# Resonance and Culture: Reading Poetry as a Sphere of Meaning

*Open Access Author Manuscript*


## Abstract

How can resonance in the reception of poetry be understood sociologically? How does the subjective response to poetic works relate to more general social and symbolic structures? I combine Hartmut Rosa's Resonance Theory with a cultural sociological perspective to illustrate how vertical spheres of resonance—art, nature, religion, or history—can be understood as structures of meaning. I demonstrate how actors transformatively adapt (*anverwandeln*) a segment of the world to sustain personal meaning and the possibility of resonance. Using Tomas Tranströmer's poetry as a case study, I demonstrate how poetic reception embodies core elements of resonance—affect, self-efficacy, transformation, and uncontrollability. The cultural sociological reading of Resonance Theory helps to explain the broader cultural dynamics at play. Reception, thus, can be understood as a continuous process in which poetic work becomes a dialogue that reshapes both reader and text. I focus on three phenomena of reception: meaningfulness of form, elemental significance, and uncontrollability of the author's voice. Ultimately, the case study reveals how poetry, as an iconic medium for existential inquiry, can foster a contemplative relationship to the world—one that resists the instrumentalization of modern society.



## Keywords

Poetry; Resonance Theory; Aesthetic Reception; Sociology of Art; Literary Sociology; Cultural Sociology; Anverwandlung; Darkening Existentialism



## Author

Dr Marcel Knöchelmann
Postdoctoral Fellow
Yale University
Center for Cultural Sociology
New Haven, CT 06520
marcel.knoechelmann@yale.edu



This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article published in *Acta Sociologica*, following peer review (June 2025). The version of record is available online at:
https://doi.org/10.1177/00016993251346686


## Introduction: Social theory and poetry

Resonance Theory (Rosa, 2019a) is an ethical theory for understanding how individuals relate to the world in the face of the social pathologies of modernity. By focusing on the *relational* dynamics through which people experience and respond to the world in their own voice, it offers sociologists a more comprehensive perspective on social life. Resonance is situational, but it takes place within spheres—structured contexts within society. How can we understand these spheres?

My thesis is that spheres should be understood not only through their institutional and material foundations but also as *structures of meaning* that actors transformatively adapt (*anverwandeln*). Consider art. Art is an institutional realm shaped by various material conditions—it relies on exhibition spaces, books, digital representations, and distribution channels, among other things. Yet beyond these, art is also *symbolically* meaningful. What defines a work of art or a poem within a given tradition? Actors who sustain art as a *personal* sphere of resonance engage with such a *general* discourse, making the sphere concretely meaningful and intelligible. But general meaning does not enable resonance. In reception, poetry becomes personally meaningful within its broader material and symbolic context. Actors respond to *specific* forms (such as iambic pentameter or uses of metaphor) that embody *concrete* ideals of beauty (such as the harmony between form and content). An individual's *personal* history of reception shapes how they experience and interpret a poem.

In this article, I illustrate what it means to understand spheres of resonance as structured segments within society, where cultural discourse and personal history intersect. This is particularly relevant for spheres on the vertical dimension, where Rosa locates *existential relationships* (2019a: 195): art, nature, religion, or history. Through a case study on the poetry of Tomas Tranströmer, I demonstrate how actors *transformatively adapt* a sphere on this vertical dimension as a personally meaningful space. To do so, I combine Resonance Theory with insights from cultural sociology such as structural hermeneutics (Alexander, 2003) and practice theory (Reckwitz, 2020). I do so selectively, whereby my focus remains on Rosa's critical theory; I look at poetry with a critical-ethical interest far more than a descriptive one.

The value of Resonance Theory, for its part, is demonstrated by the attention it has received in scholarly debate. Due to its phenomenological and relational approach, it is a practical tool for investigating how actors react to moments of intense meaning or affect—or its loss in the form of alienation (Felski, 2020b; Knöchelmann, 2024b). The theory's normative framework makes it an important point of reflection of modern society and the contradictions of capitalism (Reckwitz and Rosa, 2023; Susen, 2020). Rosa thus positions himself as an innovative, albeit romantic heir to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Taylor, 2018; Vandenberghe, 2023). Reflection, of course, always implies debate and dissensus. It is precisely the theory's normativity that is also subject to criticism, whereby the claim seems to be that resonance should rather be a descriptive theory (Reckwitz, 2017). Ståhl even circumvents normativity by illustrating what dark resonance might look like (Ståhl, 2024). Moreover, the proximity to literary writing, especially poetry, is always visible, both

in Rosa's own writing (he often uses literature to illustrate his arguments) and that of fellow writers (Farzin, 2017; Fuchs, 2020).

Why poetry? Poetry is embedded in cultural contexts but requires focused, almost hermetic work by the individual. This deep engagement becomes an event and, in the words of Rosa: this event 'is nothing other than an event of resonance' (Rosa, 2019a: 283). Crucially, I focus on practices of reception—looking at both production *and* reception is too much for a single article. Moreover, the sociology of literature is oddly silent about poetry. This is perhaps due to the fact that poetry appears to be a niche in contemporary society. It is a form of art that seems to concern only a few individuals and is responsible for a somewhat negligible material sphere. Empirical reality disagrees.[1] Another point of explanation is that poetry often appears to be out of touch with dominant sociological issues of power, material inequity, and conflict. Nevertheless, examples of a turn towards meaning in the sociology of literature—or literary sociology—preconfigures that poetry is significant, too (Felski, 2020a; Knöchelmann, 2024a, 2025; Thumala Olave, 2020; Váňa, 2021). Works from neighbouring disciplines further demonstrate that a more comprehensive—and more sociological—conception of poetic practice is urgently needed (Eshel, 2020; Taylor, 2024).

And lastly, why Tomas Tranströmer? His poetry reflects a full life, drawing on diverse experiences while maintaining a structured depth across decades.[2] This is a symbolic continuation that lends Tranströmer a view onto the world, an evaluative frame on the sacred. Published correspondences as well as biographical texts illustrate his deep connection of life and work (Bly and Tranströmer, 2013; Butt et al., 2018; Schiöler, 1999). Strikingly, this body of work itself exemplifies resonance in two ways: individual poems portray moments of resonance; and the structural depth that underpins this work resembles what Rosa calls a contemplative relationship with the world. Tranströmer is thus ideally placed to illustrate resonance even beyond poetic practice.

The first part of this article is a reconstruction of relevant aspects of resonance theory with an orientation towards culture (*Resonance theory and structures of meaning*). The second part focuses on the case study (*A phenomenology of poetry: transformatively adapting Tranströmer*).

---

[1] The poetry scene is very lively. For instance, the Literary Magazines database on *Poets&Writers* lists about 1,000 outlets that are open for submission, many of them include poetry: https://www.pw.org/literary_magazines. *Poetry* receives more than 150,000 poems each year; its print circulation is a stunning 28,000: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine.

[2] I first read Tranströmer's work in German and then both in the original Swedish and in English. For this article, I use the recent bilingual publication of his work: Tranströmer (2023).

