points. I further encounter her work at an intimate nexus of my (m)other tongue and a place close to my “home”, although from a very

different perspective.

All these poets have contributed coordinates to my practice. They made lines I sought to follow as well as lines I wished to circumnavigate, away for instance, from lyrical excess and unvarying form. They informed my creative-critical mode between more-than-human entanglements with language; my increasing hesitation towards taking field trips to write poetry “out” in “nature”; my negotiation of the planetary as a paradoxical category between private issues and omnipresent global climate emergency; my interest in (m)other tongues and voices a/part from the human; my bilingual moving between internalised physiology and an external environment containing varieties of residue within “nature”, ranging from the extension of sooty breaths to Dublin Mountains (“It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”) to the mapping of “milk teeth cobblestones” (“Home is where the WiFi connects automatically”) to the world, that floating “landing strip” we are roaming, together, though under unequal conditions.

In addition to a certain contemporaneity associated with global mobile communications, roaming, the title I chose for my collected poetry, is etymologically related to movement and, via wandering, to wind. Not specifically referring to humans, it echoes flowing, lifting, arising, veering (off straight paths), wandering about, interestingly both with and without a specific aim or destination; it echoes more-than-human Echo roaming the forests. For me, roaming signals a condition that cuts through essentialist ideas of origin and place. In hindsight, it echoes a form of polysituatedness I more consciously began to explore as a praxis through the poem “Meerweh”. Polysituated roaming expands to include encounters with place with language. It developed through my poems, particularly permeating “Home is where the WiFi connects automatically”, “Translatalogues”, “See-See (Reflections on Richter’s Seestück)”, “It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”, “Leverkusen Chempark”, and, of course the eponymous poem introducing the first chapter, on which I want to elaborate for a moment.

“Roaming (“Where are you from?”)” inquisitively drives its overarching question through ecological concerns, Anthropocene self-consciousness, porous bodies, and a shifting, multiple poetic I that is newly invented in each subsequent stanza. The ramifications and vibrant afterlives of human waste in the form of plastic wrappers and micro-plastics of PET bottles are part of an ecological flux, travelling breathlessly, lacking punctuation: “through arteries that travel through vessels that travels through fat cells that clings on to water that enters the plumbing”. Permeating oceans, soil, and even the air, anthropogenic pollution leaves little space for notions of pure, innocent nature “over there”, outside the human realm. The poem consequently generates a view on pollution that has taken a life of its own beyond the boundaries of human control. Sense of place is enacted as a plurality, within a continuous expanded present fluctuating between proximity to a local German herb, foreignised into English as “bear leek”, a literal translation of „Bärlauch“ (wild garlic), and a self-conscious overwhelming sense of “global anaesthesia”. Probing common emotional ground (are we loving and laughing in identical ways?), the poem finally draws an analogy to translation’s “similarly / differently” paradox. Influenced by Braidotti’s *Transpositions* and Bennett’s vital materialism I was reading at the time, the final word is visually accentuated in

response to a posthuman notion of becoming “matter”. The poem can be seen as emerging from an ec(h)ological translation zone, from a combination of personal affect (tiredness of repeatedly hearing the question “where are you from?”), engagement with critical reading material, collection of words whose sounds I enjoy (including “pierce”, “pool”, and “moss”), and concrete close observations, including the sight of two snails on a plastic foil, the smell of wild garlic, and the sensation of an uncanny heat that summer (2018), when the poem was written.

In line with this, “Roaming (“Where are you from?”)” expands a personal question to a wider scale and concomitantly begins to expose inherent political implications of terms such as “home” and “belonging”. More playfully and ironically handled in this poem, these issues return and are more critically addressed in “Schienenersatzverkehr”, “The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14”, and perhaps most explicitly in “Fears First”, in which the speaker articulates the fine line between a protective “this is our home” sentiment and nationalist right-wing “others don’t belong in our home” speech. As the discussed popularity of the “charismatic mega-concept” (Davis and Turpin 6) Anthropocene has re-emphasised, the topic of climate change has entered the public discourse. Aware of this, the poem is driven by conservative rhetoric of a green-washed sustainability topic that has been entirely subsumed by neo-liberal capitalism. Unfolding in an interconnected alliterative abecedarian Fibonacci sequence, the poem criss-crosses the sociopolitical plane of the self-conscious Anthropocene. As it echoes my reading of German news headlines whilst roaming in Ireland, it draws on regionally specific issues and translates them into English interspersed with German words. However, many of the addressed political issues are not limited to national borders and thus relatable, perhaps even easier to criticise and mock from a distance. The absurd logic of political debates led in the interest of profit and selfishness is increasingly unpacked, culminating in the final stanza and a reversed connection between cars and global warming (“no cars without global warming”).

Irony as a register to deal with heavy, controversial topics without falling into preaching and unbearable mourning is deployed in various poems, including one of my most recent poems “Corona Cycle, 16.03.2020”. Partly written in Germany in close proximity to an airport, its German stanza refers to the import of cheap labour forces from East European countries in the interest of a “local” tradition apparently trumping the threat of the virus (cf. Jacobs; LabourNet Germany). In general, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to imbue home with altogether different meanings; the place where five siblings sleep in one bed, where no one hears the bruises, where someone is alone for 24/7; refuge for some, hell for others, non-existing for many. If you can connect, Zoom in on the difference between a shared living room and living in a shared room. Already existing disparities, both within national boundaries and across a global north-south divide accelerate as the spread of the virus continues, often against a popularly reiterated “we are in this together” chant that never sounded more like a mockery. It is easier to #stay at home if home is a sheltered location with a roof, functional heating and aircon, Netflix, delivery service, and internet. Stacy Alaimo points out:

[e]ven as the virus does not discriminate, the embodied effects of race and class inequality — the way social hierarchies materially affect people’s physical health and financial resilience — means that the pandemic is hitting certain groups of people much harder than others. Social inequalities are intensified by a “natural” phenomenon. (Kuznetski and Alaimo 145)

Underscoring more-than-human exchanges and bodily interconnections between people and air, the global scale of COVID-19 and its accompanying politics once more accentuate the dissolved distinction between outside and inside highlighted by the self-conscious Anthropocene. There is no exit and no escape from this situation that again confronts a notion of unfaltering human supremacy with the vital, uncontrollable forces of the material world “that capitalism, colonialism, and extractivism have radically transformed” (145). A moment that could spark an increased sense of respect and responsibility for an interdependent multispecies world, as well as humble acceptance of the unknown that may never turn into the known (cf. Manemann 35-36), however, has been accompanied by xenophobia, massive gains on part of the pharmaceutical industry, attenuation of democratic structures, and massive sufferings of an increasingly larger group of vulnerable people. While a surge of eco-fascist ideas envision a recovering “Nature” (cf. Garcia; Newton), there has been no change in extreme violence against the collective planet; humans and other animals; not to mention that the usage of disposable masks, disinfection and other chemical cleaning solutions bear new, largely unaddressed challenges of pollution and toxicity (cf. Kuznetski and Alaimo 145). Mainstream documentation of the virus progression often aligns with a “spectacle-driven” hunger for instantly accessible events (cf. Nixon, *Slow Violence* 2, 6), meanwhile ignoring other forms of slow and effectively not so slow violence going on, outside the European land frontiers for example, where the line “not everyone can live here” from “Fears First” continues to manifest in unthinkably cruel actions.

