

DEPARTURES:
THE WORK OF TAWADA YŌKO

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes the work of the bilingual writer Tawada Yōko (1960-) as its point of departure into the question of a literature written outside or beyond the mother tongue. While scholars in Germany have been theoretically accepting of Tawada's exophony, this is not mirrored in Japanese literary scholarship where Tawada's prodigious output goes largely unnoticed in critical circles despite her numerous literary awards. Of scholars working on Tawada, only a handful deal with her texts in German and Japanese, and few of those have committed to the reflection necessary to comprehend the ramifications of Tawada's exophonic literature on the theoretical and disciplinary formation of literary studies in those languages. By engaging with critical interventions in the translation of Tawada's texts, and reorienting them toward a theoretical viewpoints elaborated in texts such as "The Crown of Grass" or "The Gate of the Translator", I develop the psychoanalytic reframing of linguistics to pursue the paths Tawada's texts carve out, as she says, in the space *between* Japanese and German, in the holes opened by the layering of one language over the other in the process of translation.

The first chapter of my dissertation poses the question of the mother tongue, its historical deployment, and what it means that the locus of the signifier 'mother' can be displaced by technology. My second deals with an experimental translation by Chantal Wright which includes Wright's translation notes as a separate column of the text. I read the story Wright translates, Tawada's "Portrait of a Tongue", against Wright's translation notes to demonstrate the ways in which the text evades the rhetorical moves by which Wright reifies ethnic difference in the text. In doing away with the maternal genealogy

of the mother tongue, and idea of national language as determining a text, my third chapter steps into this gap and reads Tawada's novel *Yuki no rensūsei* 'technically'. Drawing on post-structural and psychoanalytic theories of writing, I show that the economy of signifying effects in the text produces a form of knowledge lost to readings that search the text for the anthropological category of its 'identity'. Chapter 4 takes Tawada's readings of Paul Celan and theorises a practice of translation she briefly refers to as 'Augenübersetzung' or 'translation with the eye'. I examine Tawada's engagement with experimental reading between phonetic and ideographic writing to demonstrate that translation, in this mode, renders open the disciplinary procedures in which texts find themselves trapped. The last chapter examines Tawada's Japanese-language novels after Fukushima as a critical practice invested in reimagining how we occupy arcades within global space as well as form relationships with the world around the world, or the environment.

In doing so, my work attempts to follow Tawada's manoeuvres, her departures from normative language, in the spirit of polyglot play – something Tawada contrasts against the authority of the *Sprachpolizei*, the speech-police. In this dissertation I show how we can accommodate literary studies to the new reality of, not a naïve concept of world literature, but literatures which are more fully part of the world. The exophonic literature of writers like Tawada is something that conventional literary studies, conceived of as the study of national literature, cannot yet think. It remains our task to do so.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Paul McQuade was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1987. He holds a First Class Honours in Japanese from The University of Edinburgh with Distinction in Spoken Japanese, an MA in Japanese Studies from Jōchi University in Tokyo, and an MLitt in Creative Writing (Distinction) from the University of Glasgow. He is the author of *Hometown Tales: Glasgow* and the short story collection *Between Tongues*.

For my parents,
Alison and Mick.
We did no bad.
(Dinnae greet.)

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POETIC, PROVISIONAL: AN INTRODUCTION

The Appetite of Area

There is a rare psychological disorder in which humans lose the capacity to categorise: apperceptive agnosia. In adults, usually due to physical trauma, this results in loss of the ability to think in concepts and categories. Concept acquisition is one of the most vital components of infant psychology as it reduces the overwhelming perception of ‘new’ objects by reducing them to mere emanations of the concept. One need not invoke the Platonic categories here, but simply note: I can look at a chair and think about it as *furniture* or a *chair* but both these realms belong to concepts I have acquired from previous data. And yet, there is the danger of living in a world precoded, given over to unseen actors, unseen forces, voices from within and without. This is why Marx, for example, asks us to see *beyond* the category, the ideal object of Hegel, to see how the table dances to the tune of capital. The same is true of Freud and Derrida, though their questions and strategies differ. All three of these thinkers are my main theoretical interlocutors in this project as their impulse, indeed the entire basis of, as I understand it, *theory*, is to question the formation of concepts, categories, and objects as they *appear* and to put into question their conditions of possibility. Rather than, as one might expect of a single-author study, opening with the simple question: *Who is Tawada Yoko?* I will instead focus on what makes possible the conceptual category *Tawada Yoko* and how this object has been created as an object of consumption. This is made doubly important for the simple fact that, as Tawada says, Tawada Yōko does not exist. This is a paradox. A thin line which Poe approaches in “The Facts in the Case of M Valdemar”, where the body still manages to speak beyond its death. In Tawada’s case, I believe, her work is an attempt to speak beyond the death of the categories of area which are, fundamentally, the classical concepts of anthropology.

The critique of area has a long history, for example, in the work of Harootunian and Sakai. Indeed, one wonders how it can be elaborated further. I do not propose to do so in this dissertation. Instead, I will simply attempt to listen to what is at work in Tawada's texts. In many cases, this involves what one would call a 'deconstruction' of the categories that shape the text at its metalevel, or what in psychology we would call its metacognitive level. The metacognitive level is always the level of area studies because it is always a function of knowledge — *gnosis* — within the realm of what is given as *perceptual* but is in fact *political*. Gone are the days of the clichéd Area Studies specialist whose work, openly ethnocentric, now seems too easy an object of criticism. The critique, as I see it, comes at a *metacognitive* level and so long as it is confined to this heritage of area studies it cannot open — and is this not the operation of deconstruction itself? — the metacognitive level of literature *in general*. Therefore, what comes under my critique here is not a discipline but an impulse, as Tawada says of people who read Paul Celan, of finding something 'typically German' in a poem. *Typus, genus, species*. It is not simply area studies that relies upon the categorisation of knowledge to function as a discipline. It extends into all the subcategories of literatures at a national level as much as in the more niche categories of migrant literature, exilic literature, and even, as we shall see, exophonic literature. This all functions around a central premise: that writing and life can be joined in the form of an expression. This, above all else, is what is at stake in my readings of Tawada here. But what lies beyond this? What future does writing have when we yield our categories and give in to that childhood innocence or *agnosia*?

In Brazil at the turn of the century, a discourse around cannibalism emerged, *anthropophagia*, which attempted to assimilate modernity and coloniality into the sine qua non of a Brazilian creativity. Whatever legacies this has left, and whatever remains to be thought and critiqued in this discourse, it does raise the question of the ingestion of the other as the foundation of culture. There, it was the heady celebration of a site would be capable of constituting a new form of the absolute beyond

Eurocentrism. The rhetoric of cannibalism, however, might be considered more appropriate to the disciplinary formation known as area studies. The epistemic protocols to which area, literary, and cultural studies have committed themselves have for the most part involved the transformation of raw, cultural artefacts into objects of contemplation and consumption. This is how knowledge becomes utile as much as marketable. And I would like to suggest that here we attempt to avoid such a manoeuvre, even if, in a double-bind, we will never truly be free of this need to classify, taxonomise, categorise, and spatialise what will become knowledge.

For now, let me say that I believe once we open these categories, once we check this drive to taxonomise, other modalities of critical inquiry become possible. That is what one finds in Tawada's work. One can count time in roses. One can plant a garden in which stones bloom. One can make poetry where language attempts to become a billy club in the hands of language police – the *Sprachpolizei*. Rather than pin down the letter, so as to exemplify it under ether, I would rather follow its course as it moves across and through the boundaries that would otherwise stultify it under the glass of the display case.

Chapter Overview

The first chapter of this dissertation poses the question of the mother tongue, its historical deployment, and what it means that the locus of the signifier 'mother' can be displaced by technology. My second deals with an experimental translation by Chantal Wright which includes Wright's translation notes as a separate column of the text. I read the story Wright translates, Tawada's "Portrait of a Tongue", against Wright's translation notes to demonstrate the ways in which the text evades the rhetorical moves by which Wright reifies ethnic difference in the text. In doing away with the maternal genealogy of the mother tongue, and idea of national language as determining a text, my third chapter steps into this gap and reads Tawada's novel *Yuki no renshūsei* 'technically'. Drawing on post-structural and psychoanalytic theories of writing, I show that the economy of signifying effects in the text

produces a form of knowledge lost to readings that search the text for the anthropological category of its 'identity'. My next chapter takes Tawada's readings of Paul Celan and theorises a practice of translation she briefly refers to as 'Augenübersetzung' or 'translation with the eye'. I examine Tawada's engagement with experimental reading between phonetic and ideographic writing to demonstrate that translation, in this mode, renders open the disciplinary procedures in which texts find themselves trapped. The last chapter takes Tawada's opening of the "unit" of the world after Fukushima as the conditions of a new translational form of sociality.

Departures

I will conclude this introduction not with a hermeneutic manoeuvre, not a taxonomy or a summation, but simply with the openness that is the gesture, the position, and the possibility of translation. I have translated Tawada's '*Selbvorstellung*' for the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (German Academy for Language and Poetry) which forms, in part, a later essay found in the book *Akzent: "Transibirische Rosen"* ("Trans-Siberian Roses"). In translating Tawada, I will let her speak for herself *in her own words*, acknowledging all the while that in translation both the 'self' and the 'representation' of a *Selbvorstellung* are fundamentally transformed. I do this to contrast the gesture which is foundational to criticism: the introduction of the author by place of birth. For example, one could say of Tawada, that she was born in Tokyo in 1960 and studied Russian literature at Waseda University before a long train journey at the age of nineteen along the Trans-Siberian Railroad took her to Germany, where, after one year back in Tokyo, she has resided since graduating from university. First in Hamburg, and now in Berlin. One could begin with place of birth (Tokyo), place of longest residence as an adult (Hamburg), and current place of residence (Berlin). And yet, as we can see in the *Selbvorstellung*, this does not really tell us much about Tawada so much as it tells us about geography, space, and linguistic dispersal. Rather than choose to discuss where she was born, or where she lives, Tawada's *own representation* takes us along the route of her interests: in language, history, etymology; in

the legacies of colonialism and the fault lines of culture. Most importantly, in the *possibilities* these open.

A departure can be a taking off. A denuding. A laying bare. In this sense it is always connected to the problem of analysis, the breakdown of cells and of information. But more importantly, a departure is a turning away, taking oneself in a new direction, down a different path. Rather than attempt to provide a summary introduction or a general overview of the author Tawada Yōko, her themes or the stages of her life, I would like to depart from such a gesture. Hence the title and direction of this dissertation. But a departure means first and foremost: a beginning. So let us begin.

Self-Introduction
Yoko Tamada

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to, as a new member of the academy, briefly introduce myself. I could begin my short introduction by talking about my birthplace, Tokyo. I could just as well begin with the place where I live now: Berlin. Or with the place in which I have till now lived the longest, which would be Hamburg. I could also begin, however, with a place in which I was neither born nor live, but rather was merely a guest, since I am after all a traveller.

Last summer, as I arrived in Klappholtall, a small place on the north sea island of Sylt, my field of vision was immediately flooded, in the lower half, with rose bushes, bright green, well-tended. The roses shone just as elegant and solemn as roses from a metropolis, that decorate the banquet halls of palaces, but came across as somehow modest, most likely because their colours were subtle and unevenly applied. The petals were as thin as the simple clothing of a frail, impoverished girl, who danced on the street with the wind. She did not learn how to dance in a school. Her dance instructor was the beach flags, her dance partner the wind. She knew exactly when she had to yield. I thought of the great silence of the long winter and an earlier life, more arduous, in which humanity developed a modesty toward nature.

An older woman familiar with the area taught me the appellation Kamchatka Rose. She said the Kamchatka Rose came from Japan. I told her that Kamchatka isn't part of Japan. I had no desire to be play lecturer, but wanted to quickly sever the Eurasian Continent from Japan before someone accused me of affirming Japanese colonialism. The names of plants try their best to bloom apolitically. *Prunus serrulate* is called Japanese cherry blossom in Germany. A particular variety of cherry, *Someiyoshino* (*Cerasus yedoensis*), was planted by the Japanese in the eastern territories of present-day China and Russia at the end of the 19th century. The imperialists earmarked, with cherry blossoms,

places that were supposed to become *Japanese* later.

The Kamchatka Rose, which settled in Nordfriesland [*das sich in Nordfriesland niedergelassen haben*], is called the Sylt Rose. My residency permit for Germany also bears an official “residency permit” (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*) that marks me as settled in Germany. In the German word *niedergelassen* (lit. to set down, to settle) a weight is put down. It feels good, to put my heavy head and shoulders down on the ground like luggage. I have set myself down here! In contrast to the Sylt roses, however, I have no wish to put down roots, but rather to explore, poetically, the new roots of words. I do not know what is more sinister to me: the naturalization of roses or the naturalization of humans. The roses do not get citizenship, do not walk on a citizenry walk. In the case of naturalization, the immigrant is declared a part of the nation and thus the nation becomes part of nature.

One year later the Sylt roses greeted me in full bloom. This time their colour reminded me of the belt, the *obi*, of a summer kimono, a *yukata*, which I wore as a child to a summer festival. I knew then that I had known these roses before I ever met them a year before on Sylt. The Sylt rose is identical with Hamanasu! Because the intimidating word Kamchatka rose stood in the way, the word *Hamanasu* never came to me and with it, the fact that I already knew this plant.

Hamanasu bloom in north Japan. *Hama* means the beach and *nasu* an aubergine. The Sylt rose is a beach aubergine. *Hamanasu* is also called *Hamanashi*, the beach-pear. Many people say that the word *Hamanasu* was made by a regional shift in the word *Hamanashi* and has nothing to do with aubergines. Others say that the name *Hamanasu* appears already in botanical dictionaries of the medieval period. Be it pear or aubergine, I have a new crop. A back translation or an etymological journey occasionally brings me new fruit. On the internet I discovered even more names for the Sylt rose: Japanese apple rose and potato rose. To the aubergine and the pear came the apple and the potato. I have to bring all these fruits and vegetables into the tiny word-cellar of the rose, which is already filled with rosehips. Besides this, I have to bring Kamchatka, Sylt and Japan under one roof. What is this roof made of?

According to tradition on Sylt, roofs are made of reeds. What is the roof of linguistic memory (Sprachgedächtniss) made of?¹

When the weather is good, the word Sylt rose goes out for a walk and finds false friends on the beach – the turtle, for example. *Syltrose* and *Schildkröte* have enough in common for a friendship, even if they mean nothing to each other. This *Syltrose* makes another false friend later, a *Sylt-mat-rose*, a Sylt-sailor, and goes with him on a journey across the world, lands in New Zealand and remembers there, that the word *Sylt* may itself come from the word for *Sea-Land*. And so it has found a way from the old Seeland to the new Seeland, to New Zealand.

I have now landed in New Zealand, and would love to write more about the path from here to Darmstadt, but unfortunately I am out of time. In any case, I am happy that I can be there in Darmstadt, with you, as a new member of the academy.²

¹ Tawada plays here on the word for roof *Dach*, and the word for thought *Gedächtniss*, which contains the word ‘dach’ inside it like a seed. This kind of wordplay will be dealt with at length in chapter 4.

