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Author(s)	Pusse, Tina-Karen
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Trembling Drums. The Permeable Membranes of Rilke's "Weltinnenraum"

At first sight, looking at Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonette an Orpheus* when thinking of utopian, dystopian or heterotopian spaces represented in literature seems an unlikely choice. It is *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* which immediately lend themselves to an analysis within this paradigm, with its highly subjective description of a metropolis, with a narrator who is constantly, simultaneously in the past and in the present, with a constant disintegration of space and the I, which could be read as an ultimate study in Foucauldian heterotropes. And, I am sure, an interesting article could be written with this focus, perhaps culminating in a series of direct pointed questions: Is Malte himself actually *alive* as the 'I' that narrates the text? Or, is this rather the perspective of a revenant, who can pass easily through walls and time while making up plausible excuses why, in the entire text, nobody directly addresses him, so that he himself could just as well be invisible to the other characters in the text? But this will not be my undertaking in this article.

However, his restlessness between places (a hotel, a museum, a library, a hospital, a café) that are designated to be only temporary refuges, shelters, his fear of staying out in the open air for too long and the *Parabel vom verlorenen Sohn* at the end, about the impossibility of a return to 'home' can be read as an agenda of problems that needed to be revisited in the texts that followed. 'Rettung', one of the central notions of *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonette an Orpheus* can be translated into English as both, *salvation* or *resort*, it can address both simultaneously: a practical shelter from the elements (or persecution) or a spiritual experience.

From a socio-historical point of view, the human need for shelter is undeniable. For millennia humans have built dwelling places to shelter themselves from exposure to the threats posed by their environments. But whereas fences and shelters once seemed essential to our survival, in an age of over-population and ecological crises, in which mankind figures as the single biggest threat to the well-being of the ecosphere, it is the environment which seems in need of being sheltered from us, and once again, fences are built and borders established.

Where once we shut nature out we now shut nature in, in nature reserves and conservation zones, trying to exempt species and habitats from destruction. These exemptions, however,

are little more than an alibi for ever greater exploitation and eradication of wilderness on the outside. It is now wilderness that has become a utopia while completely virtual spaces have become habitually accessible. Rilke, in his *Duineser Elegien*, and even more so in his *Sonette an Orpheus*, creates an alternative to this approach: In his “Weltinnenraum”¹ the boundaries between life and death, culture and nature, human and animal, the self and the other become porous and it is the poem itself that becomes an entry point into this alternative space.

Faced with the *Duineser Elegien* and their specific reception history I find myself in difficulty regarding a suitable tone, since their pathos is often even outperformed by the pathos of their literary critics, especially of those with phenomenological background. At the other end of the spectrum there are critics with an angry drive to “prove” the implicit ontology of the Elegies as inconsistent, if not contradictory, and finally there are those who distance themselves completely from the philosophical dimension of the text and the existential tensions and ethical dilemmata it invokes by detailed (but largely disconnected) linguistic or poetological analysis of its sign repertoire. To find a certain balance between a wish for coherence and an adequate attention for sign events, for singularities that resist the general narrative one has identified in a text, is the big challenge of every literary analysis. Here however, this difficulty is amplified by the fact that the communicative situation of the text is that of a series of imperative forms: Of orders given to readers (most of them impossible or at least cunning), of being permanently directly addressed, of being asked to validate or acknowledge an experience, that is, at the same time outlined as highly subjective. Such communicative setting triggers, often unconsciously, specific social dynamics. It invites either full submission, rebellion or withdrawal/ironic distancing – and during a long process of engagement with the text, this position can change in a reader, thereby producing a text that can fluctuate between these positions.

In February 1922, Rainer Maria Rilke, writes in a letter about his latest works, *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonette an Orpheus*, that they contained something “sehr weit Herstammendes [...] Wesentliches aus dem ägyptischen Erlebnis.”² And indeed, we find traces of and

¹ Rilke formally applies this term first in 1914 in his poem *Es winkt zu Fühlung fast aus allen Dingen*: „Durch alle Wesen reicht der eine Raum:/ Weltinnenraum. Die Vögel fliegen still/durch uns hindurch. O, der ich wachsen will,/ich seh hinaus, und in mir wächst der Baum.“ (W 2 113), but it is only in 1924/25 that he refers to this concept again in letters, implicitly in *Duineser Elegien*, and then explicitly again in *Sonette an Orpheus*.