As has been discussed earlier (cf. 1.4), place, home, and a sense of belonging have always been pivotal elements of ecocriticism whose problematic undertones prevail. Dis/oriented by the notion of roaming, my poems continuously seek to undo a singular home and through echo-translations engage with a vulnerable communal polysituatedness on a shared planet. The self-conscious Anthropocene once again emphasises that being in touch with some kind of “nature” is not enough. Engaging with the destruction of ecosystems, ecopoethics is likewise attentive to the inequalities between “we” who have “no private insurance” and “we” who “believe that water is not a human right” (cf. “We are in this together”). Unpacking an embodied sense of place without “fixation on the local” (Hume 764), my poetry therefore investigated places as zones of tension, instability, and fragility in an unsettling self-conscious Anthropocene sprouting “radioactive mushrooms”, “leafy salted moss”, and “grey-green hyphens” (cf. “Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others”), breathing “oxygen, nitrogen, methane” (cf. “It’s always tempting to look for something beautiful”), touching a burger wrapper draped over a dead heron (cf. “Reiher im Sonnenbad”), and leaving “sand grains of translation” (cf. “See-See (Reflections

on Richter's Seestück") trickling through children's fingers carefully holding translucent jelly moons ("Response: Anbaden"). In place of homesickness, "Meerweh" eventually searches for a sense of connection with more-than-human place that cannot blind out dead dolphins, plastic cans, and signs of protest indicating the connectedness between systemic ill-treatment of trees and birds, pigs and people, land and sea.

Home is never taken for granted but approached as a plurality. When engaging with destruction of the wider home oikos, it echoes urgency, exhortation, and occasional despair when realising that "it's not enough" ("Home is where the WiFi connects automatically"), when lamenting "so frail my hands, so useless" (cf. "Marienkäfer, flieg"). Nevertheless, as they seek to reveal various forms of violence towards the Mitwelt and embody interconnected more-than-human-kind/ness, my poems try to cling on to a radical, critical hope that "one day [...] water will be drinkable." (cf. "Baumschule II") The ecopoetical wager they aspire to in this sense is a critically informed, emotionally connected wake-up call asking what alternatives could be made in place of fences and a world sliced in corporate chocolate advertising (cf. "Schienenersatzverkehr"), asking how we want to go from there, from here.

Place and home are entangled with (m)other tongues in countless ways, historically folded into an expanded time frame. When I consider home and the way it roams my poems, I notice it is already approached through a foil of distance that is likewise proximity. The heritage of the Nazi past that arguably slowed down the onset of ecocriticism in Germany and my cultural upbringing in this context make me deeply hesitant of the term — particularly given its recent appropriation in right-wing conservative circles. It was partly through my English identity that I began to engage with home in the first place, while my German suspicion of it translates into its continuous articulation as a charged, fluctuant idea that always needs to be followed by "where" (cf. "Cologne in Pieces") and for whom / not? Home is therefore necessarily more than one location, approached from various angles, configured as a sudden feeling of absence between Greece and Italy (cf. "The Souths and Kassel. Documenta 14"), framed as a privilege, reinvented in pieces, potentially nowhere and everywhere, composed through glimpses at an always different, always the same sea anchoring echotranslations. Attending to, critically reflecting, and sensually witnessing the paradoxical and complicated process of becoming polysituated, they try to register a kaleidoscopic sense of more-than-human relationality. Shuttling between chemical plants in Leverkusen, sights of dead dolphins washed into the streets of Plymouth, and rainbows in Donegal, echotranslating faces the task of making lines of connections through borders, through differences, through foreignness, through similarities, through crazy equivalences. It attempts to sound the many layers of the transforming home planet earth circling with us, connecting us through toxins, bacteria, viruses, air, water, telephone, and Wi-Fi.

In this sense, the poem “Home is where the WiFi connects automatically” may be seen as the epitome of ec(h)otranslation in a roaming mode. It shares the contemporaneity of roaming in relation to mobile networks and further articulates formal ramifications of a poetics of roaming. The feeling of being connected with multiple places at once develops through an open form, enacting polysituatedness through parallel stanzas, enjambments, and overlapping lines generating multi-linearity. A larger scale of events comes into view as references to various different conversations are echoed. In a way, they enact the mentioned experience of scrolling down a newsfeed, feeling strangely detached and disoriented and implying again what Lynn Keller calls “scalar dissonance” (cf. 3.1.3) that contributes to a slightly melancholic tone throughout.

Its beginnings written in Dingle (Ireland), a sensory engagement with the place is registered in the smell of the local whisky distillery, the coldness of the season, and the intense greenness. The body mingles with more-than-human matter, writing an in situ immediacy with “winter-branch-stiff” fingers. In this context, “notenough” can be read as a self-reflective comment on the vastness and infinity of place that can only be translated as an echo. Continuing to trace relations “between things”, the poem moves upwards and outwards to tune in with other connections, including reading material – a second-hand book with “Acid Pollution” (McCormick) in the title – and virtual communication. General statements are juxtaposed with close-up details and observations situated in relation to, weaving interconnections on the page as well as between the pages: rainbows, for instance, can be found in other Ireland poems (e.g. “View from the N59 road”), while the theme implied by the title links with poems such as “Roaming (“Where are you from?”)”, “LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine’s *Lebensfahrt*)”, or “Cologne in Pieces”. The poem seeks a shared sense of place as fragility between more-than-human relations, echoing back and forth via bodily senses and a shifting knot of home whose lines can leave painful cuts.

