

A Vision Shared: Rising Water, Rising Voices

An Eco-Poetry Workshop, Session 3



Marine Animals & Metaphor

MARA-DARIA COJOCARU, 11.12.2020

„Wasserstandsmeldung“

1. Literally: report on the water-level
2. Metaphorically: How are you? :-)
And how did it go with the poetry?
3. Today's session
 1. Why use metaphors?
 2. Why not to use metaphors, particularly those that involve other animals
 3. Your water animal metaphors
4. Dana Ranga's *Waterbook*
5. Time to float your ideas for a poem





The Uses of Metaphor ...

Figure [sic!] of speech, comparing one thing to another, where the meaning „carries over“ from the one to the other, either clarifying or obscuring an issue

E.g. „storm in a glass of water“
(-> „tempest in a teapot“ note how the image changes through translation)

„like water off a duck's back“ = simile

Metaphors we live by: „to cast one's net widely“, „fishing for compliments“, „things going swimmingly“, but also: „to feel down“, „getting up“ (orientational metaphors, Lakoff & Johnson), „looking forward“ etc.

Using and inventing metaphors for new experiences is great and a chief ingredient to poetry! Aristotle said poets have an „eye for resemblances“, creating new associations between words, allowing meaning from one semantic field to refract in relation to another.

Yet, there is a reason why the blue-footed Booby here on the left looks a bit unhappy ...

... and Its Abuses

Apart from some metaphors being just plain old and boring (e.g. „ein alter Hut“ in German), humans have often conserved simplistic views of other animals and anthropocentric privileges as to what humans are allowed to do to other animals in metaphors:

„(stupid) cow“, „(mean) shark“, „(fat) whale“

„flogging a dead horse“, „killing two birds with one stone“

„great chain of being“ (humans at the top)

These metaphors reinforce the distance between humans and other animals.

- If we imagine sharing a future with all creatures on this planet, maybe even moving back into the water, to build and inhabit these utopian places you have explored with Lisa, don't we have an obligation to find the right words for other animals?
 - And what metaphors could we come up with to speculate about more-than-human experiences?
 - Questions?
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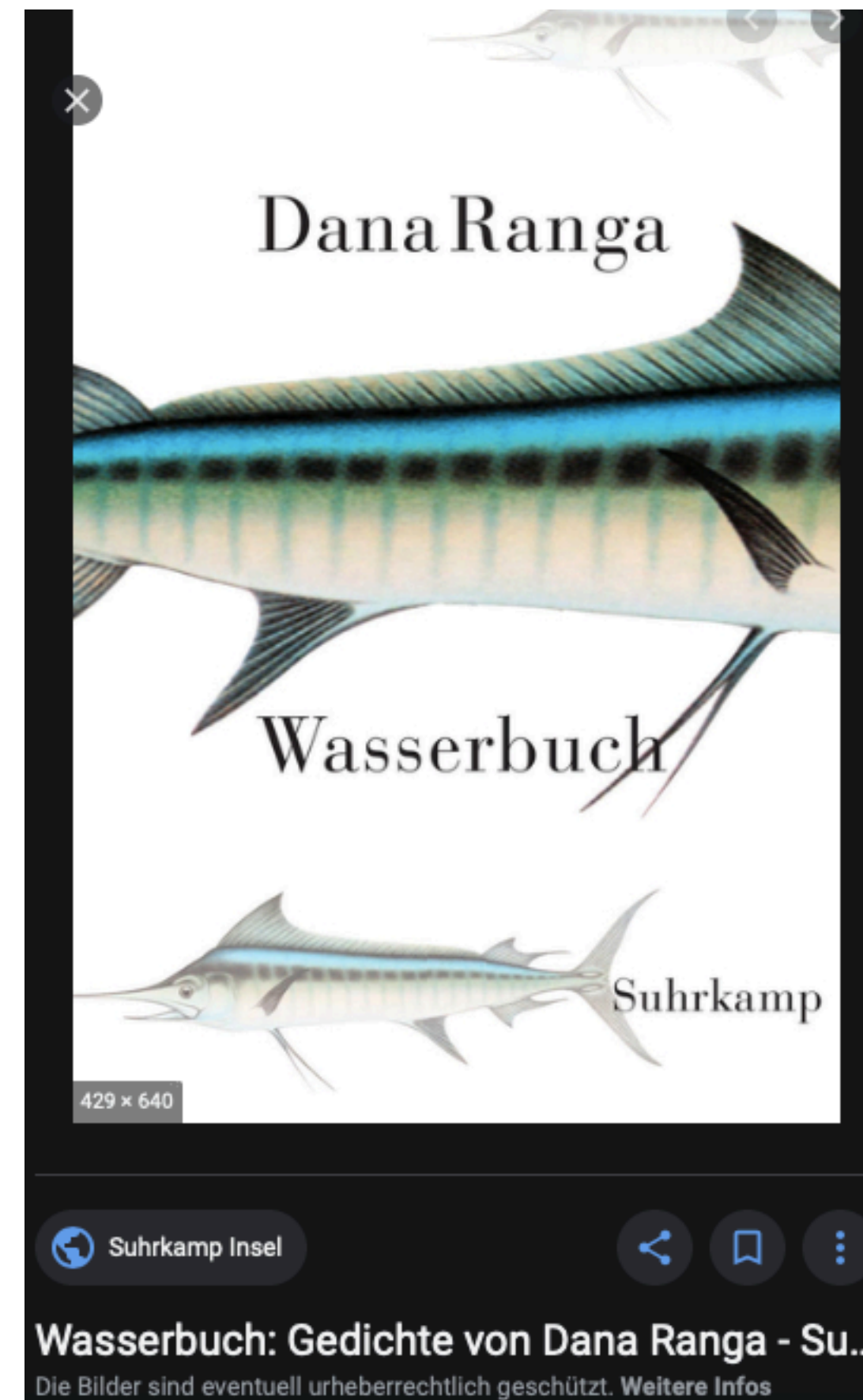
Your metaphors involving water animals