² ‘Deutsche Akademie Für Sprache Und Dichtung - Academy - Members - Yoko Tawada - Selbstvorstellung’ <<https://www.deutscheakademie.de/en/academy/members/yoko-tawada/selbstvorstellung>> [accessed 11 October 2019]. My translation.

CHAPTER 1

SPRACHMUTTER: THE DEATH OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

“The age when women were mothers is over.”³ This remarkable sentence appears in the second part of Tawada Yōko’s novel *Yuki no rensūsei* (2014).⁴ Developing from Tawada’s interest in the media furore around the polar bear cub Knut, who died in the Berlin Zoological Garden in March 2011, this novel imagines the biographies of Knut’s female forebears: Tosca, a bear working with the trainer Ursula Böttcher in the then DDR, and an unnamed Soviet writer in the first section, “Grandma’s Theory of Devolution.”⁵ The novel ends with an account of Knut’s life, in the third section, which appears to have distracted from the book’s effect as a composite of several voices, rendering it instead into the story of Knut — evinced in the French translation of this novel by Bernard Banoun as *Histoire de Knut* (2016) — with the first sections serving merely as backstory to the novel’s only male narrative voice. While many commentators have naturally focused on the overt themes of animal-human relationships in this novel, what interests me here is the problem of maternity and the linguistic tie: theme that concerns not simply this novel but a common metaphoric at work throughout all of Tawada’s writing. It is around this statement — “the age when women were mothers is over” — that we will orient our reading of a text that is unique in Tawada’s oeuvre, representative as it is of a shift in her linguistic practice.⁶ The questions we must ask here concern the nexus of the conceptual apparatus that bears the name mother tongue. If, as

³ Yōko Tawada, *Yuki No Rensūsei* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2011). 54. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own, from the Japanese.

⁴ In English *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2017), translated from the German *Etüden im Schnee* (2014) by Susan Bernofsky.

⁵ The Japanese title is *sobo no taikaron* (祖母の退化論) which uses “*taikaron*” (devolution, degeneration) as opposed to the German *Evolution* (*Evolutionstheorie der Großmutter*). While the Japanese text appears prior to Tawada’s own German translation, we would do well to retain the sense of involution in the teleology of an evolutionary schema in this text.

⁶ *Yuki no rensūsei* is the first text Tawada has translated herself from Japanese into German. For a discussion of this see *Kotoba to aruku nikki* (2018) written over the course of the translation process.

Tawada suggests, the age when women were mothers is over, then what exactly is it that has passed? And how are we to understand its end, which is the history and dominion of a maternal ideology and maternal language? Which raises the question: when we read a text, any text, beyond the frame of exophony, migrancy, and so forth, is it language, *Sprache*/語, or the *mother*/母, *die Mutter*, we must speak of?

And yet in raising the question of the mother tongue, we appear to risk breathing life into an antiquated notion. Modern linguistics and studies of second-language acquisition prefer terms such as first language (L1) and native language, by which it seems possible to bypass this romantic cliché. In linguistic studies concerned with territories beyond Western Europe, it has been especially important to do away with this term, which, as Thomas Bonfiglio demonstrates, emerges in the European Middle Ages around the cult of the Virgin Mary. The primal scene of language: an infant imbibing words with mother's milk. This image draws on themes of lactation and sacramental haemophagy as part of a larger effort to figuratively corporealize language, which pre-exists in a social field prior to the event of birth. It is precisely through these metaphors that language and the language community — nation or otherwise — partake in the devotion of religious commitment as much as the intimacy of the parent-child bond.⁷ And in so doing, they inscribe language — like the machine of Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*⁸ — in a tattoo, the ink appearing undifferentiated from the surface of the skin.

And yet, for all that, this concept of language, steeped in medieval religiosity, and seemingly historically removed from our present, is nevertheless inherited as a disciplinary conceit. The philology of German Romanticism as much as the virulent linguistic politics of the Third Reich cast

⁷ The term 'mother tongue' appears first, in 1432, with 'native speaker' appearing over a hundred years later in 1586 in the first vernacular English grammar, *Pamphlet for Grammar* by William Bullokar.

⁸ Andrea Bachner has an invaluable discussion of the role this text plays in the context of poststructuralist conceptions of subjectivity. See Andrea Bachner, *The Mark of Theory: Inscriptive Figures, Poststructuralist Prehistories*, First edition. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

a shadow over the present of linguistic thought. *One land, one language, one nation*. Christopher Hutton writes, of the linguistic *Weltanschauung* of the Third Reich:

It was the “quasi-natural” primal bond between mother, child and language that was both the origin of the *Volk* and *its point of maximum vulnerability* [my emphasis]. The language was imbibed with the mother’s milk, and that socializing moment shaped the child in the image of the language, and fused it onto the body of the *Volk* through the intense emotional bond to the mother.⁹

Can we truly say that this is limited to the linguistic politics of the Third Reich? In what sense does this logic not underpin not only national language, but language, as such? What can and cannot count as language? Minority language, major, dialect or sociolect, this image of the priority and naturalness of language figures in every language community. It is a network of power, infused with maternal metaphor, which has not lessened with the diminution of the term mother tongue, nor with the putative decline of nation-states and their idioms. Whether we refer to it as a *Muttersprache*, *langue maternelle*, *cainnt mbàthaireil*, or 母語 (*bogo*), each of these bears within it the history of this rhetorical maneuver by which social relations are naturalized through figuration. The mother tongue is an ethnocentric linguistics which privileges the *Volk* by use of the ‘mother’ as the figural index of the linguistic field (i.e. a discreet “language,” a *Volksprache*).¹⁰

It is in this way that we must remember that the ideology of the mother tongue is not simply a matter of whether or not the *term* mother tongue exists in a language — as a translated term or as cognate — but a matter of whether the *tropology* of the mother tongue is operative. Which is to say that its metaphorical figuration governs the social arrangements of kinship ties, property, territory,

⁹ Christopher Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich: Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language* (Routledge, 2012).

¹⁰ The use of *Volksprache* and *Schriftsprache* has been used in classical German linguistics as a means of differentiating between the written language (*Schriftsprache*) and the oral (*Volksprache* or ‘language of the people’). The tension between these fields led Romantic thought to view the mother tongue as the repository of a culture foreign to the culture of writing (in Europe, Latin). Derrida’s reading of Lévi-Strauss’s “The Writing Lesson” in *Tristes Tropiques* is particularly rich in exploring this distinction in the field of linguistic anthropology and in a non-European context. See “The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau” in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Fortieth Anniversary edition. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

and the fiction of ethnicity. A conceit, and symptom, summed up succinctly in a comment by the director Pedro Almodovàr: “The mother is at the centre of all relationships: with men, women, children, society, land and reality.”¹¹

The term mother tongue itself makes clear the ethnolinguistic nationalism criticized by those who take aim at *native* language and the ideology of the native speaker (“native speakerism”).¹² In too readily assuming that it is possible to do away with the mother tongue, something goes astray in the prestidigitation between mother tongue and native speaker. I would like to suggest here that we view terms like native language, native speaker, or first language as epithets which serve to veil the stakes of the mother tongue: namely, the incorporation of language, familial relations, and territory, through maternal metaphors.¹³ It is from this point of view that we must begin to stake out an alternative conceptuality in order to understand the figural economy of Tawada’s work *in toto*. Her exophony cannot be thought *within* the mother tongue, but it is also not a movement against, or a retreat from it. Consider the following:

Many authors have such a pathological (*krankhaftes*) relationship with their mother tongue and avoid living abroad. But I see a chance in this destroyed (*zerstörten*) relationship to the mother tongue and to language *in general* (my emphasis). One becomes a word-fetishist. Every piece, or even every letter, can be touched and changed; you no longer see a semantic totality (*semantische Einheit*), and do not allow yourself to be taken into the flow of speech. One stays still and takes close-ups of the details. The enlargement of the component parts is disorienting because it shows entirely new images of an object with which one was intimately familiar. Just as one’s own mother cannot be recognised when seen through a microscope, one cannot

¹¹ Almodóvar, quoted in Chitra Ramaswamy, *Expecting: The Inner Life of Pregnancy* (Text Publishing Company, 2017).

¹² See, for example, Thomas M. Paikedays’s *The Native Speaker is Dead!* (1985), or Rey Chow’s more recent *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as Postcolonial Experience* (2014). Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, in Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, *Mother-Tongue in Modern Japanese Literature and Criticism: Toward a New Polylingual Poetics* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018), claims that mother tongue did not exist as an object of discourse in Japan until the 1980s, after first being introduced by resident Korean writers (*zainichi chōsenjin*) in the 1960s. Yokota-Murakami therefore argues that ideas of maternity were not tied into the problem of nationality in a linguistic sense until it was brought forward in the scission between 母語 (bogo) and 母国語 (bokokugo) among *zainichi* writers. This is contrasted with the term mother tongue in a European context, framed by the vernacularization movement of Dante, despite the fact that as Bonfiglio demonstrates, Dante’s rhetoric has deeper roots in earlier medieval thought. We must beware yielding to an exceptionalism here; this argument cannot hold when the mother tongue is thought, as I am doing so here, as symptomatic of ethnolinguistic nativism more generally.

¹³ Thomas Bonfiglio’s work is exemplary in demonstrating this confluence and extending it also into arboreal metaphors.

recognise one's own mother tongue in a close-up. But art is not a matter of portraying the mother in a way in which she can be recognised.¹⁴

It is clear that for Tawada one must be careful not to indulge such a pathological relationship to the mother tongue — native language, first language, L1, etc. — in which a phobia of the foreignness or *Fremdheit* of a foreign language means it must be kept at a distance. Such an attitude is characteristic of a pathology centered on the presumption of monolingualism. It is simple enough to critique such a presumption: ethnolinguistic, racial, territorialized. A fear of difference as endangering the locus of an identity conceived of in terms of self-sameness. Like an immunological response to this discourse comes the inevitable glorification of multilingualism as the celebration of difference, hybridity, and betweenness.¹⁵ Our problem remains, however, that the relationship to and between language remains within the untroubled thought of the maternal paradigm, without the destruction or *Zerstörung* of the relationship to the mother tongue.

Indeed, it is easy, as Deleuze writes, to “conceive of two languages mixing with each other, with incessant transitions from one to the other; yet each of them nonetheless remains a homogeneous system in equilibrium”.¹⁶ It is a problem whereby even in its heterogeneity language is articulated in units which correspond to cultural sovereignties.¹⁷ This problem persists even in work which celebrates the need and importance of translation. In Kate Briggs’ recent *This Little Art*, Briggs characterizes the anglophone reception of books in translation thus:

We receive these books newly made by the hands of translators, and the small contacts that those hands make, between translator and writer, reader and translator, language and language, culture and culture, experience and experience are, as Edith Grossman

¹⁴ Tawada, “Schreiben in Netz der Sprache”, in Yōko Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1996).

¹⁵ An important counterpoint to such valorization of ‘betweenness’ can be found in Leslie Adelson’s “Against Between: A Manifesto,” in *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, ed. Salah. Hassan, Iftikhar. Dadi, and Leslie A. Adelson (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2001).

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “He Stuttered,” in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Naoki Sakai refers to this arrangement as the “modern regime of translation” and the operation by which this difference is managed to articulate two separate “identities” the “schema of co-figuration”. See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

puts it, as vital to our continued reading and writing, to the vitality of our languages, our cultures and experiences as the books themselves.¹⁸

A dizzying array of conjunctive ‘ands’ — one and the other, in a relation that remains opaque save for an interaction facilitated by translation. One culture *and* another. Linguistic sovereignties whose borders are molded by the process of translation. Briggs, as a translator, and a reader of translated books, is praising the necessity and importance of translation, all while remaining within a paradigm which views literature as the repository of a national culture, even as that culture is disseminated, mixed, and problematized.

Exophonic writers trouble such a paradigm because their work cannot (or is not permitted to) occupy a traditional place within a national literature. The exophonic ‘outside’ is a site where political and social tensions, as much as the issue of translation, surface. Yasemin Yildiz even goes so far as to categorizes Tawada’s work as indicative of a “problem of inclusion” within the mother tongue, as opposed to other writers whose relationship to language is formed in exile, suppression, dialectical subordination, and so forth.¹⁹ And yet even these linguistic relations — of suppression and minority language — can rearticulate the problematic of the mother tongue which is undermined in Tawada’s work. The Nobel laureate Herta Müller, from a German-speaking minority in Romania, provides an example of this. In a speech delivered on the occasion of the Radka Denemarková, translator of Müller’s *The Hunger Angel* (*Atemschaufel*, 2009), being conferred the Magnesia Litera Award for translation, Müller writes of her own relation to language, not as “destroyed” but as “vulnerable”:

Your mother tongue feels as direct and unconditional as your own skin, and it is just as vulnerable if held in low esteem, treated with contempt, or even banned by others. Having grown up in a village speaking a dialect and learning standard German at high school, I found it difficult to find my bearings in the official Romanian spoken in the capital. For the first two years in the city it was easier for me to locate the right street in an unfamiliar part of town than the right word in the national language. Romanian was like pocket money. No sooner would I be tempted by something in a shop window

¹⁸ Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017).

¹⁹ See Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

than I would discover I was short of the money needed to buy it. There were so many words I did not know, and those that I did would not come as quickly as they were needed. Today, however, I know that this kind of inching along in another language, the hesitancy that forced me below my intellectual level, also gave me time to marvel at how objects were transformed by the Romanian language.²⁰

Let us take a moment to recall the metaphor by which the mother tongue is deployed here: “as direct and unconditional as your own skin.” We are never far from the ultimate anteriority of the mother tongue, as close as skin, as unconditional as mother’s love. In Müller’s work, this confrontation — eye-to-eye, in Müller’s terms — between two languages fundamentally alters the mother tongue (German) through the richness of the foreign language (Romanian):

I became more and more aware that the Romanian language had words that were more sensuous, more in tune with my perception, than my mother tongue. I would not now want to live without this string of transformations, in speech or in writing. There is not a single Romanian sentence in any of my books. But Romanian is always with me when I write because it has grown into my way of seeing the world.²¹

While the foreign language is capable, through its richness and territorial propriety (recall that it is in the capital that Müller deals with Romanian, not the dialectical province of her ‘own’ language), of operating at a subterranean level within the mother tongue, it never displaces the mother tongue as the *locus*. The mother tongue remains sedimented, prior, anterior, even as it is enriched by another language. As Müller writes: “Your mother tongue comes to you without any effort on your part. It is a dowry that comes into your possession without you noticing. It is then judged by another language that has been added later and that comes from somewhere else.”²² The relation to language, however, is not *zerstört* or destroyed. *Die Muttersprache*, the mother tongue, remains as it is: immovable in its priority.

²⁰ ‘The Space between Languages - Asymptote’ <<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/herta-muller-the-space-between-languages/>> [accessed 30 September 2018]. Translation by Julia Sherwood.