## Part A: Resonance theory and structures of meaning

A key characteristic of Resonance Theory is its dialectical indeterminacy. Key elements are defined in the context of difference: resonance *and* alienation, self *and* world, sustain *and* control, affect *and* emotion—the list could go on. The most foundational dialectic is that of situated *self* and *world*. We will begin with the self and make our way towards world as structures of meaning.

### *The relational self*

'Resonance is a kind of relationship to the world, formed through af←fect and e→motion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed.' (Rosa, 2019a: 174) This gives us a breakdown of the analytical elements of resonance. First and foremost, it is not a state, but a dynamic *relationship to the world*. This can be concretised in three directions: this relationship is formed by *af←fect and e→motion*; it builds on *intrinsic interest and perceived self-efficacy*, and it results a *mutual transformation*. This is complemented by the constitutive fact of *uncontrollability* as a fourth property (Rosa, 2020).[3]

The *relationship to the world* is an actor's precondition of mediating meaningfulness in such a way that makes resonance possible; it can be seen as the *how* that provides the entirety of beliefs and moral values as an actionable epistemology. Rosa calls this epistemology cognitive-cum-evaluative maps 'which reveal potential courses of action and indicate obstacles or inhibitions' (Rosa, 2019a: 111), and provides a fourfold typology of relationships, as shown in figure 1.

| | Active Relation | Passive Relation |
|---|---|---|
| Affirmation | **Adaptation to the world** | **Contemplation of the world** |
| Renunciation | **Domination of the world** | **Withdrawal from the world** |

*Figure 1: Four basic forms of relating to the world, adapted from: Rosa, Resonance, 131.*

[3] Rosa claims that 'a poem can resonate with me only as long as I have not yet *fully* grasped, understood, and processed it' (2020: 44). I disagree. This understanding of poetic reception is too static. I offer a different interpretation of temporary uncontrollability in the case study below.

Vital for Rosa is the contemplative being-in-the-world: 'an ideal basis for relating to the world in a way that facilitates or even produces resonance' (Rosa, 2019a: 131). It affirms world instead of utilizing it as a resource; it always seeks to understand otherness instead of conforming it to one's own needs. Such a contemplative mode means taking otherness as an end in itself, and not as an instrumental means. It tries to turn the subject-object relation of self and world into a subject-subject relation. This highlights the *intrinsic interest*: a book is read for the sake of its aesthetics, its ideas, its cultural memory—and not for the sake of mere cultural capital. Nature is lifeworld, not a resource.

Passivity does not mean inactivity; it refers more to relationships, than to voluntarism. Rosa later introduced the concept of *mediopassivity* to account for the 'form of *being-in-the-world* in which we are *both* active *and* passive—or *neither* active *nor* passive'. (Reckwitz and Rosa, 2023: 153; italics original) This is particularly evident in the context of poetry: readers do not merely absorb meaning but actively engage in interpretation, allowing the text to speak back in potentially unpredictable ways. This dynamic—where the poem resists full control yet invites deep engagement—fosters resonance as a transformative experience. The self is active, yet responds to *affect*ive guidance. Reader and received text both speak with their own voice as two subjects on par. This takes place within materially and symbolically defined spheres. And with this, we turn from self to world.

*Spheres as structures of meaning*

For analytical purposes, Rosa separates spheres as potential realms of resonance. These spheres are institutionally anchored, symbolically mediated segments of social life. Rosa provides a programmatic typology of how the wealth of institutionalised social life can be analysed in three dimensions (axes), as shown in figure 2.

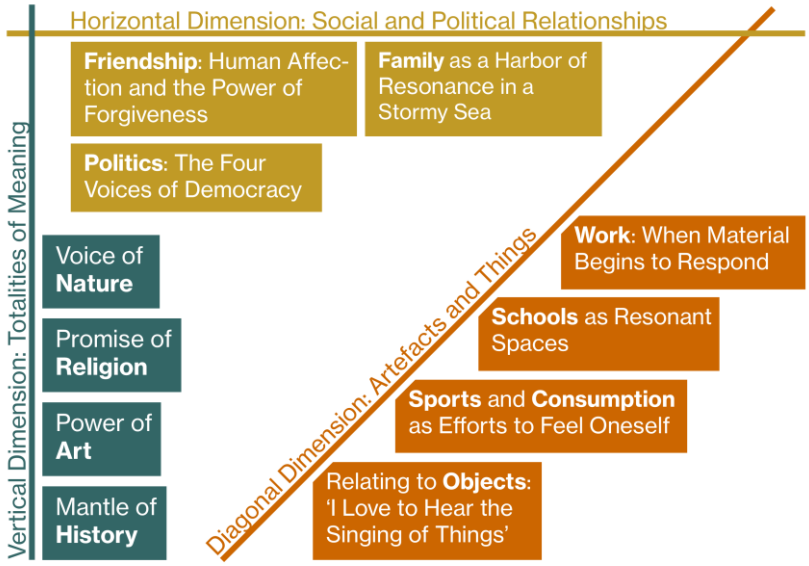


*Figure 2: Spheres of resonance; cf. Rosa, Resonance, part two.*

This typology allows a non-reductive perspective on social life in which material and symbolic layers are integrated. None of these dimensions stands alone: the family is deeply connected to a place (interrelation of horizontal and diagonal dimension); schools are not just places and realms of rites and artefacts (diagonal) but also environments of friendship or politics (horizontal).

I suggest that, besides institutions and material conditions, spheres also need to be seen as *structures of meaning* in the sense that there are always layers of symbolic and semantic meaning that enable and motivate actors to find and sustain a segment of world as a possibility of resonance. In other words, even though a sphere is institutionalised and materially manifest—a school, nature, a museum—it gains concrete meaningfulness through discourse.

### *Cultural meaningfulness: symbolic structures of society*

On one hand, this meaningfulness is cultural. A relationship to the world does not take place within a cultural vacuum. As far as actors are socially integrated, they are also situated within symbolic discourses of society (Alexander, 2003).[4] Similarly, albeit from a less structural perspective, Reckwitz

[4] I refer to structural hermeneutics here. The intuitive connection between Resonance Theory and Alexander's Cultural Pragmatics does not hold upon closer inspection. Cultural Pragmatics is an analytical frame for public performances in which actors 'display for others the meaning of their social situation.' (Alexander, 2004: 529) Resonance Theory, instead of looking at such a public *display* of

also shows how even seemingly private practices are deeply embedded in cultural logics (2020). This idea of an inherently culturalised realm provides a generalised context of spheres. It highlights that meaning is not just situational and subjective; an actor acts in the context of symbolic codes and collectively held ideals. These 'represent a level of organization that patterns action as surely as structures of a more visible, material' kind do (Alexander and Smith, 1993: 156). A book or a work of art embodies something of which an actor is aware even before they interact with the concrete thing; a regular reader can situate themselves within a landscape of books, authors, or tropes. Moreover, such codes and ideals have a normative function (Alexander, 2006: 49; Želinský et al., 2021).[5] The language we use to talk about books or authors immediately situates the material in an evaluative context: it is good or bad, authentic or gimmicky, demanding or entertaining.