The final word of the right column (“shipping”) and its echoed connection to crossing and sea-faring leads me back to translating as „über-setzen“ in German. To an extent, the ongoing oscillation between German and English in my poems is closely connected to the constant renegotiation of home. My voice disperses through the voices of others, orients towards different directions, roams an expanded space and time ranging from Heinrich Heine to Mikael Vogel. Sometimes in closer, sometimes in more loose contact with their sources, I regard my interlingual translations as participants in a wider conversation that introduce new perspectives and new places into the ecopoetic multiverse. They are about retrieving texts, searching for their ecopoetics, multiplying points of contact. Trying to make sense of a time of accelerated crisis, they figure out what it means to be human in a feelingly way, across species and language borders. Through listening and responding, they reflect on foreignnesses and familiarity in languages; through echoing and transformed re-echoing, they explore language as constantly in motion and weave its über-setzungen into their fabric. In the poem “Marienkäfer, flieg” (ladybird, fly), for example, the title of the German children’s song *Maikäfer, flieg* (Maybug, fly) overlaps with a similar English nursery rhyme *Ladybird, Ladybird*. Rhythmic repetitiveness subsequently turns into a component of the poem, as do borrowed elements such as the “war-torn wings”, in ana-

logy to the German song's reference to war.⁵³ The discord between the innocent maybug and brutal war references is partially mirrored in the pairing of violent images ("babies grow & die unnoticed") with trivial breathing exercises. As the poem engages with a new time and place, however, the sing-song is disrupted and impressions from a (poly)situated moment — brushing teeth while looking at the toothbrush's marketing hashtag — are echoed instead.

In a similar vein, the poem "Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others" echotranslates the free-verse German poem „Flechtenkunde“ (1967) by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (*Blindenschrift* 71-75). It thus converses with the cultural, historical, and literary context in which the eco-politically committed source poem is consciously embedded: written during the post-war economic acceleration, it contrasts a fast-living, economised, competitive dog-eat-dog society with the life of lichen, mapping the vision of a slow, mindful, peaceful, symbiotic community. Enzensberger's poetic list form that draws on Roman numerals to introduce each subsequent stanza is replicated in my significantly more compressed poem. Issues raised by his poem are revisited ("are all lichens communists?"), selected words recycled, including an updated version of his often cited expression of lichen as „der erde / langsamstes telegramm“ ("the slowest telegram of the earth"), which transforms into "Nature's slowest email, Culture's spam" in my version, accompanied by a self-reflective note on this modernising process. The poem contains further references to a number of critical material as it drafts its own poetics of lichen in response to their increasing popularity in ecocritical discourse (cf. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 30).

Across a temporal and spatial distance that charges the echotranslation with the poem's historical concurrency with the Great Acceleration, the proposed onset of the stratigraphic Anthropocene, Enzensberger's German Öko-considerations are transplanted into my roaming ecopoetic edge. Each line freshly polysituates the "lack" and "luck" of language in its über-setzungen, surrounding Enzensberger's echoes with Jonathan Skinner, Charles Olson, Charles Darwin, notes from a poetry festival, collected fragments from conversations, Google Translate, and, crisscrossing through time back to my school time in Germany, an extract from a biology book on lichen: they are, we learn, the most popular example of symbiosis, in mutual exchange as they form something new, never existing alone.

In this sense, poems, too, are never emerging in a vacuum. Behind and around every poem are different poems, various places, and other, different voices, shaping it as echotranslation. Some are less obvious, some explicitly mentioned, like "LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine's Lebensfahrt)" or the borrowed title in „Sage nicht mein. Es ist dir alles geliehen.“ (Mascha Kaléko) Many connections exist, however, unconsciously, and each reader will doubtlessly discover varying connections, depending on their own polysituatedness across textual and extra-textual ecologies. Writing is again constituting itself not as an isolated practice but is embodied and em-

⁵³ The German song allegedly originated during the Thirty Years' War (cf. Wieden). It exists in various versions and in different vernaculars, but the reference to war in the second line is present in most versions. Here is the beginning of one the most well-known versions: „Maikäfer, flieg / Der Vater ist im Krieg“ (direct translation: "Maybug, fly / The father is at war")

bedded in interaction with the oikos and other matter, involved in constant movements through encounters with places, words, texts, experiences. As John Kinsella phrases it aptly in this regard, “everything I read, everything I hear, everything I see — in fact, it runs the gamut of all senses — everything I receive has to undergo translation.” (*Polysituatedness* 157) The notion of synaesthetically oriented ec(h)otranslation, thickened by an “h”, particularly emphasises the interactive, relational, affective, shifting character of translation expanded to include more than interlingual exchanges between human languages. Attentive to other voices, it encounters moths and beetles, disclosing differences whilst acknowledging that the limits of our minds are not the limits of the earth. Through sensually engaged reflection on ecological relatedness of various kinds, echotranslation is thus envisioned as a creative opening, motioning towards, über-setzen beyond the self, wagering on transformation through awareness of being continuously interconnected with a vulnerable multi-species Mitwelt.

For me, roaming became an open poethic form within ec(h)otranslation; an orientation by which I tried to figure out a sense of being polysituated with the more-than-human home earth. Through language that is always in flux, I explored a variety of poetic modes across links between local specificity and a bigger global picture: there is, as Kinsella phrases it, “no ultimate and absolute leaving or arriving, as place is intrinsically connected and we carry all previous lives and experience in our presence” (303). Seeking to echo this embodied presence along lines of beginning infinite interrelatedness, my poems take on experimental forms, microscopic imaginations, continuous über-setzungen. Acknowledging the friction movement generates, they critically inquire into the precarious status quo of a self-conscious Anthropocene: Translating is a form of polysituating language with the more-than-human world, echoing forth a responsibility to the Mitwelt, to the collective home oikos. Paradoxically autonomous and dependent, the ephemeral shape-shifting echo embraces uncontrollable indeterminateness, the possibility of multiple meanings, the possibility of transformation, the possibility of other connection points, the possibility of vibrating further. Roaming implies openness, it resists closure, it “goes on and on”, as the final poem (“The meshwork of storied knowledge”) will show along its disclosed lines.

The Anthropocene is a marker that “our” home is going through fundamental changes, that toxic interconnections of profit are backlashing, that what happens between things develops harmful and uncontrollable feedback loops. Therefore, the point from which we start must be attentive, responsive, belatedly humble (“#gohumble”), reflective, open to more conversations and more stories that nevertheless share a desideratum of communal, less hierarchical, less profit-driven interactions and forms of togetherness. To draw a line from here to the introductory Anthropocene discussion, as the reflections in this section have demonstrated once again, poetry in its condensed equivocal form has indeed the potential to “compress vast acreages of meaning into a small compass or perform the kind of bold linkages that it would take reams of academic argument to plot.” (Farrier 5) The discussions in this chapter as a whole, including my own poetry and other people’s work, can thus be seen as echoes of much wider, inexhaustible sources oriented towards an ecopoethic “Anthropocenic perspective in which our sense of relationship

(and from this, our ethics) is stretched and tested against the Anthropocene's warping effects." (5) Following this trajectory, the knowledge that we are always late in our perceptions of echoes, and sound waves and suffering, but the hope that it may not be too late can be understood as the wager driving all ec(h)opoethic translations, on and off the page.