²¹ ‘The Space between Languages - Asymptote’.

²² ‘The Space between Languages - Asymptote’.

Here we reach a turning point. Are we to say then, simply, that there is no mother tongue? That because it is, in the end, a phantasy of a community grounded in the sentimentality of language, therefore something to be dismissed? Our work here is precisely to demonstrate that while it is possible to *dismiss* the ideology of the mother tongue and native speaker, understanding and countering its tropological effects is another matter. We cannot state with polemic surety that there is no mother tongue.²³ This simple dismissal, notably made by Deleuze and Guattari, effaces the effects of the concept of the mother tongue in social and institutional reality. We can show that a language bound up intimately within the parental-child matrix, taken in with mother's milk and remaining beyond the effects of socialization, has never existed. Yet this project would fail to take stake of this concept's profound and far-reaching effects as a phantasy which regulates the heterogeneity of languages. In Müller's case, Romanian enriches her writing without a single Romanian sentence being written and the language does not put in question the status of the mother tongue, which remains as close to her as her own skin.²⁴ For Tawada, however, the mother tongue is not seamless, and one cannot claim birth as the right to language:

[Monika] said that the woman was an 'Eingeborene' (a native). I had completely forgotten that this German word existed. If it is possible to describe a 'Native American' as an 'Eingeborene', then we can understand a "native speaker" as someone who is born into (*hineingeboren*) a language [in English in the original]. I was born into Japanese in this way, the way someone is thrown into a sack. Since then these words have been for me an exterior skin. The German language, however, is something I ingested, and has sat in my stomach ever since.²⁵

For Müller, the mother tongue is a "direct and unconditional" skin; for Tawada, it is an *external* layer, a fact further emphasized in *Katakoto no uwagoto*, where Tawada describes Japanese as *clothing*

²³ Deleuze and Guattari make this move in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "There is no mother tongue, only a takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity." Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

²⁴ This reading is also in keeping Naoki Sakai's reading of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* in *Translation and Subjectivity*, where the mother as the keeper of the mother tongue haunts the polyphony of the text.

²⁵ "Die Ohrenzeugin", in Tawada, *Talisman*, 103.

(衣服, *ifuken*).²⁶ Language does not have a direct, “unconditional” relation. It is not a skin, nor does it condition a psychic interiority, seen, for example, in the short story “Tabula Rasa” in the collection *Kitsunetsuki*, or in a more developed form in “Eine Leere Flasche” in *Übersetzungen*, where the reader encounters with the question: “in what language do you dream”? The narrator of that story, a woman who dreams in Afrikaans, despite not speaking it, is told: “People dream in the language of the country (Sprache des Landes) in which the soul lives.” The narrator answers: “I have many souls and many tongues.”²⁷ This multiplication — of the soul, of the *psyche* itself — and of tongues — *Sprache* as much as *Ziungen* — flies in the face of the ideology of the mother tongue.

The problem we are taking up here in the figure of the mother can be seen throughout Tawada’s writing. She writes, for example, in “Sieben Geschichten der Sieben Mütter” that “Mothers have played a huge role in my life thus far.” Then clarifying: “I don’t mean my biological mother, but other mothers, andere Mütter: die Stiefmutter, die Gebärmutter, die Doktormutter, die Perlmutter, das Muttermal, die Muttererde, das Mutterseelenallein.”²⁸ These words are mother-compounds. We have stepmothers, the womb; a doctoral supervisor, mother of pearl; a mole; topsoil, and Being-Completely-Alone. She continues:

What fascinates me, in the image of the mother, has nothing to do with nature or with family. Rather it has to do with a space, from which thoughts and images emerge and develop. The air in this space has a dense, material quality like water in a womb. In it it is often impossible to distinguish what lives in the space from the space itself. The doctoral supervisor, die Doktormutter, is in this sense, the ur-form of the mother.²⁹

²⁶ It is important to note, however, that this cleavage is not primarily linguistic; the first experience Tawada says she has of an alienation akin to ‘destroyed’ relationship to the mother tongue is actually the breaking of a bone, described in the essay, “Byōin to iu ikoku e no tabi” [“The Hospital: A Journey to a Foreign Country”], in Yōko Tawada, *Katakoto no unagoto*, Shinsōban. (Tōkyō: Seidosha, 2007).)

²⁷ “Eine Leere Flasche,” in Yōko Tawada, *Übersetzungen* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 2002), 70.

²⁸ Tawada, “Sieben Geschichten der Sieben Mütter”, in *Talisman*.

²⁹ Tawada, “Sieben”.

This formulation of the mother seems to fly in the face of so many biological presuppositions. It tells us that the ur-form of the mother is not a biological link but a social arrangement and a figuration whose consequences are material. What is signified by the term “mother” is simply a body or object that is necessary for the tropological arrangement termed “maternity,” which thus takes the signified “mother” as its origin. This new age, where women are no longer mothers, is one in which what goes under the signifier “mother” need not be a female body. The structure, however, remains the same. In a memoir of her own pregnancy, Chitra Ramaswamy, an Anglo-Indian journalist living in Scotland, interviews the Spanish director Pedro Almodòvar. In the context of a discussion of Almodòvar’s *All About my Mother*, Ramaswamy writes:

Transformation is Almodòvar’s great theme: child to adult, man to woman, woman to mother. *All About My Mother* teaches us that anyone can become a mother, or for that matter a woman, if they desire it, enact it, embody it and live it. If we cannot carry babies in our bodies we can still summon motherhood into our being through acts of will. We can mother without being mothers. We can mother without being women. We can be mothers without giving birth. We can mother without having children at all.³⁰

This is a liberatory view of maternity, and a familiar jubilation. Just as multilingualism comes as the supposed counter of a presumed monolingualism, this opening of the “mother” — its place in structure — seems to counter the genealogical fantasy of a biologically deterministic heterosexual reproductive system. It is no coincidence that *Yuki no renshusei* references the so-called *Rabenmutter*, a derogatory term for “bad mothers” which is used to refer to Tosca in the novel. Working women in Germany even now suffer this slur, itself a mother-compound blurring the human-animal distinction. Unlike the raven, it is the proper place of a mother to rear children, to raise them, to induct them in language and culture. Even a critic as sophisticated as Barbara Johnson is still capable of claiming that a “child comes into language through the mother’s address. It is her job to

³⁰ Ramaswamy.

transform the little animal into a little human being.”³¹

And yet here, on the knife-edge of promise, *anyone* can be a mother, even “without being mothers.” It is for this reason that, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, a Russian man, to a polar bear, occupies the same place in the structure of maternity as any biological mother. And yet still this figure of the mother — beyond any determining biological sex — comes to guard the symbolic pact of the social link from disturbance and displacement, lest the various systems predicated upon this ‘maternity’ of the origin be undone. This structure is precisely what is at stake in the tropological arrangement of the mother tongue.

Let us look to *Yuki no renshūsei* to see this logic in effect. At this point in the novel, the polar bear narrator of the first section has defected to West Berlin, where she is being encouraged, rather forcefully, to write her memoirs by a liberal literary organization:

The following day, Wolfgang came to visit me for the first time in a while. We spoke about the ape story [Kafka’s “A Report to an Academy”, “Ein Bericht für eine Akademie”]. “If you’ve got the time to read I think you should use it to write,” he said with a pained expression. “Reading is a waste of time for writers. The time you spend reading other writers’ books is time you’re not writing your own.” “But reading is good German practice, isn’t it? If I write in German you won’t need to translate it. It’ll save you time, won’t it?” “No, you have to write in your mother tongue. You have to pour your feelings out naturally.” “What’s a mother tongue?” “The words of your mother.” “I’ve never spoken to my mother.” “Even if you’ve never spoken to her, your mother is your mother.” “I don’t think she spoke Russian.” “Ivan is your mother, or have you forgotten? The time when women were mothers is over.”³²

One need not stress the reference to Kafka (and there are many in *Yuki no renshūsei*) to demonstrate the logic of what Wolfgang is saying: it is perfectly circular and circularly absurd. The mother is the mother. Even if a child has never spoken to her, the mother tongue is the words of this mother, even if that mother is male. What appears here as remarkably modern was, however,

³¹ Barbara Johnson, *Mother Tongues: Sexuality, Trials, Motherhood, Translation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). 66.

³² Tawada, *Yuki No Renshūsei*.

always the case — it is not the mother Dante invokes in his praise for the vernacular, but the wet nurse. There was always the possibility of prosthesis, often thematized from a female perspective in the domain of speculative fiction: Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, for example, or Helen Sedgwick’s *The Growing Season*. There has been no lack of problematizing this structure of maternity because it is always the sociolinguistic link which triumphs over biology. And yet it is this structure of maternity — even maternity beyond the mother, the female body, maternity simply as a practice, an *étude* or *renshū*, 練習 — that determines the clearest channel of pure speech, how one will understand a language as a mother tongue, privileged in its command of the psyche by a naturalness and priority that cannot be undone by reproductive technology, adoption, or displacement. Tangling the threads of biology, sociality, and linguistics, the mother tongue appears as an impossible knot. The mother tongue is the language of the mother. The mother is the one who gives language. Round and round we go, in a tautological circle from which neither psychoanalysis nor linguistics has broken free.³³ Even those writers considered exophones are capable of operating within the logic of the mother tongue for all that they have supposedly left theirs behind. Consider Jhumpa Lahiri, who writes in *In Other Words*:

I have to listen to those [first Italian manuscript] readers, I have to follow their advice. I have to remove the incorrect or wrong word and look for another. I can’t defend my choice: one can’t contradict a native speaker. I have to accept that in Italian I am partly deaf and blind, and so I’m afraid of being a spurious writer.³⁴³⁵

This is the Ann Goldstein’s translation of Lahiri’s Italian which states: “*Non posso difendere la mia scelta: non si può contraddire un madrelingua.*”³⁶ *Un madrelingua* in Italian, meaning both a *native speaker* as well as being the name for *first language* or *la lingua materna*. We are firmly within the nativist logic

³³ For a comprehensive study that bucks this trend, see Jacqueline Amati-Mehler, *The Babel of the Unconscious: Mother Tongue and Foreign Languages in the Psychoanalytic Dimension* (Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, 1993).

³⁴ Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Other Words*, trans. by Ann Goldstein, First edition. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016). 179.

³⁵ Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Other Words*, trans. by Ann Goldstein, First edition. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016). 179.

³⁶ Lahiri, *In Other Words*. 178.

of the mother tongue here. The status of the mother, and the mother tongue, is the last bastion of surety in language: *it cannot be contradicted*. And it is only a native speaker, that is, one who possesses the *birthright* to this tongue, *eine Eingeborene*, who may access it. That the mother tongue has many children appears only to increase the desire for her/it [*sie*]. Consider the famous passage from Joyce's *Ulysses*: "Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. Amor matris, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life."³⁷

Joyce terms paternity a legal fiction — it is only the mother who guarantees the line in the last instance. But unlike Joyce, and unlike the surety with which Freud tells us that "no one possesses more than one mother, and the relation to her is based on an event that is not open to any doubt and cannot be repeated,"³⁸ it is language itself that Tawada tells us places in doubt the surety of the mother and her infallible maternity: "Everyone as a child often thought that their mother might not be their "actual" mother but a stepmother," she writes. Further:

This allegation comes from a knowledge that is not available to most adults: What is in the belly of the mother cannot be what signals itself with the word "I". Because there is a world in there that is entirely different to the one out here. Just as one cannot remain oneself after death, one cannot be the same before and after birth. And so each child is born a counterfeit. A child is lost in being born, and another child takes its place. That is/am I. [Das ist/bin ICH]³⁹

The third and last section of *Yuki no rensbusei* demonstrates this fact profoundly. From the perspective of Knut, the Japanese text utilizes the language's ability to communicate without a grammatical subject. There is, in this text, no "I," no "ich". It is only some pages later that, by the intercession of the third person ("das ist") Knut is forced to take on the first person and learn to say: I am. Here it is not a matter of, as in Müller, language coming without condition, like a dowry, a skin

³⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, New Random House ed., (New York: Random House, 1961). 266.

³⁸ Sigmund Freud, "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men", in Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989). 390.

³⁹ Tawada, "Sieben Geschichten der Sieben Mutter", in Tawada, *Talisman*. My translation.

inherited from one's mother which will garb the locus of the speaker. It is instead language as a matter of surfaces that exist in a social field. Far from the priority and interiority of the mother tongue, which then interacts with a social 'outside' of the family, language is a social casing. In Knut's case, a box at which he scratches (and the verb 'to scratch' [*kaku*], in Japanese, as Tawada has dealt with elsewhere, is also a homophone for 'to write').⁴⁰ Here, for comparison, are the original Japanese, Tawada's German translation, and my translation of the Japanese:

力強い腕の持ち主は、ミルクをくれる前に必ず熱っぽく「クヌート」と何度も呼ぶので、ミルクを飲みたいという気持ちそのものを「クヌート」と名付けることにした。
飲み始めると暖かさが上から下へ道を作る。その道がクヌートという名の欲望を線状に引き延ばし、その先端がお腹に達すると、今度は心臓が強く動きだし、そこから指の先まで放射線状に暖かいものが広がっていく。下腹は重くなりごろごろ鳴って、お尻がすこしかゆくなる。そのうちまた眠ってしまうのだけれど、意識がなくなる前のその暖かさが広がっている区域全体がクヌートになる。⁴¹

Der Mann mit den kräftigen Armen rief jedes Mal leidenschaftlich das Wort 'Knut!', um die Milch anzukündigen. Die Lust auf die weiße Flüssigkeit bekam den namen "Knut".

Kaum hatte er einige Züge Milch in sich gesogen schon bahnte sich die Wärme ihren Weg durch den Brustkorb. Die Milchlust namens Knut erreichte den Bauch. Das Herz war zu spüren. Etwas Warmes verbreitete sich fächerförmig aus der Herzensmitte, es kam in den äußersten Fingerspitzen an. Der Unterbauch murmelte schwermütig, der Anus juckte, und kurz bevor er einschlief, war er bereit, den ganzen erwärmten Bereich als Knut zu bezeichnen.⁴²

Before the owner of the strong arms gave any milk, he would say the word "Knut" over and over, and so the word "Knut" became attached to sensation of wanting to drink.

When the body started to drink, the warmth made a path from top to bottom. That path drew the desire called "Knut" out in a straight line, and when the tip of it reached the stomach, the heart began to beat strongly and a warmth radiated out and through the fingertips. The lower stomach grew heavy and grumbled, the backside started to itch slightly. While this happened the mind fell asleep again, but before losing consciousness, the whole area where the warmth had spread became 'Knut'.

⁴⁰ The homophonic verbs *kaku* can be written as 'to write' (書く), 'to scratch' (掻く), or to depict (描く). See Yōko Tawada, "Tawada Yōko does not exist", in *Yōko Tawada: Voices from Everywhere*, ed. by Douglas Slaymaker (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007).

⁴¹ Tawada, *Yuki No Renshūsei*. 167-168.