*Any* segment of social life is thus pre-conditioned by symbolic discourse. But what I wish to highlight with my emphasis on meaning is particularly strong in the case of the vertical dimension, within which Rosa locates art. This dimension forms a type of modern metaphysics. Even though modernity might have lost metaphysics in a strong sense as an absolute guide of moral, epistemological, or expressive structures,[6] for individual actors and fragmented communities they continue to exist, albeit in a weaker sense; 'they allow subjects to experience a constitutive connection with a power that concerns or encompasses their existence as a whole.' (Rosa, 2019a: 296) The fundamentality that Rosa ascribes to this dimension already shows the strong evaluative function that is also visible in Alexander's conception of structures of meaning. Rosa speaks of resonance as a '*flash of a connection to a source of strong evaluations*' (2019a: 185; italics original). These *strong evaluations* are particularly visible in these quasi-metaphysical spheres. Their existentialist shape pre-conditions that their meaning reaches to the depths of an actor's relationship to the world.

---

meaning, examines the ways actors, after having internalized meaning, interact with the world in a deeply meaningful way. Further, Cultural Pragmatics's notion of fusion—of audience with actors and their scritps—neglects key normative aspects of Resonance Theory. Self-efficacy and intrinsic interest are vital for a *resonant* relationship that is not merely an echo. As Rosa maintains: 'totalitarian and fascist communities are rooted in a longing for *fusion*, a longing to dissolve oneself in a community.' (2019a: 447; italics original) Cultural Pragmatics refrains from making such a normative distinction between resonance and echo.

[5] As will become clear with the discussion of transformative adaptation, Alexander's strong notion of a relative autonomy of culture cannot be supported by this article, or by a critical theory such as Rosa's generally. Concrete meaningfulness is too dependent on socialisation and material enablement to support such a general autonomy.

[6] Rosa acknowledges that religion lost part of its all-encompassing force in Western society with the degradation of metaphysical worldviews; cf. Rosa (2019a: 258). In a way, this dovetails with the Habermasian perspective of the post-metaphysical society. Still, as practice and institution, religion continues to be a key resource for society (Rosa, 2024).

*Personal meaningfulness: transformative adaptation of a sphere*

One the other hand, meaning is always also deeply personal. An actor adapts the generalising cultural discourse which transforms both actor and sphere. With *transformative adaptation*, Rosa refers to the way(s) an actor needs to sustain a segment of the world as something personal. Besides material adaptation, they need to *transformatively adapt* (or *adaptively transform*) generalised meaning as a concrete, personal realm to enable the possibility of resonance.[7] Even Alexander with his strong notion of culture structures concedes in the context of his discussion of Giacometti's *Standing Woman* that its expressive textures carry 'ideas and things [that] are simultaneously personal and social.' (2008: 6) Correspondingly, as someone who is not familiar with art, it is rare to go to a museum and experience resonance. As someone who does not read poetry regularly, simply reading a poem is unlikely to result a flash of resonance. This is, of course, not to say that it *cannot* happen; but it is rarer.

*Transformative adaptation* expresses the dualism of self-efficacy and intrinsic interest noted above. Perceived *self-efficacy* is the belief 'concerning one's own capacities and ability to exercise control in certain areas of activity.' (Rosa, 2019a: 159) Self-efficacy distinguishes between whether an actor allows the world to dominate them or whether they actively transform it. Yet, this is always paired with *intrinsic interest* as a basis of the contemplative relationship. It puts the notions of being active and transforming something in the context of mediopassivity, which means that an actor sustains a sphere as a both active *and* passive agent, with a motivation of self-efficacy (of change and transformation) *and* an intrinsic interest (of preserving the voice of the other). An actor adapts meaning out there (such as a general idea of poetry or of Tranströmer) and transforms it to be meaningful to them in a highly personal, even intimate sense (which reflexively transforms the actor, too). Consider also the notion of affect that is vital for resonance as an immediate force. In a discursively dense realm—such as art—any affect is at risk of being stifled by discourse. For instance, the affect of an aesthetic form is immediate and, at the same time, takes place within the intelligible context of what form means. A reader must not allow this intelligible context to drown out the immediacy of affect; the dominance of pure knowing inhibits resonance.

Paradoxically, transformative adaptation requires a degree of control, since 'it is impossible to resonate with things that are completely inaccessible or beyond any form of control.' (Rosa, 2020:

---

[7] Rosa speaks of *Anverwandlung* here, which lacks a complement in the English language; cf. Rosa (2019b: 182 or 286).

41) The acceptance of *Unverfügbarkeit* is vital for a contemplative being-in-the-world.[8] In the phenomenological language, the crude attempt to enforce control over resonance means imposing an affect through manipulation, offensive management of meaningfulness, or simply by trying to buy it. Only resonance is not for sale. You may be able to afford the material base, but resonance is by no means an inevitable consequence. There always remains the contingency of muteness: the mountain view does not speak to an actor; a poem's words suddenly appear meaningless. Rosa speaks in this context also of *semicontrollability*: the possibility to control everything but resonance itself (2020: 55). Openness is its concrete appeal: a constellation of poetic work and additional insight into the poet's life reveal a sudden new meaning that fosters a moment of resonance. The actor needs to be open to it, but cannot enforce this.

What falls by the wayside with overt control 'is *contact with the inaccessible Other* with which we enter into a responsive relationship that both permits and demands contradiction and makes possible an adaptive transformation that itself in turn presupposes an active experience of self-efficacy.' (Rosa, 2019a: 371; italics original) Situational muteness here manifests in the social fact that the actor wishes art to be a specifically meaningful entity; art is supposed to embody this or that which it unexpectedly does not. This impairment can also come from outside: curators, publishers, the crude circumstances of reception: all of which can inhibit resonant receptivity in a given moment. If this takes place continuously and meaningfulness wears off, the actor's relation to art assumes the status of a *relation of relationlessness*; they become alienated (Jaeggi, 2016). Paintings, poems, sonatas stop speaking to them. And to be sure, resonance and alienation are not for actors to decide on if the material conditions are denied in the first place. In a foundational sense, it is society much more than individuals who are responsible for worldviews and relationships to the world, as Rosa repeatedly demonstrates (Rosa, 2010, 2017). It is necessary for society as a whole to sustain spheres both materially (financial assistance, premises, prizes) and meaningfully (as an ongoing public discourse). An autocratic state that inhibits an independent artistic sphere suppresses the open, public conversation that art needs to be meaningful.

---

[8] Rosa devotes an entire book to demonstrating the importance of *Unverfügbarkeit*, including a discussion of how to best translate it into English (Rosa, 2020). *Unverfügbarkeit* is a quite poetic term that has multiple meanings; the best approximation in English appears to be *uncontrollability*. Yet, alternative translations need to be borne in mind. Resonance is *elusive*, *unengineerable*, and *temporarily unavailable*. To the managed mind, resonance remains *unobtainable*, *not at disposal*.

*Where life and world interact: practical examples of meaningfulness*

The concrete notion of meaningfulness that I highlight arises in the interplay of subjective experience and structured social contexts, an ongoing and active process. An example of this interplay can be found in Rosa's discussion of Proust's famous remembrance. 'Though this transformation of Marcel's relationship to the world is induced physically, it owes its resonant quality to the biographical memory and association that has some meaningful connection to his life and world.' (Rosa, 2019a: 89) Life and world, as structured elements, do not dictate meaning but provide the conditions under which resonance *can* occur. Life and world—personal history and structural meaning—together form the background within which Proust's situational remembrance takes place.