² Rainer Maria Rilke: Werke. Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden. Edited by Manfred Engel et al, Frankfurt a.M.1996, Vol.2, p. 708.

references to Egyptian burial culture in both texts. By the ‘Egyptian experience’ however, Rilke may refer to something entirely different. When he arrives in Egypt, he hopes to cure a severe writer’s block. He wants to collect material for an extended study on Egypt, he starts an Egyptian diary, he expects to be energised in the same way in which he previously experienced his stays in Russia or Italy (both lead to a significant outpouring of literary production). Instead he becomes severely ill; he separates from his travel companion and his plans for his “Egyptian Studies” had to be reduced to a short note of only 4 lines. More than the sarcophagi and the sphinx, which have become an inventory of his elegies and sonnets, the texts deal with existential anxieties, doubts, disappointments and hopes that must have been the most pressing issues of this time, in which nothing gave him reason to believe that he was about to become one of the most iconic figures of literary modernism. How to turn his sudden awareness of the fragility of life and of fundamental solitude when faced with death, into artistic productivity is a question that he could begin to address only 10 years later in a long, solitary winter at Duino (near Trieste in Italy), only to be disrupted again for 10 more years by having been drawn to serve in the First World War, a time during which all of his property is confiscated and auctioned. The result of this process, however, is these two poem cycles that emerged from such a complicated, painful history after a second solitary winter in 1921/22, this time spent at a small tower in Muzot in Switzerland. Not only did he complete the *Duineser Elegien* there within just a few weeks – but he also wrote most of the *Sonnette an Orpheus*, which are thematically closely related. Where the *Duineser Elegien* are full of imperatives with regards to the future role that poetry had to play in celebrating the ‘once and for all’-ness of human life (instead of beweeeping its fragility and transience), in rescuing and admiring that which vanishes (instead of seeing its volatility as worthlessness), or in short: being a witness of and a medium for the transitoriness of everything in and around us, these imperatives, formulated in the *Duineser Elegien*, are then implemented and realised in the *Sonnette an Orpheus*. So, rather than calling one the dark, and the other the light text, I would suggest seeing one as the programme, the other as its execution.

WER, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel
Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem
stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,

und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht,
uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.

Und so verhalt ich mich denn und verschlucke den Lockruf
dunkelen Schluchzens. Ach, wen vermögen
wir denn zu brauchen? Engel nicht, Menschen nicht,
und die findigen Tiere merken es schon,
daß wir nicht sehr verlässlich zu Haus sind
in der gedeuteten Welt. [...] (DE 1, 1-13)

The *Duineser Elegien* describe the process of finding another “recipient” as well as another “cause” of praise. The angel, in Christian mythology the messenger between God and man, the ultimate translator of every human language, the only figure who can easily cross the frontier between the dead and the living, is addressed in the first elegy only in subjunctive form. He has become an impossible receiver, but yet the yearning to be in relation to him is still vital.³ His shift away from him has the form of a lament, it is a shift in grief for a previously powerful, reliable and inspiring relationship – the motor of culture for more than 2000 years after all. A relationship that was always infused with fear too, but that is now exhausted. However, the artefacts of its former potency have remained in the world as permanent cenotaphs or memorials of this loss. The speaker’s turning away from the angel⁴ starts a process of reinterpretation and re-appropriation of the world (and especially of such phenomena that are existential experiences for humans: death, love, childhood, aging, the creation of art), but also humans’ relationship with things and animals. While the speaker undergoes this transformation, he momentarily ties in with pre-Christian concepts and mythology, he occasionally falls back into the Christian paradigm and has to break free again, but at the end of this process the void, the experience of emptiness and of being disconnected from everything that was formerly meaningful has been replaced by a new concept of a somewhat stable⁵ existence that Rilke later named “Weltinnenraum.”⁶ Malte’s unrelenting, fear

³ A very detailed analysis of the communicative dilemma of the first elegy can be found in Peter Szondi: *Das lyrische Drama des fin de siècle*. Frankfurt 1975, p. 388-394.