As controversially discussed as the issues it implies, this chapter began by offering insights into a wider Anthropocene discourse (3.1). Not yet confirmed as a stratigraphic time unit, the Anthropocene has already turned into a cross-disciplinary "charismatic mega-concept" (Davis and Turpin 6) whose many shades and underlying implications this chapter sought to figure out and echo. Countering a "we are in this together" politics that runs the risk of violently homogenising humanity as one geological agent, the more-than-human became a driving force for a pluralised, humble attention to geopolitically enmeshments inscribed into material interaction between enlivened, itinerant, posthumanly configured bodies. Nixon's considerations on what the Anthropocene means for "the stories we tell", "what it means to be human" in a "feelingly" way ('The Anthropocene') thus re-appeared throughout the chapter's inquiries into different facets of ecotranslation oriented towards the Anthropocene as a compass point.

To that end, the Anthropocene has been modified by critical reflection into the "self-conscious Anthropocene" (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics*) that signals a condition of increasing urgency, growing vulnerability, expansive scale, and intensified climate across nature-culture entanglements. Ecotranslation conversely emerged as reflective, transformative (e)motion taking "us" beyond "our" self-absorbed minds to stay connected with the needs of others and develop active response-abilities towards the Mitwelt. Juliana Spahr's poem "Unnamed Dragonfly Species" models such an ecotranslation, a form of empathic and embodied witnessing of multiple interdependent events across multiple spaces. Oriented towards the Anthropocene, it reinforces the need for a planetary "we" to learn to navigate global interactions and one's implication in it, resulting in unsettling states of confusion and grief. With this in mind, Jody Gladding's poetry inserts beetle ecotranslations into the "violent silence" predominantly governing interactions between a human and an insectile "we" (section 3.2). Her various, multi-dimensional makings further build on previously established decentring of human exceptionalism in favour of a more-than-human poiesis acting as common ground at a border between species.

Stretching ecotranslation further, towards cultural and disciplinary boundaries, towards immeasurable *Übermaß*, section 3.3 has opened up additional perspectives on a link between the Anthropocene and different ecopoetic forms. Encountering an enlivened oikos, Poschmann's poems travel through inner and outer places, intimate observations, and literary references while ecotranslating fundamentally unmeasurable, interconnected landscapes. Departing from subjective encounters, Daniel Falb postulates an abstract, conceptual Anthropocene anaesthetics in response to an intangible, invisible condition. Clashing with pluralised, embedded ecopoetics, his approach nevertheless revealed to be inherently ecological and further served to complicate preconceived notions of poetic form and language. Alerted to his outlined reliance on existing texts and technology, Rita Wong's poetry illustrates an intense awareness of intertextual connec-

tions and digital infrastructures. Her practice of foraging is set against *Übermaß* and formally turns into an echoing technique of various additional material through the poems, thus breaking textual hierarchies and creating a sense of collaboration. In an Anthropocene ecoethically disclosed as a “Corporatocene”, Wong traces synergies of environmental, economic, and social injustices, and in doing so, reveals toxic slow violences and more-than-human interactions across porous, vulnerable bodies. In resistance against its complicity in harmful modes of production and consumption, her poetry enacts the need for language to reinvent itself: language connects, disconnects, re-connects, reveals, reflects, moves, (eco)translates. As Cecilia Vicuña phrases it: “Language is the translator. Could it translate us to a place within where we cease to tolerate injustice and the destruction of life?” (“Language Is Migrant”)

Embarking yet again on the question of place, I explored my own poetics of roaming in the final section of this chapter (3.4), intertwining eco(poet(h)ics, translations, and Anthropocene concerns that run through all of the lines I have woven so far. Wong’s as well as Spahr’s poetry could be explored with regard to John Kinsella’s polysituatedness that I unpacked alongside practice-based considerations of echotranslating. As has been previously established, developing a sense of local place is not enough for a relational eco(poet(h)ics trying to articulate responsibilities towards the more-than-human home. Through considerations of an embodied, sensual engagement framed by perceptual limits, interrelations, and ongoing transformative openness, echotranslation emphasises “we are in this together” as a call for attending feelingly to other parts of the “we”. Noting vulnerabilities not only of our own species but across all roaming earthlings, echotranslation emphasises a necessary turn outwards to register, critically reflect on, and make lines through geopolitical strata, multiversal stories, global entanglements of profit, and enmeshment of matter, on and off the page. “I see poems outside lines,” writes John Kinsella, “[I]t’s the smudges and crossings-out, the ‘bleedings’ and coronas, that make up the poem as much as they make up the body of a person or animal (those scars, those blemishes) or plant.” (*Polysituatedness* 292) To move these bodies into view, stay connected across their lines, and wager on more-than-human kindness is the poethical note that echotranslations seek to sound forth, on and on, and on.

The meshwork of storied knowledge

Lines across my body.
Across the extensions of my body.
Across the imagined extensions of my body.

On and on
like the heartbeat
of wiki changes
pacing in the clouds

On and on.

All
the way until
they hit mathematical improbability. Or
never.

Silence
is a conspiracy.
Confidence
is a poetics
for making your opinion count.

Make your opinion count.
Make it go
on and on

“Give your words more male confidence.”
Make them count.

You: Respondent:
Me: Response
We:

Male confidence
is hiding a bottle of Sherry in the basement
having your bedsheets washed for you
by your wife
having your potatoes mashed for you
by your daughter
having your smiles mirrored for you
by your granddaughter
Having your heart made beating again
by the (male?) chief of cardio

who had enough confidence
to follow the lines of the veins and the electrodes of the metal
to a place where they connect.

When I think
of people
I think of meat.

I think of flesh
that is not theirs.

I think of deaths
that are theirs/ours

going on and on.
I've never been hungry.
I've never been homeless.
I've never been cold.

Not in any way significant.
I've never been gassed for economic reasons. I only shredded

my tears
in golden latte
this morning.

How are you?
is nice but tiring.
When meant seriously
when answered
against repercussions
of the "Free From" label

It's hard to listen
to the world from below – *schwer*.
in German, I'd say *schwer*, heavy, without noticing it is
Heavy, hard. Unexpected weight. Or, wait, expected, but *schwer* nevertheless.
Don't drop it. *Lass nicht los*.

I read poetry quietly to myself
press the warmth
of a full tampon
shamefully
hidden
in toilet paper
against a heart.