I do *not* argue that meaningfulness simply generates resonance. I also do not mean to say that meaning is more important than material conditions. Rosa repeatedly accounts for how spheres are institutionalised and depend on specific material conditions. An actor is also dependent on certain *social* or *socioeconomic* structures—they need to be able to afford access to art. But they are likewise structurally bound to *cultural* backgrounds—to symbolic discourse that provides a canvas of potential meaning. Both social and cultural background are mediated by lifeworld experiences, foremost socialisation. If the parents of an actor read a lot, they may be more inclined to do so, too. The Bourdieusian notion of *cultural capital* is therefore still crucial for those structural pre-conditions of actors that other branches of cultural sociology neglect (Bourdieu, 1984). But there is also a positive cultural-structural aspect beyond this.

If an actor reads a lot of poetry, and a lot of criticism of poetry, they are concretely attuned to specific notions of meaning that provide the grounds of this sphere of resonance. Consider also the imbrication of social, material, and cultural structures in the context of music. Sustaining resonance when making music in a band is overwhelmingly connected to *social* relations (the people you are playing with), the *material* instrument you are playing, and a relationship to the world that is affirmative towards *art as such* (e.g. for art's instead of for commerce's sake). Just think of the many memoirs and biographies of musicians who lost resonant touch with their craft once they became so famous that commerce superseded the artistic pursuit.

Music brings us to the more practical example. Building on his own theory, Rosa himself puts forward a sociology of art (2023) that demonstrates the sense of structural meaning underscoring heavy metal music. What comes to the fore is that this sphere is also a cultural discourse that the individual (Rosa) transformatively adapts. There is a general idea of heavy metal in society, often

negatively connoted. And there is a closely knit social community of heavy metal bands and audiences who experience these semantics positively. And within this still general code we find Rosa himself, for whom this music is personally sacred: 'the experience of transcendence, about the perceived encounter with a force or reality that goes beyond oneself.' (Rosa, 2023: 15; translation mk) This phenomenological study is enlightening. It shows how the individual has to assert their place within the general. Rosa even accounts for how he entered this social space. He was enticed by the music, but had to preserve its meaning against opposing evaluations of his parents, who divided the world in the *pure* and *impure* (in a remarkably Durkheimian sense; cf. Rosa, 2023: 13). This dovetails with Alexander's understanding of the normative function of culture structures. That which is sacred for one group cannot be thought of as such. The sacred is always either *pure* or *impure* which marks the fundamental gravitation of symbolic discourse (Alexander, 2003; Durkheim, 2008: 413). Listeners of heavy metal find solidarity in their evaluation of this—for them sacred pure—form of art. The social fact *that* society regards this art in negative ways thus marks a form of boundary work that becomes foregrounded in a solidarity to this music and its community.

Moreover, we can think of nature, another sphere on Rosa's vertical dimension, to better understand this. Nature prima facie appears to be *out there*, literally being an opposition to culture and symbolic meaning. But nature is a deeply culturalised space like any other, which is characterised by the continuous symbolic discourse of what nature is supposed to be. It can be accounted for as the *voice of nature* that actors go out to listen to. This voice is, first and foremost, a cultural code. It is, of course, not what makes resonance possible, which is rather the experience of, say, a mountain view or a remote forest itself. So the actor who seeks this voice actually needs to deal with the general, normative notion of such a cultural code by finding their personal space in relation to such a code. The material and our bodily experience within it—mountain, forest—is mediated by ideas and values. 'Here, too, we can see that even the bodily dimensions of our relationship to the world are always also *culturally* and *cognitively* shaped.' (Rosa, 2019a: 271; italics added) Someone who has grown up in a household where hiking is the predominant hobby can do this more naturally than someone who only starts hiking at an advanced age. Both must ultimately preserve nature as a personally meaningful space, as a subject with which they interact instead of as a generalised other (nature as mute object or resource). Tranströmer, whose poems often touch on themes of nature, summarises this personalisation poetically. For him, nature is structured by memories which bring it to life in the first place:

> I must go out into the greenness that's filled
> with memories, and they follow me with their gaze.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 343)

As a last, and more philosophical, example, Taylor recently explored the concept of cosmic connections within a specific tradition of poetry (2024). He begins with a search for an ontological status of meaningfulness, and asserts that all humans have a need for it that goes beyond mere biological facts. 'But can we define the need/meaning here more fully? This is something we might try with the term "resonance": some movement of sympathy between us and our niche.' (Taylor, 2024: 50) What Taylor refers to as niche is what I call personally meaningful sphere. The works of Hölderlin, Wordsworth, or Rilke deal with ways to (re-)connect hermeneutically with a meaningfulness that marks an essential quality of the good life (for Taylor). This poetic (re-)connection is an ethical aspiration, where ethics define 'the ends we seek, the fulfillments which our nature as human beings prescribes for us'. (Taylor, 2024: 257) In other words, Taylor reconstructs his personal space of meaning that deeply marks his ethics. The specific hermeneutics with which he approaches (the niche of) poetic works characterises his relationship to that segment of the world and, through this, the way it is meaningful to him. It is important to note that Taylor moves back and force between general discourse and personal history of reception; one is marked by the poet's times and the philosophical discourse about them, the other is the consistent subjective meaning that Taylor extracts from the intersection. He ultimately covers 250 years of poetic creation and crystallizes their meaning in a single code: *cosmic connection* (the sacred pure), which opposes the impure loss of connection in modern society.[9]

The case study that I present now is similar to Taylor's, albeit reduced to the reading of a single poet. I reconstruct three key phenomena that mark the meaningfulness of this phenomenological space of reading Tranströmer. This meaningfulness can be read as a continuous symbolic and semantic background within which Tranströmer's works *take place*.

## Part B: A phenomenology of poetry: transformatively adapting Tranströmer

What makes the reception of poetry a potential for resonance? I focus on three phenomena of poetic reception to answer this: meaningfulness of form (vs focus on content alone); elemental

[9] Taylor marks this loss as a form of alienation of the modern rational subject. This echoes Taylor's thesis of subtler languages, which refers to the way language extends beyond factual representation to articulate richer ethical, aesthetic, and existential meaning (2016, 2024: 3–24).

significance (vs superficial reading); uncontrollability of the voice of the author (vs outright control of what is being said). These phenomena are strongly interconnected, but I tread them separately for analytical purposes. In each section, I reconstruct in what sense reception is a meaningful practice that characterises the potential for resonance, and highlight how these characteristics relate to the conceptual elements discussed above.