⁴ The ambivalence in this movement can be observed in the seventh elegy, when the speaker says “Engel, und würb ich dich auch! Du kommst nicht. Denn mein Anruf ist immer voll Hinweg”. The word “Hinweg” – depending on which syllable the emphasis is placed, can be both: a command to “leave” as well as a “forward run”, thereby denoting –simultaneously- a movement in two opposite directions (one of many oscillations that are lost in English translations).

⁵ ‘Stable’ not in the sense of static or solid, but rather in a stabilized dynamis.

⁶ “In a letter to Withold von Hulewicz of 15 November 1925, Rilke describes the imagination as the site or process which allows humans to realise the ethical imperative to transpose the perishing world of finite beings and natural phenomena into a world *internity* via embodied experience, memory, and poetry. Most English translators translate Weltinnenraum as “world-inner-space”, “worldinnerspace” or “cosmic inner space” (Detsch 2; Marcel 135). But in a strict sense this is not what the original, paradoxical notion implies. ‘Weltraum’ – the German term for cosmos and universe, as a vast spatial-temporal extension is interjected with the word “innen” – “inside,” which adds the experiential dimension of embodiment but retains the duo-unity of time and space of the original word. [...]n the fashion in which an Escher-construction or a Moebius loop can create identity as a

driven fluctuation between the open air and temporary sheltered resorts, his experience of not being able to trust human made borders and walls any longer (“Elektrische Bahnen rasen läutend durch meine Stube” W III, MLB, p.455), has, in *Duineser Elegien* given way to the struggle for letting go of this fear and embracing the invalidity of such borders (i.e. the insight that they are mere products of human creation and can therefore just as well be undone). Undoing them and recreating a balance in movement is the project of *Sonette an Orpheus*. They present permanent transmutations of attitude, position and matter into motion, flux and energy and vice versa. Malte’s tiresome self-conscious horizontal movements, his stop and go (he makes himself aware “dass Tote nicht saßen”, W III, MLB, p. 570) has become an effortless flow for the I in *Sonette an Orpheus*.

Atmen, du unsichtbares Gedicht!
Immerfort um das eigne
Sein rein eingetauschter Weltraum. Gegengewicht,
in dem ich mich rhythmisch ereigne. (SaO 2/1)

Thus, Weltinnenraum is no radical subjectivism or violent appropriation, but rather an act of *translation*,⁷ but in a metaphorical as well as literal sense, as permanent translocation. The creation of poetry is a spiritual as well as a physiological and a metabolic act. Allegorically, “breathing” refers to the initial act of “inspiration” in *Genesis*, that brings clay to life, it refers to Pentecost, the ultimate sign-event in the New Testament, in which suddenly, language is no barrier to successful communication of a message any longer, but immediately understood. However: physiologically the moment of breathing defines a point, when no word is spoken at all. It is the zero point of a poem’s presentation. It is only after taking a breath, that the poem is “ventilated” by the speaker – it is spoken *in* the process of exhalation (the speaker is *mentally* inspired by the poem while (s)he *physically* inspires the poem). The next lines can be interpreted as an accurate description of the metabolic process involved. Exhalation is also a process of excretion: body particles of the speaker are released

procedural continuity between sides, poles or dimensions that still remain visible as distinct and yet are shown to be emanations of the flux of the same. This is the reason why the oxymoron *Weltinnenraum* can ultimately not be translated as world-interior because it is pervaded by and everted into the vast expanse of the exterior “Weltraum”, in German meaning universe. World *internity* captures the term best since eternity and interiority both resonate in it. Rilke’s God-Self permutations become the performance of a dynamics *as* which the world “happens,” the dynamical flux is instantiated as a texture, a knot-work of a primary passing through and turning into its antithetical and vice versa. This eversion as a dynamic of procedural non-difference instantiating a texture can be seen in M. C. Eschers paintings.” (see Sabine Lenore Müller: *Conceiving Unity of Being*).
⁷ “[...] Sind wir vielleicht *hier*, um zu sagen: Haus,/Brücke, Brunnen, Tor, Krug, Obstbaum, Fenster, –/ höchstens: Säule, Turm . . . aber zu *sagen*, verstehts,/ oh zu sagen so, wie selber die Dinge niemals/ innig meinten zu sein.[...]” (DE 9, 32-36)

into the atmosphere (Weltraum), which becomes thereby enriched (Raumgewinn) by the metabolic by-products of the poem. There are no fences, no borders between I and outer space – it is merely the organic membranes of our lungs that separate us from the open space while letting it (as well as particles of our fellow humans, animals and plants) constantly enter our bodies. The notion of Weltinnenraum, thus, does not “take everything inside” like the massive ego inflation involved in radical subjectivism, it rather thinks the world and the inside as a *continuum*, in which these the I and the world are in constant exchange and in balance.