⁴² Yōko Tawada, *Etüden im Schnee: Roman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2014). 212.

This “counterfeiting,” as Tawada calls it, of a child in language, can be thought of as an induction of a living being into language, a system which will ultimately fail deictically to allow this being to ever refer to itself fully. The time difference or *Zeitverschiebung* between the first ‘das ist’ (‘that is’) and ‘ich bin’ (‘I am’) codes the terms of identification and affection which will thus enable the conceit of the mother tongue to function. Knut, for example, identifies not *as* Knut but with the word Knut only as it refers to a knot of desire linked to his “mother” Matthias: “Not his father then, his mother?” “That’s right. However you look at it you’re a manly mother. No, no, a womanly father.” It is only via the intrusion of wolves (whom Tawada describes as “fascists”)⁴³ and a Malaysian sun bear who derides Knut’s use of the third person that Knut finally learns the word “I.” This social force is nowhere to be found within the logic of the mother tongue, despite the fact that there *can be* no language without it — what language could take this place, a connection between mother and child as seamless as the tie of an umbilical cord? It is a fantasy. And yet it persists in the logic and deployment of the mother tongue, a term which, as Ivan Illich writes, “From its very first use, instrumentalizes everyday language in the service of an institutional cause:”

In the decades before Luther, quite suddenly and dramatically, mother tongue acquired a strong meaning. It came to mean the language created by Luther in order to translate the Hebrew Bible, the language taught by schoolmasters to read that book, and then the language that justified the existence of nation states.⁴⁴

Illich has no interest in locating the effects of this transformation on women’s bodies. Yet we should note that throughout the late 18th century in Europe, woman becomes enmeshed in the symbolic pact of nation, which co-opted the maternal relation and made the womb into the space of

⁴³ Yōko Tawada, ‘The Profound Empathy of Yoko Tawada - The New York Times’, 2016 <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/30/magazine/yoko-tawada.html>> [accessed 1 October 2018].

⁴⁴ ‘Vernacular Values by Ivan Illich’ <http://www.davidtinapple.com/illich/1980_vernacular_values.html> [accessed 1 October 2018].

national subject production and rendered every child into a blank slate for what Illich calls the ‘taught mother tongue’. As a result of contemporary colonial expansion, this transformation became globalized as a modular form called the “nation-state.” The cult of the mother is never far from the nation-state, and as we have shown, today these issues are still at stake despite the readiness of some commentators to claim that the end of these concepts is at hand. The point would not be that advances in the historicization of linguistic knowledge or in reproductive technology have fundamentally altered age-old principles and ushered in a new epoch or episteme, but that these principles themselves have been revealed to be phantasmatic in origin. Between the mother tongue, national language, and vernacular, a series of displacements and forces cleave the putative cohesion of language. It is against the undoing of the ideological totality of the mother tongue that the figure of the mother comes forward as a mechanism of defense, as guardian of the mother tongue and the social tissue of “maternity.” Even where one has been able speak of dialects, pidgin, creole, and so on, this form of language has always been in relation to an interior emotional landscape which is truer than the social exterior of a dominant language. These languages themselves are caught within a maternal ideology in which the ‘mother-language’ (also called a ‘*Sprachmutter*’ in classical German philology) births other languages. In each case language can only be thought in terms of subordination and hierarchy to the maternal origin and true inheritor. What then of a literary studies of today? (Subjective and objective genitive.) How is the discipline to make sense of the literature of exophony without a maternal genealogy to guide it?

When Wolfgang, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, asks the polar bear writer to write in her mother tongue we see a short-circuit in the logic detailed above. The mother tongue is the words of the mother. Even liberated in views such as Ramaswamy’s, the maternal genealogy persists, meaning that even postcolonial, feminist, Marxist and deconstructive analyses have not moved beyond the tropology of the mother tongue. This is why the concept of an exophonic literature presents a problem. In the

history of the Western academy, literary departments that have dealt with Anglophone and European languages and cultures have traditionally been able to claim their work as being of importance to the project of the humanities in general. Area Studies, on the other hand, has since its inception been dismissed as producing knowledge based on an ethnic other that is somehow excluded from this general humanity.⁴⁵ Rather than belabor the long historical trajectories of these disciplinary formations, I would like instead to focus on something which both have in common: a reliance upon the same conceptual apparatus, namely a sorting by area, language, province. In short, the mother tongue haunts both disciplines. The concept of the mother tongue is a tropological force which governs the production of knowledge by tying it to maternity.⁴⁶ The idea that Tawada's writing, and her thoughts, in general, can be confined to the priority of Japanese as her mother tongue plagues readings with an unintended ethnocentrism. As a Japanese speaker, Tawada writes, in "An Uninvited Guest," that Japanese is important, but that it cannot govern her work. She writes: "All of these thoughts, which come to me, have something to do with the fact that I speak Japanese [*dass ich Japanisch kann*]. But my thoughts cannot be confined to the asylum camp that one calls a Japanese origin [*japanische Herkunft*]."⁴⁷

An act of confinement within the asylum of a national origin. Compare this with the comments from the grandmother of the first section of *Yuki no rensūsei*: "Is it appropriate behaviour for a bear to stick its nose into politics? Was I myself, who thought of such important matters, not locked in an invisible cage, forced to work as evidence for the criticism of my country's failure to

⁴⁵ This is taken up at length by Naoki Sakai in the distinction between *humanitas* and *anthropos*. See Naoki Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of Humanitas and Anthropos", *Postcolonial Studies*, 13.4 (2010), 441–64 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2010.526539>>.

⁴⁶ Consider Yasemin Yildiz' claim that Tawada's border-crossing is representative of a general trend of Japanese women seeking out the foreign in the 1980s (See Yildiz, *The Postmonolingual Condition*, 2012), or Chantal Wright's mystifying hunt for a subterranean Japanese in her translation of "Portrait of a Tongue" (Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue* [Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press: 2013].

⁴⁷ Tawada, "Ein ungeladener Gast", in Yōko Tawada, *Akzentfrei* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2016). 46. My translation.

observe human rights?”⁴⁸ Here, the Soviet writer is lifted up in Western academic discourse merely as an ethnological object, with Cold War political intent, yet never quite capable of making a political intervention herself. This “invisible cage” amounts to a depoliticization which is in itself inherently political. It stops in its tracks all that might be accomplished by writers concerned with whether or not their work, opinions, or interventions may be “appropriate.”

This is the danger of the mother tongue: as the most natural, or in Müller’s words “unconditional,” means of explication, it forecloses any creative invention or production that cannot be explained in terms of this origin *even* if the origin only appears in negated or comparative terms, for example reading Tawada’s German texts always in comparison with her Japanese origin. This opening of a creative field beyond the ready-made models of national language and culture falters across disciplines. If we are to open our scholarship to the promise of an exophonic literature, and exophony more generally, then we must think of how to follow Tawada’s tracks or traces, to move, as she says, from the mother tongue to the *Sprachmutter*. I would like to suggest here that, in contrast to the figure of the mother deployed in defending the culturalism of the mother tongue, it is in the figure of the *Sprachmutter* that we find an opening into another logic which will be indispensable in thinking more fully of modern literature today. In an essay by the title of “*Sprachmutter*,” we are told of an experience of a German office. Tawada writes

There was also a female character (*weibliches Wesen*; female being) on the desk: a typewriter (*eine Schreibmaschine*). She had a big, broad body covered in tattoos, and on her body was visible all the letters of the alphabet. When I sat down in front of her, I felt that she was offering me a language. Her offer didn’t change the fact that German wasn’t my mother tongue (*Muttersprache*) but it did give me a new Languagemother (*Sprachmutter*).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Tawada, Yuki No Renshūsei.

⁴⁹ Tawada, “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter”, in Tawada, *Talisman*. My translation.

It would be possible to trace the figure of a *Sprachmutter* in multiple places in Tawada. Recall, for example, the dead woman in “The Bath,” where the masculine word, *der Rat*, transforms into *die Ratte*, rats, giving us the figure of an advisor, a rat-giver, whose rats the narrator must destroy with a hammer at the behest of the police.⁵⁰ Consider also the spectral figure of Deneuve in *The Naked Eye*, where the cinema becomes a mother and a space of thought and image: *ma, mama, shinema* (マ、マ、マ、シネマ/間、まま、死ねま). It is easy to see in this the echo of Tawada’s previous idea of “a space, from which thoughts and images emerge and develop” which was connected to the water of the womb, the *Gebärmutter*. In *Yuki no renshūsei*, rather, we have a *Bärmutter*, Tosca’s grandmother, who appears in dream-states, or, rather, as the novel states, in a “third space” between animals and humans. It is in these places, gaps, fissures, or especially the ‘*zure*’, wherein one must linger in Tawada’s writing, rethinking what it is that has been displaced. One would find here, always, it seems, the figure of this other mother, this *Sprachmutter*, whose promise is to untie the ties that bind, to remove the staples of the mother tongue which cling to the body itself.

Language makes a person; birth into language is undeniable. But the liberatory power of the *Sprachmutter* is that she reworks the conduits of language, and just like the ‘mother’ itself, what occupies this place in structure need not be inherently feminine but, as in *Yuki no renshūsei*, merely serve as the cornerstone of a maternal genealogy. The *Sprachmutter* is not simply a *negation* of the mother tongue; nothing can change the linguistic milieu of one’s birth, though this does not determine in advance all other linguistic phenomena unless one yields to the ideology of the mother tongue. It is in the *Fremdsprache* — and above all, in the mother tongue *as Fremdsprache* — that one finds the possibility of doing something *otherwise*. Paraphrasing Gertrude Stein, Tawada’s narrator in

⁵⁰ See Tawada, “The Bath”, in Yōko Tawada, *Where Europe Begins* (New York: New Directions, 2002).

“Die Ohrenzeugin” says: “the mother tongue makes the person, whereas in a foreign language, it is the person who makes something.”⁵¹

And so, if the figure of the mother, most notably articulated within the cult of the mother, mentioned in *Yuki no renshūsei* and taken up at length by Julia Kristeva in “Stabat Mater” governs a relationship which we have gathered within the trope of maternity and the “mother tongue,” then this *Sprachmutter* would govern an alternative logic. The opening may be a foreign language, or it may be not; exophony, Tawada tells us, does not require multilingualism. As seen in Müller, the opportunity may be presented, while the relation to a language phantasized as maternal remains intact, *unzerstört*. Rather than the simple *act* of writing in a language that cannot take the place of a *first*, exophony in Tawada must be thought in terms of a strategy that is capable of producing a new relationship to and in a signifying economy. It is for this reason that it is always possible, even when one speaks only one language. The movement is, as in the subtitle of the book of *Exophony*, outside the mother tongue: *bogo no soto*. And yet the Japanese particle “no” here is both subjective and objective genitive: it refers to the outside of the mother tongue as much as the mother tongue’s outside. A mother tongue outside itself. This is the close-up exophony allows us; to view up close an object with which we were once intimately familiar but depicted in a way in which this ‘mother’ is no longer recognizable.

Tawada tells us: “In a foreign language one has something like a stapler remover [*Heftklammerenferner*]: It unstitches [*entfernt*] everything that clings together [*sich aneinanderbefest*] and clings to itself [*sich festklammert*].” The *Sprachmutter*, this feminine being who incorporates all the letters of the alphabet, does not promise the warm welcome, the succor of milk, or the coverlet of skin. Unlike the *Muttersprache* we see in Müller, she is not handed over like a dowry. Where every

⁵¹ Tawada, “Die Ohrenzeugin”, in Tawada, *Übersetzungen*. 111. My translation.

movement of the mother tongue's tropes is toward the centrality of a psychological interiority, a maternal line, and a genealogy — subjective and objective genitive — the *Sprachmutter* sends us outward, softly: *soto, exo*.

All these knots which stitch themselves together — biology, linguistics, maternity — come undone. And their undoing cannot be forestalled by the deployment of the mother tongue as an exile to an ethnolinguistic origin which, for Tawada, would be the asylum camp of the Japanese language. Even exophony is still capable, as in Lahiri, of operating within the logic of the mother tongue. Indeed, insofar as exophony poses the threat to the centrality of this 'mother' and the concepts which rest upon it — the mother is at the center of all relations, Almodóvar reminds us: with men, women, children, society, land and reality — maternalism is deployed against it. It transforms exophonic writing into an inert yet charming bauble; a looking glass in whose reflection the culture of the *madrelingua* seems that much richer.

We, however, cannot be content with imposing a maternal genealogy as the last resort for understanding difference in terms of "culture," "language," "race," and so on. And we do not overcome these problems by replacing the concept of the mother tongue with a vernacular, a more natural, or interior language. The paradox is rather that it is the recognition of the trope of maternity, and the figure of the mother as dead, that one begins to unstitch the mother tongue. For Tawada, it is not the biographic fact of migration that opens this concept — that kills the mother — but poetry. In Celan, for example, where each word is haunted by the ghost of his mother, murdered in a Nazi death camp. Of Celan's poem, "Zweihäusig, Ewiger" ("Dioecious, Eternal"), Tawada writes: "Where is the mother? In the word "Mutter" (mother) just like the word "Gott" (god), I see

the double T — the crown of grass. Both crowns are absent: the first has been murdered and the second is not coming.”⁵²

The mother is murdered. The mother tongue is dead. And yet we still meet her in Tawada’s work: in dreams, in hauntings, in visions of the snowfields and of burnt faces, in the space of the cinema, where images scatter across the naked eye. This kind of space Tawada has consistently thought in terms of *ma* (間), a central concept of Noh theatre, where the stage becomes a sacred space where the dead make their return.⁵³ In her reading of Celan, Tawada still notes that, though the mother is dead: “Grass, which grows over the dead as “silence,” makes the dead invisible while at the same time forming a medium one must deal with in order to approach the dead.” And this “grass,” Tawada notes, is “immediately recognisable as writing.”⁵⁴ (“An ideogram that signifies “writing” also has the radical “the crown of grass”: “著 ”).⁵⁵ The movement toward this dead mother, this languagemother or *Sprachmutter*, brings us close to the productive nature of the *Gebärmutter* or womb while never bringing us back to an original state. This is because it is language itself separates us from this phantasmatic return to the origin: what signals itself with “I” *cannot* coincide with what was preverbal. (*Das ist/ bin ICH*.) But the movement outside of the mother tongue — *bogo no soto* — teaches us that it is always possible, in a foreign language, in this linguistic exile, to *make something*. This is, after all, the heart of poetry itself: for example, in *poesis*, the Greek verb “to make”, or clearer still, in Scots, where the poet is called a *makar*, a *maker*.

This is why the death of the mother tongue is not a freedom from the effects of the concept, nor is it by any means the triumphant cry of a polylingualism that has outdone monolingualism as

⁵² Tawada, “Die Krone aus Gras”, in Yōko Tawada, *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2007). My translation.

⁵³ This interest in *nō* is usually in the context of the theatre of Heiner Müller, the subject of Tawada’s MA thesis. See Tawada, “Karada, koe, kamen – hainaa myuraa no engeki to nō no ma no koō, in Tawada, *Katakoto no unagoto*.