I always had
Paul Celan and silence
next to my pillow

Home
is a shrink-wrapped book on my IKEA shelf
that I will (never) read

trying to catch up
with Pound and Keats and Wordsworth
but Ulysses is so long
the earth spins so fast
and there are others
“not mentioned here.”

Memories; all lives, are lines:
undertones of your last meal under freshly-brushed teeth

.

How things change. They do all the time
and it still comes
as a surprise.

Radiant warmth
is much less confident

Now
my body is full of lines and layered in accents
refuses to chime in
with any metronome

A wrong word
superfluous # in a musical score
messing with the brain

Sometimes
I just want
a toilet in private
and no one to care about
the colour of my thong

Two parallel lines never meet, they say
they just run on and on

into space. And further.
 On and on
 and on
 is where
 I stop thinking

Conclusion

To eventually “stop thinking”, as the final lines of the poem above suggest, holds various implications. In the absence of a full stop, it indicates less an ending than the beginning of something new. As thinking is displaced, other practices can unfold, as silence is created, space is made for other encounters, further connections, new actions. Confronted with every-day systems of oppression, with heaviness, uncertainty and ongoing indeterminacy that affect our most intimate as well as larger political spheres, we are asked not to let go („*Lass nicht los*“): keep the smudges, blemishes, scars, crossings-out, and coronas (Kinsella, *Polysituatedness* 292), take them with you into the opening, into the eco-poethic continuum of plants, animals, all enlivened matter. Sometimes, as Jonathan Skinner suggests, “[T]he important thing is what happens when you are done with the poem” (‘Poetry Animal’ 103), the insights that are revealed, the connections that are lit up and stretch towards a moment of peaceful relief.

Eco-poetics has come, in human terms, a long way through the swerves and inquiries that lie behind. Initially regarded as a subset of nature poetry giving “nature” a voice, it has been moved into poethical ecotranslation setting course for the geopolitically charged, self-conscious Anthropocene. As has been shown by my poetry in interplay with the works of Cecilia Vicuña, Jody Gladding, or Sarah Kirsch, eco-poetics as a creative-critical edge encompasses encounters across boundaries between ecosystems, disciplines, species; encounters with languages, texts, places, persons, and matter. Written along versatile, permeable lines in place of static fences, these encounters are motivated by an eco-poethically articulated need to disentangle human centrism and make space for transformative alterity. Translation is activated at this point, similarly built on transboundary communication, unsettling lines, and points of contact with the foreign. Expanded in an ecological framework that includes more than language exchanges, a focus on translation thus emphasises in these encounters possibilities of common poietic grounds with-nessing an active, vital, expressive Mitwelt. Reconfigured as more than a trope, translation alerts to power dynamics and interconnections in an ecological continuum that has likewise cultural, socio-political, and historical layers. The dismantling of absolute untranslatability underpinned by an illusion of sameness facilitates more-than-human relation-making through difference, wagering on respectful relatability: Translation exists *because* of difference, *because* of foreignnesses that

pervade even the familiar, and instead of abolishing offers fleeting windows into them.

Negating ideas of subordination and loss, translation itself has been furthered as an independent creative writing practice never fully exhausting the source. The contact with ecopoetics therefore advances a shared eco-poetical orientation towards unknowingness and ongoing responsiveness, change and changeability. Humility and reflection at the acknowledgement that one translation cannot say it all speak to a perpetual possibility of “more” that refutes totality and appropriative grasping. This helps deconstruct a problematically unified, human-centred Anthropocene whose geological measurements signal above all injustices and imminent peril of unimaginable dimension. “Our” bodies in constant exchange with vibrant, more-than-human matter, “our” makings exposed to ephemerality, the notion of ecotranslation has oriented feelingly connection-making through infinite entanglement and varying degrees of vulnerability. Pushing existing approaches further, ecotranslation as it has been propelled in this thesis therefore provides an investigative lens and concept for the boundaries, connections, and disconnections that ecopoetics as a poietic ecological practice is confronted with. It gives heightened attention to links and echoes between textual and extra-textual ecologies, presence of multiple languages, and the plurality of manifold stories. Above all, it offers a creative communication model for and with ecopoetics that searches for forms, practices, and sustainable connections on and off the page; movements from source to mouth, fact to emotion, emotion to knowledge, knowledge to thoughtful action. Ecotranslation seeks to encompass the boundaries of ecopoetic encounters within a more-than-human net of infinite entanglement and shapes them as eco-poetical acts of resistance against monolingual, monologic, monospecies, and monocultural systems.

Waypoints

As an array of poietic practices converging on the more-than-human oikos, ecopoetics has been embraced in its perseverance of complicating dynamics and radical openness. While Vicuña’s three-dimensional weaving art (cf. section 1.3) and Wong’s activism (cf. section 3.3.3) particularly point to the variety of ecopoetic forms, there has otherwise been a focus on page poetry and the ways in which it includes a poethical off the page potential. Conceiving the eco-prefix as a continuous challenge for the tasks of such poethical movements in interaction with and attentiveness to endangered more-than-human ecologies, what ultimately is at stake is the role of language that shapes thinking, being, belonging with “nature”, notions of care-ful as well as exploitative co-existence. The poems chosen for discussion as well as my own poems have tried to show up different modes disclosing and resisting the latter. In attunement with ecotranslation they sought to reinvent uncritical perspectives towards beautified landscapes ignoring their degradation, static categorisation of people legitimising violence, and ideological rhetoric justifying no-action. Some referred to explicit sites and events, such as Spahr’s ecopoethics of Hawai’ian culture (cf. section 1.4.1) or Wong’s foraging of toxic interactions in Guiyu. Others, like Peter Larkin (cf. section 1.2), revealed through their poetry a general mode of anti-anthropocentrism

and ethical attentiveness towards more-than-human ecologies.

Within the constraints of academic text, the interwoven structure of this thesis has emphasised ecopoetics as an experimental, poethical interest that challenges textual hierarchies and genre distinctions. As critical research has informed creative approaches to ecopoetics and creative approaches responded, reflected, and rebuilt critical notions, the emergent interdisciplinary body of text has thus not only been about ecopoetics but, as far as possible, has *enacted* it, adding to the possibilities and modes of critically-creative ecopoetics in its various translational endeavours between the more-than-human, language, and the earth. Instigating a theoretical breadth that included translation theory, literary criticism, ecocriticism, and Anthropocene studies, the swerves and ongoing changes that come with creative process further spoke to an ecopoetical turning outwards towards indeterminacy. An enhanced understanding of place through poetics by Juliana Spahr, for instance, echoed a dawning personal feeling and eventually led to the abandonment of place-based ideas and explorations of itinerant modes. In this vein, the poem “The meshwork of storied knowledge” preceding this section, more unconsciously than directly inspired in its long form by Anne Carson’s poem “The Glass Essay”, moves through the notions of lines. It can be read in relation to Tim Ingold’s notion of lines that is further referenced in the title (*Being Alive* 163). However, it has actually been written prior to any engagement with Ingold, and only retrospectively revealed a connection to his work that offered me a deeper understanding of tensions between personal, global, and local trajectories, embodied by the metaphor of lines, poetically, metaphorically, materially, physically, and geographically. The complexity and multilayeredness of poetry that has been emphasised as a site of plurality throughout the thesis continues to make space for beginnings instead of closures.