*Meaningfulness of form*

Form is fundamental in art, and for poetry in particular. It is primarily form that separates the poem from other types of literature that are less formalised, such as linear prose. It negates the direct, linear approach and the quick eye that follows the line. But form does not reside in text alone. It is a relationship to the text; the actor needs to affirm the meaning of form in the first place. Only then can form be a catalyst for mediopassivity. The receiving actor both actively responds to and is passively led by Enjambments, metrical feet, or breaks in metre. A verse's ebbs and flows evoke pronunciations that often result a bodily response, such as oral rendition or even rhythmic movement. Equally, in the macro perspective, structured poetic forms with fixed patterns such as Ghazal, Villanelle, or Pantoum give a poetic voice an inherently strong motion.

The history of the idea of artistic fiction accounts for this distinction, where '[it] is precisely poetic appearance, which is *conscious as appearance*, that reflects the spiritual situation and the psychological needs of man.' (Schlaffer, 2006: 87; translation mk, italics added) Form is a truth here that embodies a deeply hermeneutic foundation. Through its aesthetic poignancy, poetry remains true to its mythically divine origin: an aestheticization of cult and culture. Poetic form exemplifies how the concrete is seen as both a continuation of tradition (poetry *is* highly formal) and an inventive originality that defies traditionalism. Metric and rhyme are structural reminders of a distant past and still contingent in their unexpected contemporary use. Employed with irony, a iambic or dactylic metre signifies to the reader a mode of perception and depth as a first threshold to what is being said. It is a constant confirmation of the fact that in 'the art-work content and form are one: meaning.' (Benjamin, 1979: 66) Such emphasis is already visible in its most basic rendering: the representation on the page; form here is immediately affectual. Poetic verse depends on the white space around a poem, which marks the necessary silence, as in an art gallery where a large wall bears only a few works. The white page is not a negative quality, but the space that the reader may redeem. This creative engagement of reading the absent within the given is a particularly striking variable for resonance. Indeed, what a poem says is often precisely what it leaves unsaid (Eshel, 2020).

This illustrates that form is a fundamental driver of af←fect that is inherently structural. On one hand, readers respond to form intuitively, even before reflecting on the meaning of words. On the other hand, form also carries a structural dimension; a reader of poetry values form because they know about its traditions. Yet, appreciation of it must not overshadow the author's voice. A reader mediates formal knowledge and the immediate af←fect of the specific form within the reading experience. We can illustrate this with Tranströmer's free verse, which is known for both evoking and disrupting traditional metrical rhythms. The reader must be prepared to play with expectations, as in this intuitively rhythmic but ultimately disruptive classic (*Allegro*):

> The music is a glass house on a slope
> where stones are flying, stones are rolling.
>
> And the stones roll straight through
> but every pane remains whole.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 141)

Further, Tranströmer uses visual appearance such as a free line break to underscore a receptive significance. The reader needs to affirm this and look for meaning in it. For it makes a difference if we read in a single line of *The persistent humming that's right now following us up the depths*, or if we see it broken into three lines:

> The persistent humming that's right now following us
> up
> the depths.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 309)

Visual emphasis in poetry guides the reader's focus, forming an iconic unity between form and meaning. It is easy to miss the details if we encounter words without formal emphasis. Consider the anticlimactic juxtaposition and its tension of correspondence above. The *depths* appear to be a centre, but we are going up. Further, we read not of a single, concrete depth, but *the depth**s***. It is a transcendent reality of depths that burdens us, yet it remains tied to a concrete present moment, which can only become manifest as a narrow instance of time. Tranströmer has subjective, psychological burdens in mind, those that unite us in their generalisable *as such*: those that we encounter as *mental loads*, as superimposed layers in our everyday lives.

To the superficial reader, this seems simplistic; to the poetically affirmative reader, this is a depth of craftsmanship. The author employs the breaks specifically to slow down the reading, to let the

reader consider concrete emphases. But it requires this affirmative relationship and guidance by the other that allows the break to express its significance. If read out loud, it even lets us jump at the *up*—which is even more pronounced in the Swedish original where it is formed of two syllables, rhythmically opposing the last line:

> Det envisa gnolandet som följer oss just nu
> uppför
> djupen.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 308)

In the end, the contradictions that are evoked here by the unity of line break and semantics correspond to the contradictions that we encounter in everyday life, once we hear this humming and let it guide us some way. For in this poem, called *Schubertiana*, this humming is the music of Schubert, played with friends or family; music that allows some transcendence to trust in, as 'when the light goes out in the stairwell and your hand follows—with trust—the blind railing that finds its way in the darkness.' (Tranströmer, 2023: 307)

Transformative adaptation in the context of poetry means sustaining awareness for this emphasis of form. Aesthetic form grounds the author's voice. Sustaining this requires an affirmative relationship to the work of art that literally allows guidance *by* this voice. Meaning is never given but reconstructed through affectual engagement with the other. This ties in directly with elemental significance.

*Elemental significance*

Rosa's passive-pathic, affirmative self is perhaps most clearly found in what I call elemental significance. Every element of a poem, however small, unusual, or structurally contradictory, is part of its voice and is therefore received with significance. We have just experienced this in regard to form. Here we find it beyond formal aspects. It requires a mode of reception that is simultaneously affirmative and open. *Affirmation* means: recognising continuations within a poet's oeuvre and the general discourse on the craft; and there is *openness*: searching for situationally new meaning, both within specific works and the general discourse. The result is that even what causes discomfort and unhinges conventional or historically perceived meaning is taken serious. Again, this describes the *relationship* to the text; that each element is received with an affirmative significance is nothing that a text itself prescribes.

Consider how Tranströmer is represented as a great poet generally (Cole, 2011) and as a specifically Nordic poet (Ringgaard, 2021). But I as the receiving actor may be neither intensely moved by the general idea of *the* latest Nobel prize recipient nor by Tranströmer as *the* Nordic poet. Still, if I am familiar with such discourse, I necessarily relate to its symbolic meaning. It might entice me to look for a specific *Nordicness*, which I in future readings may find consistent in Tranströmer's work, such as the imagery of unspoilt, moving sea or animated vastness. Or, in tension with such general discourse, the notion of *the* Nordic poet might personally contradict my reading of Tranströmer as a *World* poet. The same can be said of religious belief. As we will see below, Tranströmer often touches on religious themes, and there are many interpretations of spirituality in Tranströmer's work (Schulte, 2017; Whiting, 2004). But another reader may wish to read him as a secular voice, perhaps because they have first encountered Tranströmer as such.

Such tensions of generalised meaning and previous reception interweave in each moment of reception (so each possibility of resonance). It means that images of sea and vastness, or of secular and religious belief, are interpreted in a specific context of meaning. How does an affirmative, contemplative relationship to the world deal with such tensions? The reader cannot dominate Tranströmer as a *World* poet if, eventually and against receptive intentions, Tranströmer's *Nordicness* should prevail. Likewise, if I appreciate Tranströmer as a meaningful voice, perhaps I am beginning to find his religious beliefs meaningful too—without them contradicting my own secular views.

In practical terms, this means not shortcutting the text to make it speak in *my* voice. It is the work that needs to speak to me and I need to respond. Instead of deconstructing what is being said to control deeper meaning, elemental significance means allowing the text to speak with its own voice, enabling even the tiniest element to have significance and to contribute to overall meaning—a meaning that might span decades of work and reception. It is for this reason that even expressions of sadness, mourning, or the ugly turn out to become beauty on the page, too. This is also what Taylor demonstrates with his examination of Eliot or Baudelaire (Taylor, 2024: 267–361). Taylor is looking for cosmic (re-)connection, which forms a structural background informed by decades of practicing philosophy. But these poets talk of existential *disruptions*; Taylor affirms every element of the poets' utterances rather than discarding ugly parts in order to adapt the poetry to his reception. Disruption is part of their modernism.