Sabine Lenore Müller therefore proposes in her study on Rilke and Yeats the translation of Weltinnenraum as ‘Internity’: “This most private space of the finite human interior is given over to the entirety of the universe which surpasses and via infinity destroys the experiential embodied form. ‘Internity’ is meant to transport the spatial-temporal direction and location of ‘in’ and combine it with a notion of *duration* which is not limited by an ego-constitutional, spatial or temporal horizon – this is how Rilke’s notion can best be understood. Taken together, what emerges is a shared, porous and uncertain time-space extension which passes into and through embodiment.”⁸

The earth is perceived as a meta-organism in which every living being undergoes permanent mutation. Death, in this light, is merely (and quite literally) a change in aggregation stage and the difference between being alive or dead is less important than the difference between being fluid, solid or aeriform. It is, in the bigger picture, no longer the end, but a passage into a new mutation – with regard to our human life however, it bonds and relates us to the perishing things. In the image of Orpheus, who is only present in the DE as an intertextual reference, this quest from the angel to “Weltinnenraum” is complete, since the Mythos of Orpheus’ transformation precedes and reveals such permanent permeability, in his case, as liquefaction. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in general present several cases of such liquefaction, of body membranes becoming permeable through contact with body fluids (tears or blood) of a loving other, but in Orpheus’ case, the unit that is reached through the process is not just a reunification with a lover, but a unification with the entirety of the world. Both, the *Duineser Elegien* as well as the *Sonette an Orpheus* refer to this Metamorphosis, but their focus is

⁸ Sabine Lenore Müller: *Conceiving Unity of Being. The Environmental Modernism of R.M. Rilke and W.B. Yeats* [PhD dissertation, 2014, in preparation for publication].

different: In Elegy 7 (as in earlier Texts such as *Orpheus, Eurydike, Hermes in Neue Gedichte*) Orpheus' attempts of retrieving Eurydice are exposed, not only as futile but as destructive.

Sie war schon nicht mehr diese blonde Frau,
die in des Dichters Liedern manchmal anklang,
nicht mehr des breiten Bettes Duft und Eiland
und jenes Mannes Eigentum nicht mehr.

Sie war schon aufgelöst wie langes Haar
und hingegeben wie gefallner Regen
und ausgeteilt wie hundertfacher Vorrat.

Sie war schon Wurzel.

Und als plötzlich jäh
der Gott sie anhielt und mit Schmerz im Ausruf
die Worte sprach: Er hat sich umgewendet -,
begriff sie nichts und sagte leise: Wer? (W I, 502/503)

By retrieving her from the underworld under the condition of blindness, he is not aware of her partial decomposition and her dissolution from former relations of property and belonging.⁹ By finally failing to meet the condition of not looking back, he releases her again – yet he is too far away from her to see the changes in her appearance and her irritation and he therefore remains in grief.

The 7th duino elegy presents us with another variant of this expression of grief: The I of this text, a lover whose bride has deceased, cries beautifully like a mating bird 'as if' to bring her back . It is important to emphasise that the aim of this cry is not to revive her, but that the song that is produced still sounded as if that was its purpose. While the mourner is already in the process of successful sublimation and acceptance, he worries that his dead bride may misunderstand this crucial psychological process and would be resurrected from her grave – and with her many dead girls might feel addressed and were reviving from their graves also, moving towards him. In this nightmarish phantasy the text condensates the Orpheus narrative by cross-fading the wish for Eurydice's return and the threat of the maenads resulting from it. A possible 'resistance' of the dead to accept their new position in the earth's metabolic process is also addressed in sonnet 14 of the first part. This sonnet follows a vertical movement, starting off with praising the leaves and fruits of a grapevine and ending

⁹ For more references to representations of Gods as roots or trees in Rilke's work, see Heinrich Imhof: Rilke's Gott.R.M/Rilke's Gottesbild als Spiegelung des Unbewussten. Heidelberg 1983. Despite of his questionable attempt of reading Rilke only through vignettes of C. G. Jung interpretations, this study has collected amazing material and was a rich source of inspiration for this article.

underground at their roots, that are nurtured by ‘the dead who live there’, i.e. decaying bodies.