⁵⁴ Tawada, “Die Krone aus Gras”. My translation.

⁵⁵ Tawada, “Die Krone aus Gras”. My translation.

the dominant paradigm. Rather it is the rebirth of language itself, the renewal of the *promise* of language: *to make something (etwas machen)*. And this beyond all genealogical confines which have so far regulated our language and our thought within the domain of the mother tongue. In this figure of the *Sprachmutter* there is instead a relation which cleaves into the joins of the mother tongue; it is not skin, but cloth, a sack into which one is hurled. And outside this sack there is, still, the freedom to move forward, into this age when women are no longer mothers. It is time, also, that the mother tongue be left behind. In *Yuki no rensūsei*, Tosca states that the human soul “Is made of words. And not just normally understood words, but broken words, images that have failed to become words, the shadow of words.”⁵⁶ To understand this, we must make or *make* many souls, and many tongues, whose origins remain ungovernable by the figure of the mother. In this, we must remember that — by coincidence or not, by some historical deviation — the word *Sprachmutter* was first used in German in the context of historical linguistics. There, it signaled a mother language, the root of language: Indo-European, Hebrew, Latin, the divine languages reflecting the lost original Adamic power of the word. In Tawada’s work, we must think that the *Sprachmutter* may very well be this kind of mother language, but not in the sense of a genealogy or inheritance but rather as the source of language itself: broken words, images that have failed to become words, the shadows of words. To think language in this way — beyond the root or mother, beyond the *radix or matrix* — is the effort required in reading Tawada’s work. And in this effort, I am simply trying to listen to the echo of a thought I hear throughout Tawada’s work, condensed or *verdichtet* in a quote from the essay “Accent”: “It is not my purpose to distinguish between a regional colouring, a foreign accent, a sociolect, or a medical speech defect. Instead I would like to suggest that every deviation — *jede Abweichung* — be taken as an opportunity for poetry.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Tawada, *Yuki No Rensūsei*. My translation.

⁵⁷ Tawada, “Akzent”, in Tawada, *Akzentfrei*. 23. My translation.

CHAPTER 2

ON BIOGRAPHISM: ECONOMIES, STRATEGIES

Our current age, Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi write, valorises “migrancy, exile and diaspora”.¹ How far things seem to have come from this appraisal in 1996, where this celebration, at large, seems to be slipping. In critical circles, at least, this is not the case (for now). And yet in this celebratory mode, should we not beware the closure of the text? To read an author in terms of representation is but one mode of reading, and yet this mode of reading has come to saturate the exegetic protocols employed in the field of minority literature, or even, as Deleuze and Guattari argued for, a “minor literature”.² This analogic mode of reading, which I refer to as *biographism*, is the double-bind by which “minority” authors are read according to a schema in which the literary text – the text, as such, the variety of its textual effects, figures, symbols, tropes – is used as a device for reconstituting the textual emanation, gathering its lustre within the prism of an authorial figure – here, Tawada Yōko – and through this proper name, transforming it into a form of expression: a representation of anthropological experience. Biographism, in short, rhetorically deploys the figures of a text in an attempt to produce anthropological knowledge, understood here as knowledge about a category of humanity that remains outside the level of the universal.³

This mode of reading – *biographism* – circumscribes the text within a field of difference (that is, “identity”) and thereby consigns it to oblivion within the logic of exemplarity and species-difference. As one horse is part of the species horse, so too does one member of a minority group exemplify all members of that group. *A* woman writer comes to exemplify *all* women; women’s fiction is a

¹ *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 2002).

² Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Robert Brinkley, ‘What Is a Minor Literature?’, *Mississippi Review*, 11.3 (1983), 13–33.

³ For more on this dynamic, see Sakai, ‘Theory and Asian Humanity?’.

representation of the experience of being a woman, Black fiction is a representation of the ontology of Blackness – but whose blackness, whose femininity, within what politics, modes of production, patterns of consumption, and disciplinary discourses? These questions, by necessity, are overlooked, in favour of producing knowledge about minority experiences in the mode of allegory, analogy, catachresis – the rhetorical foundations of identity, which is always an improper metaphor.⁴

It would be possible, thus, to speak of biographism as an idiom lacking in indefinite articles, wherein, paradoxically, claims for the respect of identity null particularity. The author comes to be mapped only in terms of identity predication: in the case of Tawada, female, Japanese, bilingual, etc.

Consider Jhumpa Lahiri's comments:

I haven't read what people write about me for years. I know, however, that certain readers consider me an autobiographical writer. If I explain that I'm not, they don't believe it; they insist. They say the fact that I am a person of Indian origin, like the majority of my characters, makes my work openly biographical. Or they think that any story in the first person must be true. [...] More than once I've been confronted by a journalist who maintains that I've written an autobiographical novel. And every time it amazes me, and also irritates me, that a novel whose plot and characters I completely invented is considered autobiographical.⁵

As Larissa Pham tells us, lamenting this trend: "Perhaps because the burden of representation has for so long fallen on the marginalized, it's hard to assert that we have stories to tell besides our own, that we might have imaginations."⁶

The objection could be made that by raising the question of biographism, I efface the experience of identity predications which are already erased: ethnic, sexual, and linguistic minority

⁴ My thinking is in keeping with that of Gayatri Spivak: "Spivak's use of the term catachresis, departing from Derrida, specifically refers to what she calls 'master-metaphors', i.e. concepts that serve to improperly impose one abstract term on to the multiplicity of experiences, e.g. 'woman', 'worker', 'peasant', 'Africa'. There is no true woman, no pure Africa, yet the concepts serve as generic catch-alls, and this not merely for convenience, but in order to make a truth claim. For Spivak, the recognition of the impropriety or incompleteness of the term does not mean that a proper term must or can necessarily be found to replace it, but that the work of recognition itself guards against making sweeping, universal claims". Sruti Bala, "Translation Is the Making of a Subject in Reparation": Elfriede Jelinek's Response to Fukushima in *Kein Licht*, *Austrian Studies*, 22 (2014), 183–98 <<https://doi.org/10.5699/austrianstudies.22.2014.0183>>. 186.

⁵ Lahiri, *In Other Words*. 217-218.

⁶ 'Asian American Writers' Workshop - The Unreliable Truth' <<https://aaww.org/unreliable-truth-larissa-pham/>> [accessed 27 October 2018].

experiences which deserve to be entered into representation more generally. This is the risk we run here, in asking questions of the text, of Tawada's texts, that *exceed* identity. It is not a matter of saying that identity does not matter – of course it does. It is simply a matter of demonstrating that so long as identity functions as a hermeneutic *limit*, the text's import will always be betrayed in favour of sustaining a given regime of identities which are, inevitably, supported by sexism, racism, and classism. It is cultural difference only at a level in which it is comprehensible; it is not difference, *as such*. So long as works by Asian authors which, in and of themselves, have nothing to do with the experience of being Asian, are *read* as representations of this experience, then there will still be the need to effect a resistance to this mode of reading – biographism, an anthropologism and an ethnocentrism.

Furthermore, the claim could be made that in reading the text *against* biographism, I myself am representing a personal interest which would *also* be biographical, meaning that it would be possible, once more, to recuperate within biographism all the objections we will here raise against it: all writing is biographic, comes the counter-claim. But of course. This does not mean, however, that that is *all* there is to the text, nor does it give us licence to so easily depoliticise questions raised by authors when the topics do not extend to their biographies – as though it is ever possible, not even in the role of a critic, but as humans with limited perspective, to know the biography of another to the extent that would permit biographism to function on its own premise, which could be summarised as follows: a belief in the correspondence of the text to authorial experience beyond the text's own reference; and a belief that this experience can be perceived, filtered, or clarified by recourse to identity categories such as geographic location (nation, area, citizenship, mobility, etc.), language, gender, and race. As the polar bear narrator of the first section of Tawada's novel *Yuki no rensbūsei* laments upon her defection to the West from the Soviet Bloc: "Is it appropriate behaviour for a bear to stick its nose into politics? Was I myself, who thought of such important matters, not

locked in an invisible cage, forced to work as evidence for the criticism of my country's failure to observe human rights?"⁷

Take, for example, Eiji Sekine's comments, in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical*: "A number of contemporary women writers express their self-images as something that defamiliarizes the femininity stereotyped by the gendered master narrative. Their selves are often expressed through a mixture of mythology and realistic self-expression: for example [...] an allegorical contemporary story inspired by folklore in Tawada Yōko's *Inumukoiri* (1993; *The Bridegroom Was a Dog*)." ⁸

What does this mean, that a story about a woman in a rural suburb, who engages in anilingus with a dog, is *allegorical* and an *expression* of a *self-image* of the author Tawada Yōko? How can "life writing" or "biography" – especially a biography mastered by the auto- of the author, as in an autobiography - be allegorical? And conversely, how can an allegory, by its very nature, be "life writing" or "biography"? This protocol of reading, which I am calling here biographism, silently, insidiously, deploys the movement of metaphor in an act of confinement, "an invisible cage", in the name of an authenticity that would correspond to lived experience, a lived experience which would prove failings in the name of human rights and equality, though these discourses are themselves fraught, never so steady or as effectively deployed as we might wish them to be. We will return to these questions, for the task we are attempting here, in tackling biographism, can only be done with the patience of a detour, an *Ummweg* and a *Verspätung* by which we will adhere to Tawada's texts in order to develop a strategy that will run counter to the lure of biography.

But here, for now, let us note that we see that political questions around gender, and to a lesser extent, ethnicity, can be found in the context of Tawada's critical reception. And yet Tawada's clear

⁷ Tawada, *Yuki No Renshūsei*. My translation.

⁸ Margaretta Jolly, *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (London: Chicago, 2001). 500.

interest in the effects of political economy has yet to take root in any major discussion of her work. This may seem anomalous, but in the context of *biographism* we can see that these questions are filtered because the question of political economy cannot be so easily thought within the horizon of identity. And this, despite the fact that, of *Yuki no renshūsei*, Tawada herself tells us: “I wondered whether life was different for them [animals] under communism and capitalism.”⁹

This question, of the mode of production, is not *one* question among many; it touches, whether one wishes to embrace Marxian thought or not, upon the entire domain of the social and disrupts the identities that biographism relies upon: “The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines consciousness.”¹⁰

So let us say, with Marx and Tawada, that to invoke analogism or metaphor runs a danger. Of one critic of “class-structured society”, named specifically, Karl, whose dog is named Friedrich (one may assume that the dog’s surname might be Engels) in *Yuki no renshūsei*, the first polar bear narrator remarks:

“You say I can’t talk to dogs, but it’s not as if I’m talking to an insect. Humans, dogs, we’re all mammals. So why shouldn’t I talk to them?” I said, turning on him. He was furious. “Humans and dogs are completely different. Dogs are just a metaphor,” he screamed. Karl really loved the word metaphor. “The circus is nothing more than a metaphor. You don’t read books so the minute you hear something you immediately think it’s real,” he said with scorn when I told him I wanted to work in the circus, then he threw Babel’s *Red Cavalry* at me.¹¹

Marx himself, the great demystifier, relies on metaphor even *as* he denounces the speculism, the specular mystification, of the Hegelian speculative dialectic. A fact remarked upon at length in Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* where Marx’s metaphors (his “phantomatics”) come to unmoor the

⁹ Tawada, ‘The Profound Empathy of Yoko Tawada - The New York Times’.

¹⁰ “Marx on the History of his Opinions” in Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1972). 4-5.

¹¹ Tawada, *Yuki No Renshūsei*. My translation.

historical materialism of the Marxian philosophical heritage.¹² And in this moment, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, where the text resolves around the balance of a metaphor, Babel's *Red Cavalry* – that hallmark of Soviet realist literature – is hurled, as a weapon.

Yuki no renshūsei is not, let us say, a *Marxist* text. Neither, for that matter, is it a *Freudian* text, though Tawada does ask: “is it possible to portray this century without Marx and Freud?”¹³ But for now let us say simply that the world of Marxist and Freudian analyses is also the world of Tawada's fiction: both function along *technical* lines. And to delve the text for its experiential value, as in biographsim, is to fail to take seriously the stakes of the text's critical questions, and the proliferation, everywhere, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, of encounters with the nature of the commodity-form, its relation to memory, the mode of production and consumption, and the nature of alienation (*Entäußerung*) and the non-anthropocentric social link. And so while there is merit – obvious merit – to biographic reading, avenues opened by strategies psychobiographic, feminist, postcolonial, or otherwise, so long as these strategies accept the limit of identity then they will restrict the text's capacity to exceed, reformulate, or augment these categories and the disciplinary regimes in which they are articulated. The economy – the structure of their circulation – is unaltered.

This problematic is not necessarily so new, for as Walter Benjamin reminded us so long ago, speaking of the literature of New Objectivity: “its political significance has been limited to converting revolutionary reflexes, in so far as these occurred within the bourgeoisie, into themes of entertainment and amusement which can be fitted without much difficulty into the cabaret life of a large city. The characteristic features of this literature is the way it transforms political struggle so

¹² See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹³ Tawada, *Überseetzungen*. 113.

that it ceases to be a compelling motive for decision and becomes an object of comfortable contemplating; it ceases to be a means of production and becomes an article of consumption.”¹⁴

What we are speaking of, in terms of a biographism, is the means by which the heterogeneity of the text, its genius and its signature, is transformed into “an object of comfortable contemplating” and “an article of consumption” through the prism of “identity” and “cultural difference”. And what we must keep in mind, as Benjamin then goes on to tell us – and Benjamin is never far from Tawada’s thoughts - is that “[the political writer] will never be concerned with products alone, but always, at the same time, with the means of production.”

And so it will be necessary to follow an example of this anthropological mode of reading, this *biographism*, in order to deconstruct its premises and strategies, and in so doing, to arm ourselves with a conceptual framework which will be necessary in approaching Tawada’s work *in toto*. All of this, in the hopes of evading the trap of biographism, something which, we will attempt to demonstrate, Tawada’s work resists.