It is in this sense of affirming every element of a poem that a sphere builds up historically as a structural background of reception. The receiving actor is transformed by it just as they transform this basis for reading, for what the poet's voice may convey next time. Symbolic discourse of cultural

actors feeds into this just as my own moments of reception do. We can pick up the example of religious beliefs to illustrate this.

Consider the imagery of the unfinished individual who is a space with doors and walls. It forms a lasting force within Tranströmer's oeuvre over the course of decades. A hopeful metaphysician, Tranströmer asserts that people are inherently open, welcoming, and connected, rather than separated, if only they listen to each other and summon their humanistic courage. This imagery intuitively resonates with a passive-pathic, affirmative relationship to the world. We can find an early depiction of it in the poem *The Half-Finished Heaven* (originally published in 1962 as the eponymous poem of the collection *Den Halvfärdiga Himlen*):

> Each person is a half-open door
> leading to a room for everyone.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 143)

The poem is an illustration of resonance in the wake of spiritual realisation, of believing in a non-dogmatic fashion. Strikingly, it allows both secular *and* religious interpretations. Tranströmer uses the language of light and awakening throughout, but the climax is the image of the individual as the entrance to a space of community and mutuality open to all. Then, in the 1989 collection (*För Levande och Döda*) we find two poems, *Vermeer* and *Romanska Bågar*, that both extend this imagery. Vermeer plays on the humanistic ability of individuals to surpass their own confines and inabilities, illustrated by the notion of the wall. At first it is a literal wall that separates different spheres of life from one another, until it gradually takes on a metaphorical status in which the wall becomes part of the self:

> It hurts to go through walls, and makes you sick
> but it's necessary.
> The world is one. But walls…
> And the wall is part of you—
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 413)

Finally, the following poem in this collection is the most complex, as it combines the metaphorical uses of the two poems above. The narrator visits a Romanesque church and, after being somewhat lulled at first by crude architectural vaults, hears the voice of an angel whispering:

> "Don't be ashamed that you're human, be proud!
> Inside you, vault behind vault opens endlessly.
> You'll never be complete, and that's how it should be."
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 417)

This voice transforms muteness into resonance, and it uses the notion of the vault for the human condition, a nature of incompleteness but fundamental reciprocity. Resonance fills the narrator with tears until he recognises everyone around him as having the same nature: 'inside each of them vault behind vault opened endlessly.'[10] Tranströmer here beautifully renders a moment of resonance visible within a few lines. But since it takes place within a religious space and an angel is speaking, the *religious* spirituality can hardly be denied. Can it still be read as a secular interpretation of human nature? An affirmative reader can do so, but they can also not deny the other possibility.

Phenomenologically speaking: absolute concentration in the material generates diligence in the practice. Each element is significant, and reception needs to maintain it affirmatively. Taking this seriously means not wishing to dominate the meaning of the work but to contemplate what is given which, again, dovetails with our next phenomenon.

*Uncontrollability of the voice of the author*

Form and elemental significance directly gesture towards the third phenomenon in reception: receptive uncontrollability. Indeterminacy of meaning—a situational unobtainability of the voice of the poet—is inherent in the practice of reception. The receiving actor needs to endure a momentary silence of the poetic voice in order to sustain the potential for resonance in the long run.

Art, in its general sense, is coded as a practice of accessing something ordinarily inaccessible, transforming feelings and experiences into language. It may be a truism to claim that poetry conveys the unspeakable. But it is precisely this communication of the expressive rather than the objective world, of perception and feeling rather than cognition and propositional truths that marks the force of poetic verse. Art inevitably faces the challenge of expressing highly idiosyncratic experiences through inherently limited and generalizable means—language, symbols, and formal representation. How can the artist ensure that they express the highly subjective in a more general form? They cannot. The expression of idiosyncrasy contains an ineradicable moment of uncontrollability that

---

[10] Similarly, at the end of *Vermeer*, a transcendent voice turns to the narrator and 'whispers: "I am not empty, I am open."'

equally applies to the practice of reception (Rosa, 2019a: 282). How can the audience be sure that they understand the depths of what the surface provides? They cannot.

Such an ambivalence is particularly central to poetic work (O'Rourke, 2024). Uncontrollability in reception means that it is always possible that this time—this writing, this reading, this poem—will fail the reader. It abruptly becomes inaccessible, and the actor remains (temporarily) stuck on the surface. Actors can still read what is written, but a deeper sense, a substantial meaning, will not emerge—at least not this reading. An affirmative worldview endures this momentary silence in the hope of accessing the voice of the other again next time. In turn, accessing substantial meaning after momentary inaccessibility, or resolving tension affirmatively, is all the more a potential for resonance. It is an epiphany that surpasses the realm of the logical mind when the previously inaccessible does make sense; recall also how Rosa describes a concert as an epiphany for those who find meaning in heavy metal within the instrumentalising capitalist society (Rosa, 2023: 111–134). Rightness or truth are wrong categories here. The emotive-cum-reflective wrestling with possible meanings repeatedly opens the prospect of resonance. Schlaffer sums this up in the dictum that a 'significant part of the magic of poetry resides in what is *not* understood' (2006: 52; translation mk, italic added).

The result is a hermeneutics of concealment and revelation that presupposes that the reception of poetry is, to a certain extent, work. As Dilthey's hermeneutics already suggests (1970), this work reflects the movement between subjective experience and objective representation in a continuous interpretive process. It means interpretively working through a poem that concretises with each reading in what way an author is authentic and moral, what beauty and memory mean for the specific work, or what the sacred aura of a body of works entails. Transformatively adapting poetry thus means considering the perhaps rationally demanding but equally emotionally affecting hermeneutic task without trying to mute the voice of the other in the process. It is work. But this work is joy since it leaves space for otherness or renewal.[11] The result is a sense of *semicontrollability*: you can try to control the poetic material, but the meaning of the authorial voice to me personally remains uncontrollable. Again, it is an affirmative *relationship* to the craft to sustain it despite its temporary muteness.

---

[11] And doing so in the company of others seems to add to this joy, as the success of decidedly collective podcasts on poetry confirms. For instance: https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/poetry, https://www.faber.co.uk/journal/introducing-faber-poetry-podcast/, or https://www.lrb.co.uk/podcasts-and-videos/podcasts/close-readings/introducing-love-and-death.