Nun fragt sich nur: tun sie es gern?...
Drängt diese Frucht, ein Werk von schweren Sklaven,
geballt zu uns empor, zu ihren Herrn?

Sind sie die Herrn, die bei den Wurzeln schlafen,
und gönnen uns aus ihren Überflüssen
dies Zwischending aus stummer Kraft und Küssen? (W II, SaO 1/14)

While “Überflüsse“ can be translated as „abundance“, the German word also carries the image of ‘secretion’ with it, which can be read as an uncanny prelude of the following sonnet, that directly speaks of the taste of an orange, liquefied in a dancer’s mouth and transformed into energy needed for her dance. In this dance, the orange is transcended while being dissolved into a human body. Life or death are rather artificial oppositions in this infinite loop of mutual consumption. While the *Duineser Elegien* still try to transcend mourning into aesthetic vivification of the beloved other, even to the extent of keeping a lost Christian God alive, at least as witness of his former existence, the *Sonette an Orpheus* shift this perspective to an I that is affirmative of the biological processes and creates aesthetic representations of the beloved which embrace these changes. In consequence, the sonnets, many of them written on the same night in which the *Duineser Elegien* were finally completed, have found a new recipient for praise. The Christian angel has not simply been replaced by a more approachable pre-Christian character who is mythologically connected with the sphere of music and poetry, and who is also, like the former angel, able to transgress the border between the living and the dead – much more importantly is he the allegory of a constant creative presence in every molecule of the earth, a personification of the earth itself and everything that is alive. Also he is at the same time an allegory of the communion of death and the artistic process, in which everything that is dead is constantly transformed into new life.¹⁰

The figure of Orpheus, especially the narrative of his death, also amalgamates Christian and Greek mythology: What is told is essentially a process of transubstantiation.

¹⁰ Ernst Leisi points out that Orpheus does not exist as a totality but as infinite trace, which through undergoing destruction performs circulation [“Kreislauf”] (Ernst Leisi: Rilkes Sonette and Orpheus. Tübingen 1987, p. 23-24). While he points out that Orpheus exists in circular figures, and that he performs a “return of earth to itself” [“Rückkehr der Erde zu sich selbst”] (25), Sabine Mueller argues very convincingly, that beings are *not* returning to themselves [“kehren immer zu sich selber zurück”] as the circle is “broken” – or *Open* - in so far as the individual beings undergo destitution. Loss of form is central and adds to every form the gravity of being once-only. Sabine Lenore Müller: Conceiving Unity of Being.)

This transubstantiation is turned into visibility/comprehensiveness in the killing frenzy of the maenads: its non-symbolic, anthropophagic core is laid open. As Christ ‘nurtures’ the believers with his blood and his body in the sacrament of eucharist, Orpheus nurtures the listeners through his eternal song. Yet only after his blood is dissolved into the Hebrons does he become audible to all. His disappearance, if looked at closely, is an endless dissolution – and therein an endless expansion. Vanishing and proliferation, disappearance and omnipresence, become one. Thereby physical extension and temporal duration also become relative to and constitutive of each other, the world is not created by a primordial presence and God is not created as an extrapolation of the earth by homo sapiens¹¹ : in an indefinite process, they are transmutations of each other.