“Portrait of a Tongue”: Translation and the De-Piction of Figure

Let us look, then, to Chantal Wright’s “experimental” translation of Tawada’s short story “Portrait of a Tongue” (“Porträt einer Zunge”). This translation takes the form of a full, bound book, in which is included an essay on the author, as the first introduction, a second essay on the nature of the translation, and the translated text itself, divided into two columns: on the left, the translated story “Portrait of a Tongue” (*Porträt einer Zunge*), and on the right, the translator’s notes. These notes make apparent the encounter that constitutes translation. And by following the traces of this encounter, coupled with a reading of this text, I will seek to demonstrate the ways in which

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer”, in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. by K. M. Newton (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1988). 93.

biographism effaces the encounter that is translation itself, in a mode beholden to what Naoki Sakai has termed the “modern regime of translation”.¹⁵

It is important to note here, as a precaution, that our reading is not simply a critique of ‘ethnocentrism’ in Chantal Wright’s translation; in part because such a critique would necessarily also borrow the presupposition that an object termed ‘ethnos’ exists in order to be pertinent. Any translation must negotiate the thin line of ethnocentrism because it must necessarily borrow resources from ‘linguistic communities’ which are prone to bordering and definition by ethnicity, race, gender, and nationality – just as literary criticism *also* borrows these categories – though we must not forget that these terms suffer an internal difference and instability that calls for translation to stabilise them. Let us simply note that though we must, eventually, yield to these categories, these “identities”, to one extent or another, this does not mean that all methods of yielding are equivalent, but rather, as Derrida has noted in the context of Lévi-Strauss:

whether he wants to or not—and this does not depend on a decision on his part—the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he denounces them. This necessity is irreducible; it is not a historical contingency. We ought to consider all its implications very carefully. But if no one can escape this necessity, and if no one is therefore responsible for giving in to it, however little he may do so, *this does not mean that all ways of giving in to it are of equal pertinence* (Emphasis added.) ... It is a question of explicitly and systematically posing the problem of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself. A problem of *economy* and *strategy*.¹⁶

This reading of Wright’s translation, therefore, is simply an attempt to, explicitly and systematically, pose the problem of the status the translation in terms of a problem of *economy and strategy*. An economy and strategy which I have termed, for simplicity, *biographism*.

¹⁵ Terms such as “the modern regime of translation” and “heterolingual” and “homolingual address” are established terms in translation studies after Sakai; see, for example, Sakai’s seminal *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Douglas Robinson has begun to refer to scholars working closely with the work of Naoki Sakai and Lydia Liu as the new field of “critical translation studies” (Douglas Robinson, *Critical Translation Studies* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017). Undoubtedly the present text owes a debt to such scholarship.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

In order to pose this problem, we must first examine the way in which the text itself is propped up, the effect of its prefaces, which presage and prefigure all that will come in the text itself, and the translator's notes, which, in the traversal of the line that bifurcates the pages, have an irreducible effect on the transmission of its meaning. This is because, though classed as secondary, derivative, or parasitic, these elements nevertheless are meaning-effects, and as such, they are always in danger of overriding and overcoming those of the 'original' by the logic of supplementarity. As such, my own intervention performs the same task, of supplementing an originary meaning-effect (Wright's translation), but the difference, and this difference is critical, is that of address. With this in mind, we must ask to whom Chantal Wright addresses her own supplements.

In her first introduction, on Tawada Yōko herself, Wright begins by writing: "Yoko Tawada is an example of a type of writer I will call exophonic."¹⁷ We should be cautious of passing over what this simple sentence performs: it exemplifies and categorises into 'type', a type which is assigned to Tawada by Wright. A kind of authorial taxonomy. That Wright should overlook Tawada's own essay collection on the very topic of exophony,¹⁸ can perhaps be made sense of given that for her "[p]ortions of Tawada's work are inaccessible—both because only a certain number of her Japanese texts are available in German translation and vice versa but also because as Ivanocic argues (2019b:12), readers are confronted with their own inability to process cultural otherness."¹⁹ This, Wright says, is part of why "[a]nthropological or cultural translation—that is, the translation of native or indigenous concepts—which include both non-verbal and verbal acts is depicted as problematic, if not impossible, in Tawada's texts." We might linger here on the word 'inaccessible' and ask, inaccessible to whom? The texts written in Japanese are certainly not inaccessible in terms of material acquisition — Tawada's Japanese-language work *Kentōshi* was published by the

¹⁷ Wright, Chantal and Yōko Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013), 2.

¹⁸ See Yōko Tawada, *Ekusofonī: bogo no soto e deru tabi* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2003).

¹⁹ Wright, 12-13.

mainstream publisher Iwanami Shoten in 2014, marking an increase in Tawada's print circulation — and to a Japanese speaker, the language supposedly poses no problem of 'access'. And vice versa. It is the second dimension of the inaccessible which is more pertinent in Tawada's work, as Ivanovic argues, but in Wright something emerges in the form of an address, and it is marked as homolingual, addressed to a presupposed community of shared language, culture, and values. The homolingual address of Wright's text is particularly apparent in her description of "Portrait of a Tongue" itself:

The text assumes that the educated German-speaking reader is familiar enough with the English language to be able to follow its thoughts on linguistic and cultural equivalence and difference. The same familiarity with German cannot be assumed of the English-speaking reader. As a consequence, a degree of explanation would be required to move the text beyond untranslatability and render it accessible to the English-speaking reader [...] the text, in its cultivated naivety, invites the reader to enter into dialogue with it, to construct its narrator, to complete its thoughts and to puzzle over what remains unsaid²⁰

It is a peculiar irony that Wright, in her care for the English-speaking reader, should include throughout her preface French quotations with no translation, assuming that the reader, English-speaking, suffers no problem of 'access' to French by presumption of a shared "European" heritage. And yet the greatest leap, and the most dangerous, that Wright makes, is the final sentence, the assumption that *the text* assumes its reader as 'educated' and invites the reader to "construct its narrator", to "complete its thoughts and to puzzle over what remains unsaid". Let us state this clearly: this is not something the text brings to itself; the text remains text, a textual effect and a complex weave of textuality. This impulse, to figure and *figure out*, or in a certain sense, to out-figure (*berausfiguren*) the narrator, is something brought to the text. And this despite Wright's claim that "Yoko Tawada belongs to a second, entirely distinct generation of exophonic writers whose migrational histories are more individual [rather than socio-political] and who do not bear the 'burden of representation' (Cheeseman 2006:471) with which German-Turkish writers, for example,

²⁰ Wright. Yōko Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013). 26.

are confronted.” One need not stress the irony of this statement given the burden of representation Wright herself is imposing upon the text: an almost pathological desire to map the narrator in a mode that, acknowledging the double-bind, we may say operates within an ethnocentric premise.

From the very beginning, Wright is preoccupied with figuration, of making manifest and apparent the narrator of this story: “Who is the painter of this portrait of a tongue? She tells the reader very little about herself but I assume that she is the same narrator who populates Yoko Tawada’s other autofictions, namely, a Japanese woman who allows her foreign and foreignizing gaze to wander over Western culture and the German language.” This, despite in her very next comment, where she is unable to find out from a colleague named J whether or not Tawada’s wordplay (*Zahnbrüst* as *Zahnburst*, &c.) is something that comes from the Japanese language into the German: “J, an American colleague who teaches Japanese, tells me that this word play is not literally translated from the Japanese. There is no mention of Japan or the Japanese language in ‘*Porträt einer Zunge*,’ and the narrator never identifies herself as Japanese.”²¹ And yet, despite this, Wright insists on attempting to locate the otherness, the “cognitive effects” of the text, as she says, in a geopolitical linguistic unity called ‘Japan’ and ‘the Japanese’, a formulation Wright employs in her preface to describe a German doctor’s reaction to the narrator of Tawada’s “Where Europe Begins”: “the doctor’s misreading is rooted in his ignorance of Japan and the Japanese, which leads him to fall back on a popular and clichéd Western artistic representation thereof.”²² Is knowledge of ‘Japan’ and ‘the Japanese’ possible? This is the assumption Wright makes, and her entire economy and strategy are built upon this assumption, a kind of politesse that Jon Solomon has termed “postimperial etiquette” — one must respect the mapped, differentiated otherness of the other, with whom one would be capable of having *authentic* knowledge with the right expertise.²³ Hence the

²¹ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 37.

²² Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 11.

²³ Jon Solomon, “The Postimperial Etiquette and the Affective Structure of Area”, *Translation*, 4.Spring (2014), 171–201.

entire project of traditional Area Studies. Hence the effects of this discipline on literary studies. And hence the entire effects of biographism, which have inflected the studies of writers who come from places – supposedly – beyond canonicity, the peculiar status of “world literature”.

It is thus no coincidence that Wright’s response to her own ‘ignorance’ of this language and this location leads her to call upon an American ‘expert’. And this despite her open acknowledgment of this process in, for example, the doctor of that story, or her invocation of Said and orientalism in her opening preface. We might say that, despite herself, Chantal Wright is caught within the logic of an ethnocentric discourse, operating within the limits of biographism. Her entire project of figuring the narrator is precisely the same anthropological gaze and knowledge-production that is so often out-maneuvred in Tawada’s texts, something that Wright is constantly affirming and, in the very same gesture, denying. For example, when she writes of Tawada’s work that readers are “put into a position where they have to resist their own preconceived ideas about the ‘East’ even as they rediscover their home culture”,²⁴ she reinscribes, at that very point of discontinuity that is a defining a feature of Tawada’s work, translation as an operation of bridging, joining, and transfer, as opposed to a poetic operation that constitutes and figures the ‘East’ and ‘home’, in a gesture that presupposes that the East is not commensurable with ‘home’, and that readers of Tawada do not come from the geographic area termed ‘East’. Wright’s theoretical sophistication and her clear talent for reading and translation are belied in these moments where she is caught in her own reading of this text: where the narrator does not reveal herself, Wright *must* figure the “Japanese woman” in order to stabilise the enunciative position of ‘home’, that is, ‘West’. That this stabilisation makes use of ethnocentric mapping, of national language, and of an ‘area expert’, reveal precisely the technologies that sustain the international. It is this economy (Japan, the Japanese, the nation-state, East, West) and this strategy (co-figuration) that reveal to us the almost invisible limits that come to circumscribe the text

²⁴ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 8.

within the logic of what I have termed biographism. Tawada herself has stated that when she reads Kafka or Kleist, she has the feeling that she is reading a “translation without original”. And yet Wright’s translation seeks a Japanese origin *behind* the German text itself; as though it were possibly to ‘complete’ Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* with recourse to Yiddish. This is precisely what is at stake in Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that Kafka’s Great Swimmer is a stranger in his own language.²⁵

Tawada warns her readers of such a manoeuvre: “All of these thoughts, which come to me, have something to do with the fact that I speak Japanese [*dass ich Japanisch kann*]. But my thoughts cannot be confined to the asylum camp that one calls a Japanese origin [*japanische Herkunft*].”²⁶

Tawada’s texts in both German and Japanese have very little to do with the modern regime of translation or with a homolingual address, two features to which, if we may risk formulating it as such, Tawada’s work in general is antithetical and impossible to subsume within a dialectical *Aufhebung* without an extraordinary amount of violence. Indeed, one only has to pay close attention to “Portrait of a Tongue” to see that — if one does not hastily assume that its fragmentary nature is an invitation to ‘fill in its blanks’, if one does not rush to ‘make an example of’ and ‘typify’ an authorial subject according to a preordained configuration of knowledge — the text itself is performatively attempting to work around the necessity of figuration itself. “Portrait of a Tongue” is not, by any means, a portrait of Tawada. In fact, it is not a portrait of a *person*, and not even, given its content, “Portrait of P”, “Portrait of Piroshka”, and, least of all, “Portrait of a Japanese Woman”. “Portrait of a Tongue” is, as much as any text can be reduced to one facet of itself, a response, and this response is conditioned by a singular address, something that, overlooked or simply incomprehensible to Wright’s biographistic reading, and is effaced in her translation, though its traces will, and always will, remain indelible.

²⁵ See Deleuze, Guattari, and Brinkley.

²⁶ Tawada, “Ein ungeladener Gast”, in Yoko Tawada, *Akzentfrei* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2016). 46. My translation.

Written in fragments, each of which pertain to a period of time that corresponds with that of Tawada's stay in Boston as the Max Kade Distinguished Visitor at MIT, the elliptical narrative of "Portrait of a Tongue" details the narrator's relation to a woman named P or Piroshka, which is not the name of a 'real' person but simply "because, later on, when I asked her what she would like to be called in a novel, she gave me this name."²⁷ Everything we might need to know, of the impossibility of figuration and the singular response to the affects of love and friendship — both instances where, in a sense, one comes to know the other — is inscribed in the text itself. The narrator writes: "I had long since moved away from traditional portrait painting, but didn't yet know what else one could do when one wanted to capture a face."²⁸ It is peculiarly ironic that, given Wright's compulsion to locate a cultural or linguistic element she can assign to Japan, she fails to recognise that the 'brush' is connected very closely to forms of writing developed from Classical Chinese, so that, one perceives in this discussion of portraiture also an echo or reflection on the general impossibility of representation in a graphic sense. This is why, for example, the narrator, faced with this impossibility, names the subject of the portrait 'P': "What am I supposed to do? Maybe I should just say P; P for permanent and provisional, poetic and practical."²⁹ In a gesture typical of Tawada, the alphabetic letter is transformed into a floating signifier that remains undecidable: at the impasse in the impossibility of the portrait as poetic or practical (lyrical or realistically biographical) or permanent or provisional, one remains in suspense: the P allows the narrator to remain undecided on the nature of the portrait, to shoulder, somewhat, the burden of representing an other (and not, let us stress again, *herself*). In language or in painting, there is always a burden of representation, of oneself and of the other, whether Chantal Wright recognises it or not, because representation is strictly speaking impossible when thought of as the dream of fully reconstituting an originary

²⁷ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 39.

²⁸ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 38.

²⁹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 39.

presence. There is no representation without loss, no representation without finitude. But given this impossibility, how does one *respond*? What is the form of the address required?

The narrator of “Portrait of a Tongue”, when she first meets P, believes that she resembles the actress Catherine Deneuve. She then rents Deneuve movies (in a gesture that resonates particularly with Tawada’s later novel, *The Naked Eye*) and attempts to paint P, “[b]ut my brush drowned in the flowing pictures of the film.”³⁰ This is a familiar structure of knowledge: one assigns what is ‘new’ (and foreign, other) with what it *resembles*, one categorises, sorts, and labels, one exemplifies and typifies: female, ethnic, exophonic. This structure is visible in Chantal Wright’s constant inclusion of allusions to other exophonic German-language writers in her translator’s notes: on her mind, at all times, is how to categorise or sort the encounter with the text into the familiar, the categorisable (“Yoko Tawada is an example of the type of writer I will call...”). But later, when the narrator of “Portrait” “began meeting P on a daily basis, the resemblance between her and the actress disappeared.”³¹ The encounter passes through the phase of categorisation and into that of a singular relation. This should signal to the reader just how problematic it is to “assume” the narrator is the same as all of Tawada’s other texts (and worse still, that the narrator is automatically coded as Japanese), and if not, the later discussion in “Portrait of a Tongue” whereby “you turn into a different subject by changing topics” should have indicated this relation. The position of the subject is always in a relation: to topics, to topoi, to paradigms and schemata.³² The translator is also in this relation, but as crux, crucial, maintaining the enunciative positions of the co-figurative schema itself, in the third position of *terstis* or witness. In attempting to answer “the question of what Yoko Tawada [sounds like in my voice, and what my voice sounds like in Yoko Tawada”, Wright places

³⁰ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 38.

³¹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 40.