I would like to illustrate such an affirmative relationship—a hermeneutics of concealment and revelation—with one of Tranströmer's shorter poems, *Two Cities*, originally published in the 1996 collection *Sorgegondolen*:

> Each on its own side of a strait, two cities
> one plunged into darkness, under enemy control.
> In the other the lamps are burning.
> The luminous shore hypnotizes the blacked-out one.
>
> I swim out in a trance
> on the glittering dark waters.
> A muffled tuba blast breaks in.
> It's a friend's voice, take your grave and go.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 519)

The poem's core is liminality—an in-between space whose meaning unfolds gradually. My initial reading intuitively drew on a personal lifeworld discourse. I found in these eight lines an expression of what fleeing from the GDR might have felt like. Imagine the Berlin Wall and the impossibility to escape: the glittering free, capitalist Western world as seen from the East. The muffled tuba blast is the eventual friend whose missing rifle shot supportively says: do not turn around, never come back. And indeed, it was not only from my point of view that it was meaningful to deal with German history here. Tranströmer's German publisher and close friend, Michael Krüger, grew up in Berlin amidst the influence of the GDR. Further, in the same collection of poems, we can find another, explicit poem on the GDR, *November in the former GDR*.

So this reading made sense, but it also raised a sense of uneasiness as I became more aware to Tranströmer's use of religious symbolism. Suddenly, new readings of *Two Cities* transformed its deeper meaning into a religious theme, casting Sodom and Gomorrah, the glittering sinfulness, and the voice of a friendly angel who tells Lot to flee and not look back.[12] Yet the subtly hopeful sentiment emanating from the earlier reading did not seem to fit with the account of Genesis. The sparing of Lot in the midst of the destruction of these cities and the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt did not correspond with the meaning of Tranströmer's oeuvre, in my history of reception. Although individual images began to take hold, the poem was muted. The earlier delight in reading it remained absent for some years. Still, I admired each individual syllable since I felt that there is a depth in these lines.

---

[12] Compare also the interpretation of Schulte (2017), who finds here the Christian symbolism of resurrection.

And then, this poem's liminality suddenly shifted again as my reading became geared to the symbolism of aphasia. The binary of *having a voice* and *being mute* began to prevail. In November 1990, Tranströmer suffered a stroke, which led to an aphasia. The poet who had struggled with language all his life had to learn its simplest elements a second time. This illustrates uncontrollability in an extremely fundamental sense: expressiveness is not a natural given. Tranströmer (with the help of his wife Monica) wrote about his new inability to express himself:

> The only thing I want to say
> glimmers out of reach
> like the silver
> at the pawnbroker's.
>
> (Tranströmer, 2023: 493)

This theme is a *darkening existentialism* that hovers over the poems of *Sorgegondolen*, the first collection to appear after the stroke. Further, it is striking to find that Michael Krüger was among the friends to write to Tranströmer right after the stroke, and that the poet himself sent him the German translation of *Two Cities* with a personal dedication, 'Till Michel från Tomas' (Butt et al., 2018: 211).[13] These biographical details fed into further readings. They opened the dark city as a realm of aphasia, while the narrator is hypnotized by the luminosity of the expressive other: two states of a human being divided by the position of the narrator. In comes the friend—Krüger?—who gives Tranströmer the friendly push, muffled by the language barrier. *Take your grave* transforms to: do not think of giving up. Stand up and keep going, language is still there, hope is still there.

Each element on the page began to correspond to the hopeful sentiment that Tranströmer exemplified throughout his work while it also induced this darkening existentialism. It was a juxtaposition of symbols in a deeply meaningful way that resulted a revelatory reading experience. It became iconic: the moment of resonance made this poem personally iconic for the general themes involved. Was it the best reading? *The best reading* is a wrong category for an affirmative worldview. Many other interpretations are possible.[14] Nevertheless, personally, this interpretation continues to resonate.

---

[13] Michael Krüger is often referred to as Michel.

[14] See, for instance, McGriff's interpretation (2011): 'Reading this poem, one can't help but think of Sweden's wartime neutrality, and the range of complex emotions that one might feel looking out over the waters, knowing that the countries in the distance were occupied or under siege.'

## Closing remarks: the poetic being-in-the-world

Poetry is a both symbolically and institutionally structured realm of the (written *and* orally presented) word within society. But the concrete, personal experience of receiving poetry is never fixed. Resonance cannot be prescribed. The meaning of poetry must be brought to life by a contemplative relationship: a poetic being-in-the-world.

The central properties that Rosa presupposes for resonance come to the fore in this relationship. The most immediate *affect* is aesthetic form. In a meaningful reception of poetry, linear semantics are subordinate to the presentation on the page. We also find *self-efficacy*. Resonance builds on a self's ability to experience themselves as a meaningful voice in the world. This is highlighted in the co-construction of a poem's meaning. Works of poetry allow, even foster this; what a poem says is never fixed. This already points to *transformative adaptation.* A critical review, even the book jacket promise specific cultural meaning. But the reader has to determine their personal meaningfulness in reception. They have to find their own Tranströmer, the one who speaks to them personally, but who still retains the voice of Tranströmer himself. Reception thus needs to build on an *intrinsic interest*, since the receiving actor must not dominate the voice of the other for instrumental reasons. And in response to it, the actor becomes, at least to a degree, *Tranströmerized*; if they encounter a Nordic Forest, the Baltic Sea, or an opening vault they may have a line of Tranströmer in mind that signifies material forest, sea, or a sense of humanistic or religious belief. They mediate world through the language of that meaningful space—it resonates beyond its material confines. And lastly, there is *uncontrollability*, which is primarily reflected by the voice of the author and its temporal inaccessibility. Even poems that a reader supposes to "know" can become temporarily illegible. It requires hermeneutic openness—an affirmative relation to what can be meant—to overcome such moments. Echoing *self-efficacy* as well as *mediopassivity*, these new ways of reading can be induced by external discourse just as they can come from within the reader.

To the degree that actors find personalised meaning for themselves within a highly culturalised sphere, this limits Alexander's strong notion of the relatively *autonomous* discourse of culture. Taking meaning seriously means acknowledging that concrete meaning is often *more* relative than seems obvious. Transformative adaptation (*Anverwandlung*) demonstrates that culture is indeed often highly dependent on socialisation and concrete lifeworlds. This is also what *self-efficacy* implies. Society may normatively claim that heavy metal is unpleasant, but by rejecting this hegemonic code, actors can still experience it as personally meaningful. Post-modernist communities may assert that poetry with metaphysical claims is outdated. A reader can still find their meaningful place with the works of

Tranströmer. Normative culture structures exist; but their impact is limited where communities and individual actors find their personal space.

In needs to be said that meaningful engagement is possible with limited correspondence to symbolic structures; this is especially the case with children. And yet, it is hard to imagine any doing in society that takes place without prior exposure to some general discourse; as I have shown, even nature is a deeply culturalised space. And even children are socialised to appreciate world in particular ways. Actors cannot flee society and socialisation. The resonant space of an actor is in one way or another always preconditioned by symbolic meaning, which is particularly true in the vertical dimension of possible spheres. Thus, one task for sociological analyses of resonance is to determine what these ways are, how actors deal with the relation of the general and the intimate, and, perhaps most importantly, what inhibits resonance even though a space is sacredly meaningful to an actor. Moreover, poetry is but one way of demonstrating how resonance becomes manifest, and I offer my personal reading as a case study. Many other forms of art or readings of Tranströmer are possible. And lastly, I focus on reception. Writing or the vast social expanses of critical discourse and collective reading, including new digital spaces, are further areas where resonance can be explored.