Focusing on emerging expected and unexpected linkages and relations at intercultural and interdisciplinary level, ecopoetical swerves further helped to keep alive frictions of ecopoetics, multiplying its connections. While reworking place-based ideas, my engagement with the Anthropocene added contemporary geopolitical layers to a complicating sense of ecopoetics as a place-making practice. Developing through my poems, the theoretical considerations had an additional impact on my poetic practice, as I myself tried to comprehend and register the proposed geographical scale of environmental damage. Moving on from a distilled view on place, my writing practice began to integrate shifts between, for instance, microscopic attention to a seagull and macroscopic attention to the “geological superpower” (see “The view on (a) plastic can the Irish Sea”) – that is, in the larger, deep time scale of the planet, nevertheless also microscopic.

Meanwhile, an expanded ecological translation zone (cf. chapter 2) brought to the fore cross-cultural lines between Gary Snyder and Helmut Salzinger, conversations about trees and anglophone ecopoetry, Bertolt Brecht and Paul Celan, Margaret Ronda and Daniel Falb, Sarah Kirsch and Les Murray. Issues and threads such as landscapes, radical ones, borrowed ones, returned in different guises and were thickened, woven into more knots and oriented into different directions. Spahr’s distrust of a disconnecting “we” introduced in the first chapter (cf. 1.4.1) returned and was further discussed in the third chapter (3.1). Her thoughts on analogies differed from

Glissant's (cf. 2.4). Earlier considerations regarding the word "capture" (cf. 2.1) had to be reinvented in the context of shakkei (cf. 3.3.1). In this vein, uncovering intratextual relations across the poems and chapters, links, conjunctions between trails of thought and language constituted an integral part of my inquisitive approach to the field, shaping this as a work of interrelation.

Specific events and developments, both broad-scale political ones, such as the inescapable corona virus and more personal ones, such as the workshops discussed in the first chapter (1.3), further influenced particular poetic responses. This includes for instance "Schienenersatzverkehr" and "„Sage nicht mein. Es ist dir alles geliehen.“ (Mascha Kaléko)", which have been written in German for a particular purpose and partially re-written in translation. Engagements with the German language and interlingual translating in general, particularly from texts temporally and stylistically further away from my own voice, introduced twists and new elements. As well as disrupting my poetic habits and enhancing the vocabulary, writing through and with Sölle, Heine, Celan or Enzensberger often also showed up unexpected orientations in their work that spoke to contemporary ecological concerns in some way. Making me see their work in a new light, this added to the fluidity of eco-poetics as a transhistoric textual capacity. In addition to my own voice articulated in the collection of poetry, I thus contribute the translated voices of German poets to a global literary eco-poetical conversation, wagering on the eco-poetical echoes they may bring forth.

With all this in mind, many of the connections unearthed and the echoes acknowledged call for further investigation. The topics addressed by both eco-poetics and translation are huge and phrase complicated, fundamental questions in their connections between the human being, the Mitwelt, language, and the perception of the world. In its various meanings and different approaches, ranging from ethnography to psychoanalysis, translation offers many potential insights into eco-poetics in its liminal relation(s) to the physical-material world. Risking expansion into meaninglessness, it can, however, only be meaningful in specific contexts, in specific encounters with eco-poetics. In view of an underexplored relation between the two, I have shown how translation functions in the wider field of eco-poetics while likewise adding to the framework of cultural, ecological translation. Facing a climate emergency, ecologically oriented poetry opens up spaces to invent, reinvent, and make us think critically about the present, which is crucial to how we manage it and imagine alternatives. As a popularised metaphor in a globalised world, translation oriented to the eco-paradigm likewise amplifies its transformative, connection-making quality necessary for sustainable solutions and togetherness. Situated at the nexus of literary ecology and translation ecology, ecotranslation as it has been explored here thus contributes to the field a poetical, relational, creative-critical framework for encounters with texts, places, languages, and more-than-humans.

Ongoing

Insofar as this has been a translational project and insofar as translation has been conceived as a beginning rather than an end, new possibilities are always already looming on the horizon. I place this creative work in front of a number of institutional hurdles, into a persisting gap between practice and theory that will require many more encounters to become an established connection. In the still young, rapidly growing field of Environmental Studies, interactions with worsening physical conditions constantly raise new questions and demands whose complexities increasingly call for interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and intercultural responses. As has been discussed in the context of the Anthropocene as an envisioned Translation Age (3.1.3), exchanges and co-operations across disciplines often still remain a future objective and necessitate transformational connections on all sides. On a related note, I have started to trace the lineage of ecological poetics in Germany and critically reflected their historical prejudices against a political aesthetics. Connections between Anglo-American ecopoetics and other eco-literary traditions nevertheless require further attention and exploration. The challenge here is an ongoing, much larger one of internal decentring that equally applies to ecocriticism as a whole: to include more voices without othering them, to not diversify around an untouched core but transform from the bottom to the top.

In this perspective, it is also vital to note that any research in this field that is seriously oriented towards eco-ethical imperatives quickly feels inauthentic if it does not continue to reflect on the conditions of its own making and production. Environmental work is in high trend and runs danger to become greenwashed and fully subsumed by commercialised structures otherwise. The same applies to creative modes of writing that need to be framed as more than outpourings of personal emotions and accompanied by reflective considerations regarding the work they entail. To find alternatives and criss-crosses off straight paths is a continuous challenge, posed by an eco-prefix that can never be taken for granted. Building on early emerging implications in the field, ecocriticism and ecopoetics need to extend their critical awareness to their own frameworks, not only ask uncomfortable questions pertaining, for instance, to canon texts, institutional structures, and accessibility, but find according responses as well. To redeem conversations about trees is one thing, yet to ask on whose soil they were planted, where they came from, who takes care of them, and who enjoys their view a whole other, more complicated, and urgently necessary one.