³² This subjective relationality to structure is a strong feature of Lacanian psychoanalysis. See, for example, Gilles Deleuze on Lacan in “How do we Recognize Structuralism?”, in Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2004).

herself in a direct relation which she *appropriates* as though the text addressed itself to her, called for her to ‘complete’ it and *figure* the narrator (as Japanese woman), when the text is attempting to *figure*, in a different mode a ‘portrait’ of P *via* the ‘tongue’. Wright fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the text by suppressing the relation to P. For example, the narrator states: “It had become impossible for me to fall in love in Berlin. The sentences that sprang into my ears had an immediate cooling effect.”³³ And from Wright’s commentary: “[t]he love story in this text is linguistic rather than sexual in nature”, and, the “narrator needs to fall in love with German again, and she does so by crossing the Atlantic”.³⁴ Why? Why this metonymic replacement of the personal or sexual relation (platonic or otherwise — one could certainly read this text as the form of a love letter, if one wished) with the relation to a proper noun ‘German’ as it names a regulative ideal of linguistic unity to which Wright, in her commentary, attempts to reorient the narrator? One notes a certain possessiveness, a certain refusal to allow the text to be *about its own subject* — and this subject changes with each topic, and thus with each fragment of the text, emerging in its fullness only insofar as it is revealed as an *impossible figuration*: “I saw within her face a silken face, a polished face, an illuminated face and many different faces within her face. The more I saw her, the less I was able to say what she really looked like.”³⁵

This relation, the possessiveness that turns the text from its subject (P) and toward the revelation of the author to Wright, plays out almost like a romantic melodrama: Wright consistently erases the third position (translator, witness) in order to place herself within the play of the text. Her desire to figure and figure out the narrator is also the desire to be *seen* by the narrator, who will come into view, is promised as a fulfilment of the labour of translation and of reading. This is the relationship she brings to a text which *forewarns* against this mode of appropriation itself: “The word

³³ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 44.

³⁴ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 44.

³⁵ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 40-41.

haben [to have] comforts us with a capitalist, enlightened gesture, as though you can have feeling in the same way you can have a house and furniture. *Hegen* [to harbour], on the other hand, implies an uncanny [*unheimlich*] relationship between people and their feelings.”³⁶ And: “We say: ‘We have grey hairs.’ How strange. We say we have long legs, have a fat stomach, have lines on our face, have an ache, have a nice life.”³⁷ “P complains that her American students use the word *haben* too often. You don’t say *Zweifel haben* but *Zweifel hegen* ... It wouldn’t be any different in Berlin, I replied. Nobody harbours anything these days, neither doubt nor love.”³⁸ The linguistic is not so easily separated from the sexual: the method in which the verb *haben* is deployed marks a certain possessiveness (marked previously in the text in the way in which German women speak in the cafe in which the narrator worked), a callousness, a capitalistic and desensitised relation. The linguistic shift is indicative of a larger epistemic transformation in which love and doubt are dying, demonstrated by the way in which the verb *hegen* is disappearing. And this epistemic change is *not nationally bound* but clearly marked as a commonality between the ‘areas’ of North America and Germany. This is why the narrator cannot fall in love in Berlin. It does not mean she must fall in love with German again: rather, the mode in which she wishes to fall in love is vanishing, but is renewed through her relationship with P, which is marked by sharing and by pleasure: “In my inner dictionary, *hegen* [to harbour] and *behegen* [to satisfy] are right next to each other.”³⁹

This quote elicits one of the most interesting remarks in Wright’s commentary: “This is one of the levels on which association works in Tawada’s texts: in terms of the personal significance of words. This personal significance is, of course, problematic for the reader because of the difficulties involved in accessing it. How can I know that two words are bound together in a writer’s head?”⁴⁰

³⁶ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 54.

³⁷ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 52.

³⁸ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 54.

³⁹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 55.

⁴⁰ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 55.

Psychoanalysis, here, is a useful counterpoint: insofar as the subject in analysis is conceived of (in Lacanian analysis at least) as constituted by a singular relation to the signifier (and to a non-signifying traumatic ‘kernel’), analysis proceeds only by addressing this singular relation, a relation made apparent in “Portrait of a Tongue” when the narrator says: “I found it confusing when two people with different biographies spoke in the same way. I found it much less surprising when two people looked alike by chance.”⁴¹ The personal relation to language is unique. It is singular. And one labours to learn what this relation is if one wishes to forge a bond with the other. That this labour may be essentially narcissistic, that to “love is, essentially, to wish to be loved”⁴² does not mean that all ways of loving, of giving love in order to be loved, are equal — the problem is, once more, of economy and of strategy.

In the attempt at a portrait of P, one cannot help but see a request to be loved in the form of an act of love which is depiction as *de*-piction, non-figural figuration, an act of ‘learning’ how to speak the language of the other. It is *an art* and it is not one that is practised widely, especially in relation to what we call ‘love’, but it is clearly inscribed in “Portrait of a Tongue”: “It was a little ‘inconvenient,’ she said.” The word used is “inconvenient” in English and as Wright notes, the “sense of the word in this context is not entirely clear.”⁴³ This in relation to P having to give up her professional ambitions for “family reasons”. The next ‘fragment’ of the text that follows is: “*Es war unbequem, daß ich damals so wenig Geld hatte, während die anderen sehr reich waren,*” [It was inconvenient (*unbequem*) that I had so little money then, when others were so rich], I said to a friend in Berlin months later. The word came out of my mouth unexpectedly, like a slice of memory.”⁴⁴ The implicit relation is, of course, that the word ‘inconvenient’ in English has transferred in its contextual ambiguity — and

⁴¹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 18.

⁴² Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998). 253.

⁴³ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 107.

⁴⁴ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 107.

not that, of say, classical translation as semantic equivalence — from that memory, into the word ‘*unbequem*’ in German, a word that is extremely unusual in this context, so much so that the friend addressed responds by correcting the narrator: “The person I was talking to looked at me the way one looks at somebody who is sick and corrected me: ‘*Du meinst, es war bescheuert, daß du wenig Geld hattest.*’” [“You mean it was *annoying* to have such little money.”] The narrative follows thus: “*Es ist unbequem, wenn man sich in keiner bekannten Liebesgeschichte wiederfinden kann*” [“It is inconvenient when one can’t recognise oneself in any of the familiar love stories.”]. Wright’s commentary on this asks: “Is she trying out another definition of the word *unbequem*?” And the answer we might risk formulating is that the narrator is employing the *singular, personal usage* of the word ‘inconvenient’ in its *translation* into *unbequem*, because a relationship — has induced some form of transference as Lacan says, of love, “on the side of resistance.”⁴⁵ And this transference, this relation, is also singular: it constitutes its own discourse, one which lies outwith the “bekannten Liebesgeschichte”, the “familiar love stories”. This relation is not “bekannt”, not *known*, in a conventional sense, but is figured without figuration, is depicted with pictorial means. It addresses itself in the language of the other – impossibly, in a *cant* – as an act of love, of sharing, and of harbouring [*begegnen*].

To this, we may oppose Chantal Wright’s desire to figure the narrator, to ‘complete’ the narrator by mapping the narrator’s irreducible relation to language into a homogeneous, nationally-bounded terrain. It seems more than a coincidence that one paragraph later, the narrator uses the word ‘*Schiftraum*’, a neologism combining the word ‘*Schriß*’ [writing] and ‘*Raum*’ [space, room] to say that P settles down in her *Schiftraum* to read. Now, given that *unbequem* has just been mobilised in its idiosyncratic, bonding usage, and that the passage just prior also features an idiosyncratic use of German by P (*Forscherperson* instead of *Forschertyp* for ‘researcher’), one, if attentive, would attempt to receive this word in its idiosyncratic usage, to take it as something that is singular to the narrator. As

⁴⁵ Lacan. 253.

the text *itself* states: “Man hat nicht immer Lust, eine Sprache mit einer anonymen Masse zu teilen.”⁴⁶ [“One does not always want to share a language with the anonymous masses.”] Here, however, in one comment, we can summarise Wright’s entire strategy and economy:

[*Schriftraum*]

Schrift can mean handwriting, a text or an alphabet. The German word for a ‘study’ would be *Arbeitszimmer*; a reading room in a library would be a *Lesesaal*. *Schriftraum* is an invented compound noun. My colleague J thinks that *Schriftraum* is a literal translation of the Japanese ideogram 書齋 [*shosai*]. The first of the two characters [*sho*] loosely means ‘writing’ and can also refer to objects on which writing has been left, such as books. The second character [*sai*] is usually used in conjunction with other characters. In this context, it means the space in which you shut yourself up for a period of time to dedicate yourself to one purpose. J explained that because space is limited in Japan, a study would be considered a luxury. In the short story “Großvaterzunge” [Grandfather Tongue] by Turkish-German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar, the narrator uses the word *Schriftraum* to describe the room where she is shut up from the outside world as she learns Arabic (1998b: 17). (*Zimmer* and *Raum* are synonyms.) My colleague H and I discussed whether this might be a literal translation of the Arabic word [*kuttab*], a school where students receive religious instruction and also learn reading and writing.⁴⁷

Faced with “cultural otherness”, with an idiosyncratic, irregular use of language, something that, let us propose, a “native speaker” might be praised for in terms of ‘poetic licence’ or originality, Chantal Wright, in attempting to figure the narrator who, let us remind ourselves, has not once in the entire story mentioned Japan or the Japanese language, seeks out the opinion of an American teacher of Japanese, to map this irregularity back within a linguistic unity termed ‘Japanese’. This is not to say that *Schriftraum* isn’t an approximation of *shosai* in German (though the connection between ‘*Raum*’ and ‘*sai*’ seems forced, at best), but this gesture, of mapping the singular into an example of approximation, a reaction to the presence of what Wright elsewhere called the narrator’s “invisible” Japanese, seems irredeemably reductive and antithetical to Tawada’s entire project, despite the fact that Wright tells us that this text must be understood in the context of Tawada’s German oeuvre, as though the Japanese language texts, “inaccessible”, were of no relevance beyond

⁴⁶ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 55.

⁴⁷ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 109-110.

their invisible and subterranean presence. Not only this, but Wright then includes in her commentary J's cultural essentialist comment that space in Japan is a luxury (does he mean all sites in the Japanese archipelago or simply Tokyo?) and then proceeds to associate Tawada's use of language here with that of other exophonic writers. Operating within biographism, Wright cannot think of language as anything other than *national* language and culture, a language and culture with which she has no familiarity, a fact that does not stop her from including such comments as: "Loan words in Japanese are exotic."⁴⁸ And this, on the word "greyhound" [グレイハウンド], as if this word held some allure to the Japanese speaker, as if what is everyday for Wright *must* be exotic to 'the Japanese' because it is a "loan", because it does not *belong* to that geopolitical entity known as Japan nor its national language or national culture, as if they cannot *haben* it due to ethnic, linguistic, and cultural difference. And then, in a mirroring of this same gesture, she then places Tawada within the broader realm of exophonic German-Turkish writers from which Wright, at the beginning of her preface, had originally separated her. The economy and the strategy employed belong to the most widely practised mode of comparison (as in comparative literature, linguistics, etc.) which marks the vast majority of translation studies modelled after the communication model of language: to mark affinity, to taxonomise by commonality, to organise kinships in terms of a family resemblance, one in this case which follows from the *genus* of *Japonica* to the sub-species of writer found under the heading of 'exophonic' (a term Wright claims for her own to 'label') or even that of more general *Migrantenliteratur* or *iminbungaku*. By sleight of hand, biographism replaces the encounter with alterity — with the truly other, the other *as other* — into a difference that can be assigned to the nation-states and the geopolitical order of the international, embodied here, within the authorial figure of Tawada Yōko who becomes less an author so much as the bearer of cultural values and identity predicates. It is a familiar story, a *bekanntere Geschichte*. And one cannot help but feel that this inability

⁴⁸ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 51.

to “process cultural otherness” is more than a little *unbequem* when it literally bifurcates a text which deals so much with the labour of learning to know another person in her singularity, and to depict her in a different manner, something which is signalled precisely in the very *form* of the text itself:

P’s handwriting looked eager, rhythmical and youthful. She wrote down everything that came into her head. She left these notes, together with a newspaper article that she’d found, a photo or some other piece of paper, in the mailbox I had at the institute. [...]

I tried to keep a diary in the style of P’s notes. With no narrative thread, no climax, meandering, unpragmatic, definitely not esoteric.

I should write down things whose importance isn’t yet obvious. The most important things often occur in isolation: they are peculiar and very small.⁴⁹

As Wright notes of the second paragraph, “This is the perfect description of ‘Portrait of a Tongue.’”⁵⁰ The text in and of itself responds to the method of communication which P employs with the narrator — fragmentary, without narrative order or sequence — and *yet* this reveals much more, it reveals precisely inasmuch as it does not depict but *de*-picts. Let us take an example. “After swimming we had to do some photocopying in a copy shop, eat bagels with salmon, shop at the Armenian grocer’s and be on the highway in time to reach Walden Pond before sunset. After we had hurriedly completed our shopping, I said to P as a joke, ‘*Wir waren tüchtig*.’”⁵¹ [“*We were efficient.*”] Now, as Chantal Wright notes, the word *tüchtig* was frequently used as part of the vocabulary of National Socialism, especially in relation to efficiency or racial purity, a kind of socio-political principle of productivity that was ethnically mapped.⁵² This is followed immediately by: “She winced and said it had been a long time since she’d heard that word.”⁵³ What does this tell us about P? One may infer that she has a specific relationship to National Socialist rhetoric. P is, after all, a German

⁴⁹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 94.

⁵⁰ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 94.

⁵¹ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 67.

⁵² The *ethnos* was not simply an object of scientifically racist thought in the National Socialism of the Third Reich: it extended to heteronormativity and idealised body images that exceed what is conventionally thought under the idea of *ethnos* but has always been at work in the concept.

⁵³ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 67.

woman who has been living in the United States for a very long time, and the history of German migration to North America bears the history of National Socialism. (Later on in the text, the narrator and P are looking for a copy Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*.) And yet the methods of portraiture are divergent. Tawada's text merely lets this moment pass, drawing the reader to wonder what the nature of this word is to P's history, and allowing the portrait, the portrayal, to remain "permanent and provisional, poetic and practical". It marks an unknowability that is kept as the necessary condition *for* the portrait itself: of a relation to language which is unique and singular, conditioned by time and distance: "Some women who live abroad remain eternally young because of the distance to their mother tongue. They love their old mother and her tongue from afar without being exhausted by it."⁵⁴

Here, however, we must note that what distinguishes Tawada from Wright, who inserts herself into the text as a creator, following a method of translation she terms as the marriage of Nabokov and Venuti, while retaining a 'cognitive stylistic' approach, is that in the approach to figuration, in the narrator's case that of P and in Wright's that of the narrator, is that Wright is possessed by the desire to fill in the blanks of the narrator's figuration in the text, even if her only means of doing this as portraiture in the broadest of brushstrokes. One could expect this as an effect of the overly empirico-rational legacy of that particular method of translation which is complicit not only with the modern regime of translation, but with an almost vulgar sort of psychologising that verges on the most facile of psychobiographic reading:

Unlike traditional anthropological texts, which are always destined for a home audience, Tawada's prose texts are written for a German readership. Unlike the anthropologist who must acknowledge his or her subjectivity as a matter of methodological good practice, Tawada's narrators generally attempt to remove themselves from the text; they give the reader no direct indication of which experiences they are drawing on when they make their assumptions about social and cultural practices in Germany and elsewhere. However, the reader cannot help *but* make assumptions about the narrator—and, because the line between the narrator and the

⁵⁴ Tawada, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 45.

author is so blurred, about the author too—as a result of her construal of so many social and cultural features of German life as alien.⁵⁵

What authorises this assignment the destined reader of Tawada Yōko's texts? And to say, kicking over the traces, that they are written “for a German readership” all the while recognising that the narrators of these texts attempt to “remove themselves from the text” in a gesture that, failing to recognise the “burden of representation”, Wright then attempts to *undo* by restoring a national subject and national language to the narrator? She obviously recognises at *once* the technique employed by Tawada's writing to *challenge* the ‘Orientalist’ gaze that demands that the writer (especially ethnic, female, &c.) *always represent him or herself* even when not writing ‘about’ themselves – i.e. *biographism*.