- In the breakout sessions, you are asked to exchange the metaphors you have brought to the session, try to find translations, discuss whether the meaning has travelled well, play with it, see whether you can come up with new hybrid-metaphors (metaphors transferring meaning from one language into the other).
 - Discuss the imageries and the assumptions behind them.
 - In the plenum, please post your metaphors, translations and new creations into the chat and we'll list your findings below.
 - the eye of the tiger, being like a chicken (chickening out), like water off a duck's back, being a cod, being eagle-eyed, being weirder than a green dog, pike in the carp pond (causing a stir), like a fish in the water, the fish dies through the mouth, to have a tom cat (being hung over), Oh, la vache (Oh, the cow), to have a cat or a frog in the throat, being dumb as a jellyfish ...
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Waterbook (German: Wasserbuch (2011))

Author: Dana Ranga

1. Poetic project: exploring the world under water, trying to imagine „what it is like“ to be another creature (note the potential and limitations of anthropomorphism)
2. Role of natural sciences, observation but also personal projection



Aurelia aurita

Ich sollte, ich sollte; was bringt mir der Schall zurück? Für Worte kein Ohr. Ich drehe sie um, im Mund; warme Beute, ein Tropfen Milch im Meer. Sei mir Grenzverlauf und weiße Fahne; verhandelbar, gewiss

I should, I should; what could bring back that sound? No ear for words.
I turn them around in my mouth; warm prey, a drop of milk in the sea.
Be the border line for me and the white flag; to be negotiated, certainly

(translation by Jill E. Twark)

Haplophryne mollis

Inside and out, water and salt. Thought sinew, passport paper, skin. What would we see, if it didn't exist, that tightly corseted Here-I-Am?

Distorted heartsounds, wordscraps in the blood; hesitant love stuck to the arterial walls; barren wishes caught in the channel's web. Shy guards

stand at the border, your name means nothing to them; a lip impression in your passport. Certainty becomes you (humming in the creases)

Innen und außen Wasser und Salz, Gedankensehne, Passpapier, Haut. Was sähen wir, wenn sie nicht wäre, straff geschnürtes Hier-bin-ich?