On a different level, external pressures against the Humanities at large, which are in many places marginalised in an academic framework driven by profit-oriented imperatives constitute another ongoing challenge. I write this at a time of growing precarity within the university and elsewhere, accelerated by a pandemic that simultaneously turns into a global educational health, social, poverty, and unemployment crisis widening disparities and solidifying borders. To connect and stay connected has recently happened increasingly virtually and likewise produced disconnections whose full repercussions yet remain to be uncovered but whose immediate detrimental consequences are already visible for anyone looking beyond their own mask.

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, it feels almost anachronistic to reflect on a project carrying the title *Roaming*, even though my dual-SIM card phone still tells me I am. Research that has been shaped by movements across countries, considerations about their sustainability included, has ended up in almost permanent physical immobility. While I would be cautious to generalise any thoughts in this direction — above all, the pandemic has highlighted once again how much we are not in this together — changes in physical movement may shift the term towards other forms of movement and pose various new questions for ecopoetics. As Skinner wrote in late 2020, “[W]hat would happen when we took the travel out of ecopoetics?” (Introduction to *Writing in the Pause*) It remains to be seen whether this question will be one of permanency, one pertaining to some people only, and also whether and how it will be influenced by the contemporary political climate. Since I began working on this project, one of the countries that has been my home for a long time has cut its ties with the EU and thus affected not only my personal mobility. Again, it still remains to be seen how the situation will develop and what role literature and ecocriticism are playing post-Brexit, in the “Covidocene”, how they address now urgently present questions regarding vibrant matter, material intra-actions, multispecies awareness, increased risks of pathogens spreading through global trade, air traffic, meat consumption, and the many slow violences offside broadcasted media spectacles.

A decision regarding the acceptance of the Anthropocene as a formal geochronological time unit is expected this year. This may or may not impact the popularity the concept has already gained, in and outside academia. Whatever it turns out to be, the conditions that brought its declaration about in the first place will not go away but continue to confront and force us, as poets, critics, readers — and above all, earthlings — to respond. The last year has been one of the hottest year on record; month-long bushfires in Australia, Siberia, South America, and California killed over three billion animals, a record number of hurricanes took place during the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, and the beginnings of this year already saw the displacement of millions of people in Syria, Myanmar, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In the face of all these ongoing complex climate justice issues, relational ecopoetics is necessarily a multi-, not a universal approach stretching towards a desideratum of an “ecological con-science” as “the ethics of community life” (Leopold 339-40) practised with the *Mitwelt*.

In this perspective, the pages that lie behind have shown up a variety of nuances of and responses to, engagements and struggles that ultimately come back to the exaggerated programmatic ecopoetic question as to whether poetry can “save the earth”. While considerations regarding our behaviours as “deliberate earthlings” (Skinner, *ecopoetics* 01 1) are as necessary as ever in these times, it may also be time to rephrase this still crude question. Instead one may ask whether poetry can create space for connections and collaborations, inspire other practices, evoke emotional responses, imagine alternative scenarios, make relations, make us think differently about the status quo, make us “listen / to the world from below”, make us keep holding on.

List of German Source Poems

- Astel, Arnfrid. 'BLENDEND weiße Zähne["Pearls & Dents"]'. Mayer-Tasch, p. 73.
- Celan, Paul. 'Corona'. Celan, *Die Gedichte*, p. 39.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. 'Flechtenkunde ["Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and Others"]'. Enzensberger, *Blindenschrift*, pp. 71–75.
- Heine, Heinrich. 'Lebensfahrt ["LifeJourney (through Heinrich Heine's Lebensfahrt)"]'. Heine, *Gedichte*, pp. 71–72.
- Kasper, Hans. 'Bochum ["BOCHUM"]'. Mayer-Tasch, p. 35.
- Kunze, Rainer. 'Pfarrhaus ["Far-House"]'. *zimmerlautstärke. gedichte*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972, p. 41.
- Poschmann, Marion. 'IX ["Poplar Row"]'. Poschmann, *Geliehene Landschaften*, p. 29.
- . 'Knochen ["Bones"]'. Poschmann, *Geliehene Landschaften*, p. 10.
- . 'Schiffschaukel ["Schiffschaukel"]'. Poschmann, *Geliehene Landschaften*, p. 34.
- . 'Wer will schon tief in der Einöde wohnen, dort aber auf dem Verkehrsknotenpunkt ["Living deep in the wasteland but then again at a traffic junction"]'. Poschmann, *Geliehene Landschaften*, p. 100.
- Röttgers, Brigitte. 'Schöne neue Welt ["Brave New World"]'. Mayer-Tasch, p. 45.
- Salzinger, Helmut. 'Weidenruten ["Willow rods"]'. Salzinger, *Irdische Heimat. Gedichte*, p. 31.
- Sölle, Dorothee. 'Definitionen des erwachsenseins ["New definitions"]'. Sölle, *fliegen lernen. gedichte*, p. 71.
- . 'Trennung ["Zusammenführung (with Dorothee Sölle)"]'. Sölle, *fliegen lernen. gedichte*, pp. 42–43.
- . 'Vom baum lernen ["Baumschule I" & "Baumschule II"]'. Sölle, *fliegen lernen. gedichte*, p. 4.
- Thenior, Ralf. 'Naturgedicht ["Nature poem"]'. Kluge, p. 9.
- Vogel, Mikael. 'Arme Kakerlake ["Poor Parasites"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 6.
- . 'Auster ["Oyster"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 63.
- . 'Massenhaft Tiere ["Animal Mass Production"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 9.
- . 'Ohrenqualle ["Jelly fish ear"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 62.
- . 'Poetik der Ernüchterung ["Poetics of Disenchantment"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 51.
- . 'Transport ["Transport"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 11.
- . 'Zeithaare ["Improvising with Vogel"]'. Vogel, *Massenhaft Tiere*, p. 6.

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Annex

Katharina Maria Kalinowski

Kittelbachstrasse 14 – 40489 Düsseldorf

☎ +49 151 7438 2762 • ✉ kathkalinowski@gmail.com

Date of birth: 29 March 1992

Education and Qualifications

- Since April **PhD in English Philology & Poetry: Text, Practice as Research**
2017 *University of Cologne, Germany & University of Kent, UK*
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow (2017–2020) of the trinational programme
“EUMANITIES” at a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne
Research stay at *University College Dublin* (Academic Year 2018–19)
Research project: “*Roaming MitWelt: A Creative-Critical Inquiry into Ecopoetics and Ecoranslation*”
Supervisors: Prof. Hanjo Berressem, Prof. Ian Davidson, Dr. Simon Smith
- Sept 2014 – **M.A. in Writing: With Distinction**
Sept 2015 *University of Warwick, UK*
Winner of Faculty of Arts M.A. Bursary Award
Modules included:
 - The Practice of Literary Translation
 - Writing Poetry**Final year project:** “Angespült – Poems for the Wadden Sea / Border of my skin: places, languages (not) of my own”
Description: An ecopoetic approach to the ecosystem Wadden Sea seeking to critically and poetically reveal its beauty and its destruction.
Supervisor: Prof. Jonathan Skinner
- Sept 2011 – **B.A. (Hons) Creative Writing and Drama Studies: First (74%)**
Sept 2014 *De Montfort University Leicester, UK*
Modules included:
 - Writing Place
 - Professional Writing Skills**Final year project:** “Lavender Notes”
Description: A poetic sequence and an accompanying critical review capturing memories in the context of scents and the manufacturing of lavender perfume.
Supervisor: Prof. Simon Perril
- Sept 2002 – **Abitur**
July 2010 *Heinrich-Heine-Schule*
Gymnasium des Kreises Plön, Germany
Final mark: 1.7
Award for outstanding extracurricular commitment