A poetic-being-in-the-world means sustaining a relationship to the written word that does not try to control it, but affirms all its elements. It means carving out a space in modern life where the hermeneutics of concealment and revelation have a significant, authentic place in their own right, deeply touched by the meaning of art, but personalised and undisturbed by momentary unobtainability. This highlights key aspects of the contemplative relationship to the world. The acceptance of a situationally inaccessible other or the affirmation of a voice of the other that speaks to me meaningfully demonstrate reciprocity, generosity, and a metaphorical community at eye level. As an ethics, which Rosa intends Resonance Theory to be, this is a fruitful guide for life in general.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale as well as at the Literature & Society Laboratory, Institute for Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences, for discussing early drafts of this article. I also thank the four reviewers for their helpful comments as well as the editors of *Acta Sociologica*.

## Funding

The author is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) with a postdoctoral stipend (Walter Benjamin Stipendium).

## About the author

Marcel Knöchelmann is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University, supported by a Walter Benjamin Stipend of the German Research Foundation. His research explores how cultural and academic practices of text production generate meaning, shape public discourse, and reflect normative orders. He received his PhD from University College London in 2021. A trained bookseller, he also writes poetry and literary fiction. More information and selected publications are available at https://marcel-knoechelmann.de/

## References

Alexander JC (ed) (2003) *The meanings of social life: A cultural sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alexander JC (2004) Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy. *Sociological Theory* 22(4): 527–573. DOI: 10.1111/j.0735-2751.2004.00233.x.

Alexander JC (2006) *The civil sphere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alexander JC (2008) Iconic Experience in Art and Life: Surface/Depth Beginning with Giacometti's Standing Woman. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(5): 1–19. DOI: 10.1177/0263276408095213.

Alexander JC and Smith P (1993) The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies. *Theory and Society* 22(2): 151–207. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/657770.

Benjamin W (1979) *One-way street, and other writings*. London: NLB.

Bly R and Tranströmer T (2013) *Airmail: The letters of Robert Bly and Tomas Tranströmer*. Minneapolis, MI: Graywolf Press.

Bourdieu P (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Butt W, Halldin M and Tranströmer T (eds) (2018) *Tomas Tranströmer: Randgebiete der Arbeit*. München: Hanser.

Cole T (2011) Miracle Speech: The Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer. *The New Yorker,* 6 October.

Dilthey W (1970) *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Durkheim É (2008) *The elementary forms of religious life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eshel A (2020) *Poetic thinking today: An essay*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Farzin S (2017) Lyrische Weltsoziologie. *Soziologische Revue* 40(2): 169–176. DOI: 10.1515/srsr-2017-0025.

Felski R (2020a) *Hooked: Art and attachment*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Felski R (2020b) The Resonance of Education. *On Education. Journal for Research and Debate* 3(9). DOI: 10.17899/on_ed.2020.9.2.

Fuchs A (2020) Resonance: a normative category or figure of uncertainty? On reading Hartmut Rosa with Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain. *Journal of Political Power* 13(3): 353–365. DOI: 10.1080/2158379X.2020.1828756.

Jaeggi R (2016) *Entfremdung: Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Knöchelmann M (2024a) Cultural Intermediation and Civil Society: Towards a Hermeneutically Strong Conception. *Cultural Sociology*. DOI: 10.1177/17499755241228891.

Knöchelmann M (2024b) Formal authorship in the wake of uncertain futures: The narrative of publish or perish in the humanities. *Research Evaluation* 33. DOI: 10.1093/reseval/rvae044.

Knöchelmann M (2025) Literary Fiction as Art and Activism: Colson Whitehead, Post-blackness, and the Trumpian Novel. *American Journal for Cultural Sociology*.

McGriff M (2011) The Eternal Moment: Translating the Nobel Laureate. *Bookforum*. Available at: https://www.bookforum.com/culture/the-eternal-moment-translating-the-nobel-laureate-8735 (accessed 21 March 2024).

O'Rourke M (2024) On Ambivalence: To Be, but to Be How? It is the voice of both our lives and our unled lives. *Poetry*. Available at: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/162740/on-ambivalence-to-be-but-to-be-how (accessed 10 December 2024).

Reckwitz A (2017) Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des gelungenen Lebens? *Soziologische Revue* 40(2): 185–195. DOI: 10.1515/srsr-2017-0027.

Reckwitz A (2020) *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten: Zum Strukturwandel der Moderne*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Reckwitz A and Rosa H (2023) *Late Modernity in Crisis: Why We Need a Theory of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ringgaard D (2021) The Region as an In-between Space: Tomas Tranströmer's Östersjöar and the Making of an Archipelagic Nordic Literature. In: Ganguly D (ed.) *The Cambridge history of world literature:* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 495–510.

Rosa H (2010) *Alienation and acceleration: Towards a critical theory of late-modern temporality*. Malmö: NSU Press.

Rosa H (2017) *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Rosa H (2019a) *Resonance: A sociology of the relationship to the world*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rosa H (2019b) *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Rosa H (2020) *The uncontrollability of the world*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rosa H (2023) *When Monsters Roar and Angels Sing: Eine kleine Soziologie des Heavy Metal*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.

Rosa H (2024) *Democracy needs religion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Schiöler N (1999) *Koncentrationens Konst: Tomas Tranströmers Senare Poesi*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers.

Schlaffer H (2006) *Poesie und Wissen: Die Entstehung des ästhetischen Bewußtseins und der philologischen Erkenntnis*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Schulte C (2017) Eine halboffene Tür. *Christ der Gegenwart,* 9 August.

Ståhl C (2024) Dark resonance: On the possibility of resonance with death. *Acta Sociologica*. DOI: 10.1177/00016993241281224.

Susen S (2020) The Resonance of Resonance: Critical Theory as a Sociology of World-Relations? *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 33(3): 309–344. DOI: 10.1007/s10767-019-9313-6.

Taylor C (2016) *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Taylor C (2018) Resonance and the romantic era: A comment on Rosa's conception of the good life. In: Rosa H and Henning C (eds) *The Good Life Beyond Growth:* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 121–148.

Taylor C (2024) *Cosmic connections: Poetry in the age of disenchantment*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Thumala Olave MA (2020) Book love. A cultural sociological interpretation of the attachment to books. *Poetics* 81: 101440. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2020.101440.

Tranströmer T (2023) *The blue house: Collected works of Tomas Tranströmer*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.

Váňa J (2021) Knowing through feeling: The aesthetic structure of a novel and the iconic experience of reading. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 9(2): 211–241. DOI: 10.1057/s41290-021-00130-5.

Vandenberghe F (2023) Tuning into Harmut Rosa's systematic romanticism. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 10(1): 12. DOI: 10.1186/s40711-023-00189-2.

Whiting J (2004) The Recognition of Faith in the Poetry of Tomas Transtromer. *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 7(4): 65–79. DOI: 10.1353/log.2004.0042.

Želinský D, Smith P and Simonsen S (2021) From artistic consecration to degradation: The case of Sven Hassel. *Acta Sociologica*. DOI: 10.1177/00016993211022792.