In this sense the divine is profaned and the poet can extend the apotheosis to every single living being as well as the earth’s body when he dedicates the sonnets “to Orpheus”, once again the address of prayer becomes the profane all-address: “Oh you lost god, you infinite trace” “O du verlorener Gott! Du unendliche Spur!” (W II, p. 253) The tree (in being blossom, fruit, seed, sapling, tree, wood), the dance’s ec-statically churning gyre, the human metabolism, the water cycle, the cycle of wind and human breath are no closed cycles, they are “expending”existence as the *energeiai* of individual life forms into the self-actualisation of other forms and yet different cycles. There is no transcendent survival of the actual form outside its specific embodiment. Orpheus may live in the tree but does not transcendently outlive the trees. Orpheus is a principle [...] that which goes from form to form through destruction.¹²

Rhetorically, Orpheus is the *figura absentia* of the poem cycle. Despite assertions that Orpheus – in his proto-mythical shape – is absent and can no longer be addressed, phantasmatically he still remains present (and addressed), not only as a character within but also through the dedication of the text. This impossible communicative act repeats the initial dilemma of the *Duineser Elegien*, but it does not repeat the distress of the speaker in the face of it. Given the conceptualisation of Weltinnenraum, there can not be a beginning, no “Vor-Gesang” of such circulation. Yet, at the same time: there must be.

Wandelt sich rasch auch die Welt
wie Wolkengestalten,
alles Vollendete fällt
heim zum Uralten.

Über dem Wandel und Gang,
weiter und freier,
währt noch dein Vor-Gesang,

¹¹ Such “Artistenmetaphysik” is a frequent diagnosis in Nietzsche inspired Rilke critics. See for example: Guzzoni, Giorgio: Dichtung und Metaphysik am Beispiel Rilke. Bonn 1986. Heller, Erich: Nirgends wird Welt sein als innen. Versuche über Rilke. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975. Meyer, Theo: Rainer Maria Rilke. In: Ders.: Nietzsche und die Kunst. Tübingen-Basel: Francke, 1993. S. 197-213.

¹² Sabine Lenore Müller: Conceiving Unity of Being.

Gott mit der Leier.
(W II, SaO 1/19)

Orpheus' time and the listener's time are diachronic. The very first listener must have existed in a time in which (s)he could not have existed ("Wann aber *sind* wir?", W II, SaO 1/3). Since Orpheus has become audible, he is already transformed into song and can only be addressed in his absence "O du verlorener Gott/ Du unendliche Spur" (W II, SaO 1/26). This problem, however, does only exist in a chronological understanding of time, and still allows for Orpheus' mythopoetic creation as *locum* or *simulacrum* for this lost sphere.

While the I in *Duineser Elegien* asked for a recipient for his cry (and is, at least initially, clearly distressed about its absence), there is no *horror vacui* involved in the absence of Orpheus, because the communicative situation is inverse: The challenge here is to hear, not to be heard: ¹³"Die Stelle, wo die Leier/ sich tönend hob, die unerhörte Mitte" ¹⁴ (W II, SaO 2-28). In correspondence to the moment of inhalation as the inaudible zero-point of a poetic performance the listener is not only made aware of listening to music or to the poem, but also made to open up towards the silence which precedes it. Here the cycle folds itself back to the first sonnet: "Da stieg ein Baum. O reine Übersteigung/ O Orpheus singt! O hoher Baum im Ohr!" (W II, SaO 1/1). If the poem includes the silence against which it is set but from where it also originates, then there is also never a "beginning". The "Da" is always belated. In the very moment in which it is spoken its function of indicating the temporal and spatial point when and where silence becomes sound, is always conflicted by itself. Once the eardrums are set in motion by it, once it is heard, it can, as a signifier, only substitute its former function and it is now renamed by the poem as "O Orpheus singt!" (W 2, SaO I/1, 241). As an entry point or cue of the poem, it initiates "die Schwingung [...], die uns jetzt hinreißt und tröstet und hilft" (W2, DE, 1, 204) through which *Weltinnenraum*, interiority, is created.

¹³ See Jana Schuster: *Umkehr der Räume*. Freiburg 2011, p 351: „Die chiasmatische Verkehrung der Positionen von Subjekt und Objekt [...], ist durch das akustische Phänomen der Resonanz fundiert.“ Earlier she develops the idea that Orpheus' „unendliche[n] Spur“ (W II, SaO1/26) can also be read as links in a chain, through which everybody is acoustically connected with each other (p. 191f.).

¹⁴ „Unerhört“ in this context, can be translated as “unheard”, “inaudible” but also as “unprecedented”.