Work Experience

- Jan 2016 – **Freelance translator / proof-reader**
- March 2017 *Language Insight Limited & “The Transnational – A Literary Magazine”*
- Technical translations in specialist areas: medical audio translations, market research, EU documents, business translation
- German ↔ English
- Literary translations of poetry, fiction and non-fiction
 - Competent time management, high quality work towards tight deadlines
 - Cultural exchange with writers across the English-/German-speaking world
- Sept 2015 – **Full-time German ↔ English translator & Quality Assurance**
- Jan 2016 *Language Insight Limited*,
London, UK
- Translation, transcreation, audio translation, proof-reading, overlay and link checking, providing feedback for other translators
 - Particular focus on translations for the healthcare / medical sector
 - Detail-oriented proof-reading/editing/writing skills
 - Flexible adaptation of translation styles according to the target market

Academic Publications

“Ecopoetry: Trans-lating Nature”, *Visualizando el Cambio: Humanidades Ambientales / Envisioning Change: Environmental Humanities*, ed. Carmen Flys and Alejandro Rivera, Vernon Press, 2020, pp. 131–148.

“Scarcely Translated: Peter Larkin’s Ecopoetic Entanglements”, *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–29, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1312>.

“Ecopoet(h)ical Wanderings in the Global Present”, *Proceedings from Summer School Contemporary Art in the Global Present*, 2017 (in preparation, proposal accepted).

Literary Publications

Belfield Literary Review (2021), *New TransAtlantic Dialogues*. Guest editors: Gregory Betts & Lucy Collins, forthcoming.

Green Theory & Praxis, vol. 13, no. 2 (2020).

Litmus: the lichen issue (2021).

Articles for *Arcadiana* (2020 & 2021).

The Climate Crisis Anthology (2020).

Epizootics! Literary Journal for the Contemporary Animal, Issue 3 (2019).

Magma: The Climate Change Issue, no. 72 (2018).

Conference and Workshop Talks (Selection)

“‘my/your/our x as in xylem:’ Eco-poet(h)ical Translations between Humans and More-Than-Humans.” The Insectile, Morphomata, Universität zu Köln (Germany), 31 January 2020.

“Ecopoetics, Anthro-po-Scenes, Borrowed Landscapes. Translating (with) Matter.” Biennial ASLE-UKI Conference: Co-Emergence, Co-Creation, Co-Existence, University of Plymouth (UK), 4–6 September 2019.

“Trans-lational Spaces: Poetry, Practice as Research” Great Writing International Creative Writing Conference, Imperial College London (UK), 5–7 July 2019.

“Writing in (M)other Tongues, Finding Poetry in Translation.” Associated Writing Programmes Ireland First Conference: The Writer’s Voice, University College Dublin (Ireland), 25–26 April 2019.

“Trans-lating Nature: The Art of Ecopoetry. Go to the World.” ASLE International Conference on Environmental Humanities: Stories, Myths and Arts to Envision a Change, Universidad de Alcalá (Spain), 3–6 July 2018.

“Sounding Places: Ec(h)otranslations” Bangor AHRC International Conference: Poetry and Sound in Expanded Translation III, University of Bangor (UK), 4–6 April 2018.

Teaching Experience and Public Engagement

Poetry in Global Quarantine, Subversive Talks, Series, launched in May 2020.

Creative Writing Workshops at Youth Climate Conference Vogelsberg/Hessen, 31 October–3 November 2019 (Invited Guest Speaker) and Kolloquium Nachhaltigkeit, Forum für Verantwortung, Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, 5–7 April 2019.

Performance at European Poetry Festival Ireland, April 2019 and recording for The Irish Poetry Archive.

Teaching assistant for M.A. in Creative Writing, “The Craft of Poetry”, Spring term 2019, University College Dublin.

Marie-Curie Fellow of the Week, February 2019.

Speaker at Research Seminar Series, School of European Culture and Languages and Creative Writing Open Seminar Series, School of English, University of Kent, March 2018.

Professional Memberships

Modern Language Association (MLA)

European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment (EASLCE), Organiser of the Creative Writers Forum

Gender Mentoring Agency (GMA, University of Cologne), as Mentee

Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment UK and Ireland (ASLE-UKI)

Additional Skills and Interests

Languages

German Fluent

English Fluent

French Working knowledge

IT skills

Basic knowledge

- Excel
- GIMP
- L^AT_EX

Good knowledge

- MS Word
- Powerpoint

Music and Sports

Pianist & flutist Performance and orchestra experience

Fencing Foil

Düsseldorf, 12 April 2021



Katharina Maria Kalinowski

Publications

- “Ecopoetry: Trans-lating Nature”, in: *Visualizando el Cambio: Humanidades Ambientales / Envisioning Change: Environmental Humanities*, ed. Carmen Flys and Alejandro Rivera, Vernon Press, 2020, pp. 131-148.
- “Scarcely Translated: Peter Larkin’s Ecopoetic Entanglements”, *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-23, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1312>.
- “Staying Connected”, *Green Theory & Praxis*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2020, pp. 22-23.

Literary Publications

- *Litmus Magazine. the lichen issue* (2021): “Leverkusen Chempark”; “Marienkäfer, flieg”; “Poetics of Lichen with Enzensberger and others”, pp.
- *Climate Matters*, Riptide vol. 13 with Culture Matters (2020): “Fears First”, p 21.
- Recordings for the Irish Poetry Archive (2019)
- *Epizootics! Literary Journal for the Contemporary Animal*, Issue 3 (2019): “We are in this together”; “Roaming”, pp.10-11.
- *Kent Review*, Vol. 3 (2018): Selection of poetry, pp. 122-131.
- *Magma. The Climate Change Issue*, no. 72 (2018): “Müllkinder”, p. 41.