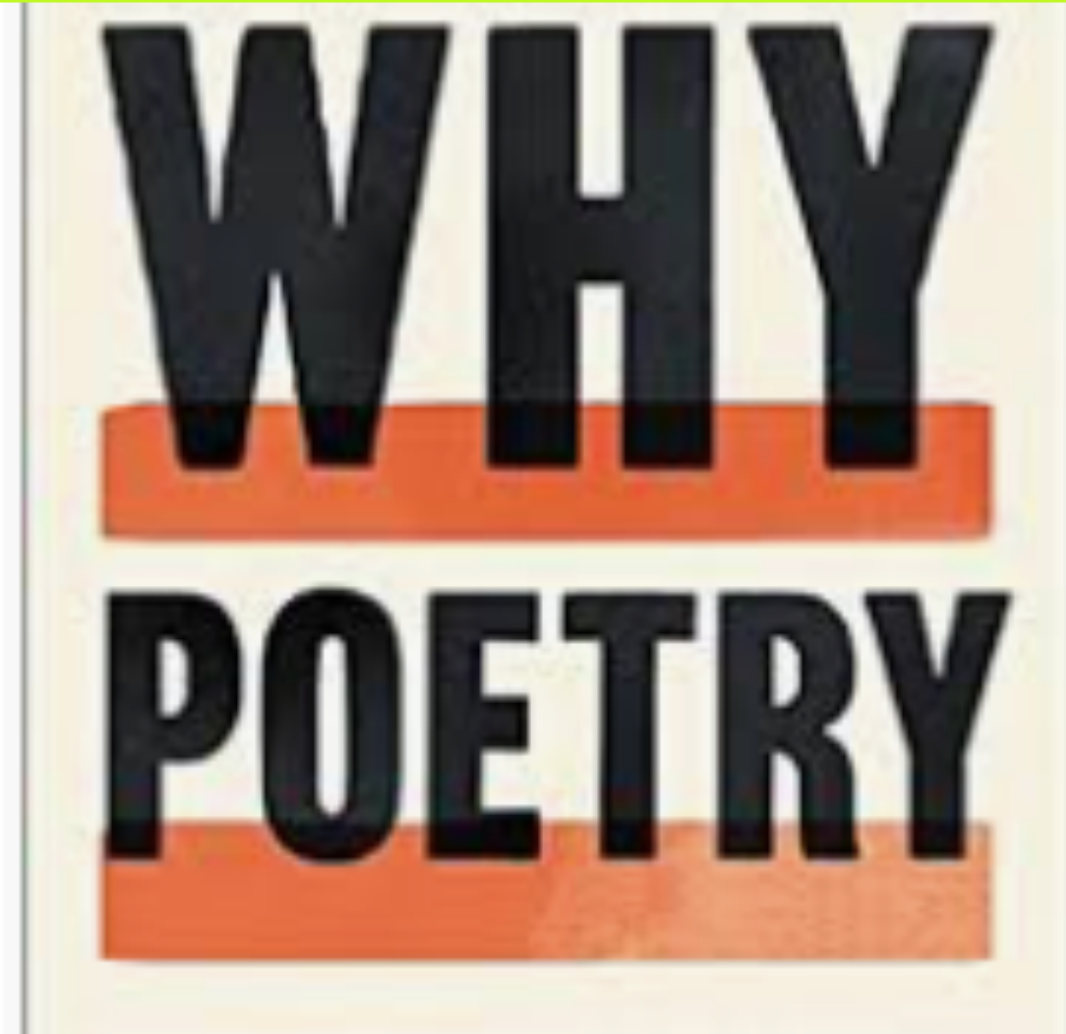
Verwachsenes Herz, Wortreste im Blut; zögerliche Liebe, festgesetzt an Aderwänden, karge Wünsche, verfangen im Bahnengeflecht.

Scheue Wächter stehen an der Grenze, dein Name sagt ihnen nichts, der Lippenabdruck im Pass. Gewissheit kleidet dich (in den Falten ein Summen)

Latimeria chalumnae

It's best when someone says: understand whatever you want; and turns away,
and forgets you

Am besten ist es, wenn jemand sagt, verstehe was du willst; und wendet sich ab,
und vergisst dich



Why Poetry: Amazon.co.uk: Za...
amazon.co.uk



Time to float your ideas for a poem

Let's play :-)

„[...] because poetry is so interested in **re-activating the material of language**, in order to see what is possible when functionality is subordinated to exploration and play, poetry is full of metaphor. [...]

Often I have intuitively placed two words near each other, and then only later realized that there are latent connections and refractions of meaning of which I was not remotely aware in a conscious sense. This is both unnerving and thrilling, but **I've learned to trust it**, telling myself again and again not only to have faith in my decades dedicated to getting to know the material of language, but also that **the complex machine of language** and its collective wisdom is far more intelligent than my little consciousness could ever be. When I am at my best as a poet, **I feel not like I am using language to write, but the other way around.**“ (Matthew Zapruder, *Why Poetry*, p. 152-3, emph. mine)