So why is it that, constantly, there is this obsessive gesture to deny what Foucault once called “the right to disappear”? We might risk proposing, as said previously, that Wright's gaze is focused on the narrator because she believes that the lack of her figuration in the narrative is an invitation for *herself*. She fails to recognise that the narrative is an *address* that is not addressed to Wright, but to P, in a mode of address that is of a different order entirely, one that lets itself be changed, dictated, provisional and poetic, in pursuit of something in the mode of the ‘harbour’ instead of the ‘having’. Wright fails to recognise that “Portrait of a Tongue” is not a mirror: it is fragments, minutiae, “magical objects”, all gathered together the form the *relation* that ‘portrays’ the woman P in a way that a static image never could. It does not figure her; it allows the reader to experience the various points of connection that constitute and sustain the relationship between the narrator and P, so that, the text *shares itself* and precludes the possessive nature of the verb *haben* in favour of *haben*. To step *into* the text, as Wright does, is to erase the third position of translator and to sacrifice, in the

⁵⁵ Wright, in Tawada, *Portrait of a Tongue*. 7.

speculum, in the search for a specular knowledge bent on figuration in the pursuit of self-knowledge, the kind of altruistic metamorphosis that is *itself* “Portrait of a Tongue”.

The objection will be raised that the *translation itself* is not affected by Wright’s failure, at the level of ‘reading’, to perceive the alterity and the structure of the address of the text. That, if it is readily apparent in her English translation, then the translation is a success. This, however, would simply repeat the same gesture which has relegated translation to *its representation*, a gesture Wright repeats in reducing Tawada Yōko’s writing (and writing itself is always-already translation) to a mode of *self-representation*. There are, certainly, sites within the text that would fail the test of ‘fidelity’ to the original, tempered as they are by Wright’s pursuit of a subterranean Japanese, but what is important to us here is that, operating within the modern regime of translation, Wright effaces the alterity that appears without appearing, without phenomenal arrival, in the text, and this is done *despite herself*. But my own reading is not simply an opportunity to demonstrate a failing on the part of Wright — far from it. That someone so sensitive to these issues, as Wright clearly is, could both pick up on the formal qualities that challenge the regime of translation in Tawada’s work *and* recapitulate them within a biographic horizon testifies to the pervasive nature of what I am calling biographism. The translation is thus, if we may risk the word, *exemplary* of the logic of exemplarity, and exemplary of a biographism, more generally.

If we are to pursue a path, then, beyond this epistemological limit of the biograph, we must recognise how “Portrait of a Tongue” passes through this limit — if we are to take anything from “Portrait of a Tongue”, some aspect or dimension that remains beneath its effacement, then perhaps it is this: figuration as de-piction. This mode of figure cannot serve co-figuratively; it cannot aid us in the establishment of the knowable as a means of knowing ourselves. Rather it holds, *sous rature*, the promise of the figure as appearance, advent, or phenomenon. The text, then, would thus function as a record of an operation whose economy and effects strive, in the mode of *hagen*, toward something

that does culminate or make commensurable. De-piction here, in this portrait without portrayal, shows us that the encounter of translation, and by extension, that of exegesis, must be “permanent and provisional, poetic and practical.” The decisions made, the economy and the strategy involved, cannot be a filling in of the blanks, but rather an effort to labour and hesitate where one wishes to be *tüchtig*, to assign the other a role within the old story of the international. And especially when these roles are mapped to national language and the discourse of the ethnos. At an uneasy compromise with this system, but connected also and irreducibly to the promise of the future beyond it, translation will always be — in a certain sense — *unbequem*.

Between P, Tawada, Wright, and myself, this word signifies no semantic content of the order of the *sēma*, but only a relation. This relation does not belong to appearance or the international, no matter how easily it is given over to the classical economy of co-figuration. By *de-picting* Wright’s own encounter with Tawada’s text, and juxtaposing it with Tawada’s encounter with P, which is itself, as I have argued, *de-pictorial*, I have simply attempted to simply follow the path the text itself breaks, a kind of *Bahnung* or *frayage* of the textual textile.⁵⁶ This path has no end, no *telos*, no final figure. It marks only a connection and a cleavage, a *mizō*, or gulf. One does not tread it with a passport or some other sign of self-identity. One moves along and back it, traverses it and is traversed by it, recalling that what is given is not possessed and cannot be thought in the mode of *haben*. As we move on from the text, from the reading of the artefact even if this reading itself is never finished, we are recalled to thought and relation in the mode of *hegen*. In this we are reminded that far from exhausting a text, all efforts at reading, and especially at translation — that most exhaustive, exhausting, most intimate reading — must remain: poetic, provisional, *unbequem*.

⁵⁶ For more on this see Gayatri Spivak, “The Politics of Translation”, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

CHAPTER 3

READING TAWADA TECHNICALLY

Introduction: The Technē of Writing

To summarise the previous chapter's intervention: we found in Wright's translation an effacement of a relation, a relation to the other without figure, whose unknowability, whose very otherness, impinges on self-identity, and an *economy* and *strategy* concerning appropriation and expropriation. From that text, the terms *hagen* and *haben* came as a guiding duality, where *hagen* marked an opening that I have attempted to restore by traversing the translation of the text with an eye to what is lost when one operates within biographism, which is, in essence, anthropology by other means. Under the premise of biographism, text and life are joined in a metaphysical embrace, and the text falls prey to an operation that *economises* difference to the *oikos* of a "biography" filtered through "identity" (Asian, woman, exophonic etc.), despite the fact that, as in the relation to P, this biography of the other is never fully knowable. As we saw in chapter one, the figure turned to in order to guarantee this manoeuvre is that of a mother. I have suggested that instead of looking for the mother of the mother tongue in Tawada we should instead be aware of its inverse, a *Sprachmutter*, a figure who governs a structural link to signification and its attendant effects.

In this chapter, I read *Yuki no rensūsei* in an attempt to take the question of writing in Tawada's work beyond the use of biographism as a method of capture. I read her work here as both staging this opening where the other would appear as the final sign of the work, and of deconstructing such a premise through writing itself. Tawada's work has often been read in conjunction with critical theory and with Tawada's own literary essays, in part because these texts are more "available" to German-speaking critics. What is often overlooked is, as Brett de Bary has noted, that Tawada's

texts are themselves a theoretical performance.¹¹⁴ When I speak of reading Tawada’s work ‘technically’ I refer not to the Heideggerian thematic of technology as the reframing of the human toward the essence of truth.¹¹⁵ My understanding of the role of *technē* is closer to that of *gijutsu* as developed by the Kyoto School philosophers, who attempted to move Heideggerian thought beyond its European *Grund*. Most notable in this regard would be the work of Nishida Kitaro, whose notion of “subjective technology” is elaborated in the work of Naoki Sakai, who uses it to describe the process of translation.¹¹⁶ The conceptuality of ‘technology’ in this sense draws on the notion of ‘productive machine’ though not in the sense of a production from above. What is machinic in writing-technology is the process of repetition: translation, as a writing procedure, repeats a ‘failure’ in language – a moment of incomprehensibility understood as ‘incommensurability’ – with a view to producing the machine of national language, which thus in turn produces citizen-subjects. Writing is at its base level a *technē* through which the subject, of the unconscious as much as the subject of the statement, is produced.

To read Tawada in a technical dimension, and *Yuki no renshūsei* as an example of this, I refer to: one, the status of writing posed *within* the limits of the text; two, how this relates to the productive operations of writing for subjectivity, in particular the interplay between the metaphors of writing and machine, as found in Tawada’s work, and pivotal in the theorisation of writing in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, drawing on Sigmund Freud. I take this technical view as a counter point to the use of writing as a mode of capture as found in biographism. Autobiography, within such a mode, stands as the greatest testament to the technological field of the letter – that is, in the

¹¹⁴ See Brett de Bary, Fiction, Theory, and the Lightness of Translation: The Experimental Project of Tawada Yōko’s Schwager in Bordeaux/ *Borudō no gikei?*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁵ See Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

¹¹⁶ See Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 24-25. A representative essay on technology in the Kyoto School would be Miki Kiyoshi’s “Gijutsu tetsugaku” [“Philosophy of Technē”] in *Miki Kyoshi zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986).

‘Selbvorstellung’ or ‘self-transmission’ of the autobiography, a subject produced in language attests to their subjective formation by means of that very subjectification. In *Yuki no renshūsei*, however, the autobiography is a lure, truth goes astray, texts are copied, authors turn into ghost(writer)s. As Foucault demonstrated in “What is an Author?”:

First, the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of 'expression'; it only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment. This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier. Moreover, it implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears.¹¹⁷

This does not apply, however, to writers who are read in under the sign of biographism. The nature of the signifier as the introduction of finitude and the movement of difference does not seem to be at stake for those writing from the ‘minor’ position. For authors working in such a position - and here one must question whether they can be called authors, as Foucault uses this term - the ‘autobiography’ is a metaphysical conceit whereby life and writing are joined. In much the same way as a native informant or a simultaneous interpreter is never supposed to lie, to represent through speech the conditions of the subject or its position, then it cannot be thought of as same kind of writing which Derrida characterises as a madness “by which whoever writes effaces himself [*sic*], leaving, only to abandon it, the archive of his own effacement.”¹¹⁸ And yet, as we shall see, in Tawada this archive of one’s own effacement is precisely what is at stake in writing itself, yet raised a power – it is this effacement that forms the very condition for, if not a political project, then a

¹¹⁷ Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 116.

¹¹⁸ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, edited by Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.)

project of *togetherness* that exceeds the atomised subject. This is the mode of *hengen* which we laid out in the previous chapter.

Things Taken for Signs, Signs Taken for Things

Let us begin with a scene in which one could, if one wished to, attempt to locate Tawada's authorial stance in the form of an allegorical reading. It occurs within the first section of *Yuki no renshūsei*, in West Berlin, where the first of the polar bear narrators of the novel has defected after being a controversial success within the U.S.S.R., her memoirs being used by Western critics to demonstrate the failings of the Soviet system:

The following day, Wolfgang came to visit me for the first time in a while. We spoke about the ape story [Kafka's "A Report to an Academy", "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie"]. "If you've got the time to read I think you should use it to write," he said with a pained expression. "Reading is a waste of time for writers. The time you spend reading other writers' books is time you're not writing your own." "But reading is good German practice, isn't it? If I write in German you won't need to translate it. It'll save you time, won't it?" "No, you have to write in your mother tongue. You have to pour your feelings out naturally." "What's a mother tongue?" "The words of your mother." "I've never spoken to my mother." "Even if you've never spoken to her, your mother is your mother." "I don't think she spoke Russian." "Ivan is your mother, or have you forgotten? The time when women were mothers is over."¹¹⁹

Here we have a point of a relation which *exceeds* the identity of the author. This connection, in which the polar bear finds a story by Kafka at the back of a language textbook and prefers it to the dry grammatical exercises, threatens the system of language grounded in the figure of the mother. This system is doubly played by reference to Kafka: though a giant head of Kafka's is located in Prague to celebrate the status of the author of Czech, for Kafka, nationality or national culture do not coincide with language. Wolfgang attempts (at the behest of "higher ups" in the literary intelligentsia, the polar bear assumes) to confine the author to the domain of her maternity and

¹¹⁹ Tawada, (2011). 54.

identity, its *expression* within the idiom of the mother tongue, even where this maternity is no longer maternal, but prosthetised, supplemented by the animal trainer Ivan. Ivan is, though used as an anchor here, displaced twice in the text: once, by the image of Tolstoy's Ivan the Fool: "when I try to draw Ivan's face, all that appears is the illustration of Ivan from the picture book of *Ivan the Fool*. My Ivan is nowhere to be found."¹²⁰ And once more by the figure of Ivan that the polar bear writes in her own memoir: "Because I had written about Ivan, the Ivan inside me, whom I thought was dead, had been brought back to life."¹²¹

So many conceptual problems revolve around this displacement, its technical capacity, and its effects. How is it possible that Ivan should be pictorially displaced yet resurrected by this displacement? The rhetorical manoeuvres of Wolfgang, which are so emblematic of biographistic reading, lead us back to Ivan, in his *position* as a "mother", as the guarantor of a language, a culture, and an identity. The mother of the mother tongue. And yet this mother in *Yuki no rensbūsei* is the very figure of a displacement: not only is Ivan not a *biological* mother, he is himself *displaced* by language itself, meaning, it is not the mother who guarantees language, but language that *demand*s the guarantee of a mother. To follow this argument leads us along the path I have already charted in chapter one and it comes at the expense of another connection, a connection in literature itself, as in the case of the polar bear author of *Yuki no rensbūsei* and Kafka. And yes, stressing an allegorical mode of reading, even the connection between Kafka and Tawada Yōko.

In the example given above, of Ivan, one could object, in the first place, that the picture book cannot be thought of as language because it is *pictorial*, not written, but this distinction can only function within alphabetic writing, putatively phonological writing, rather than graphic, ideational writing - the supposedly non-phonetic scripts of hieroglyphs and ideographs. This distinction,

¹²⁰ Tawada (2011), 65.

¹²¹ Tawada (2011), 17.

however, would lead us into the most naïve phonocentrism, would run roughshod over all we have set out in our reading of “Portrait of a Tongue” (recall the union of the brush, *fude*, with a more generalised graphics). I will elaborate on this problem of “ideogramming” language later, but for now let us note that this most normative, most received supposition of the very *substance* of language would prevent us from comprehending a peculiar scene, later in this section of *Yuki no rensbūsei*, where the polar bear author sees a commercial display with a record player and a dog, in a department store she has gone to with Wolfgang: “Wolfgang and I said a terse goodbye and I went home and tried to remember the record player I had seen as a child. All that came to mind was the one I had seen in the department store and the dog sitting shrewdly beside it. It seemed that in the department store, my memories had somehow been switched for brand-name.”¹²²

The literary artefact (“Ivan”), the commodity fetish (“brand name”) both *overwrite* an original memory. That one of these memories is precisely that of a mother and an origin means that we must examine the technical consequences of this if we are to understand how *Yuki no rensbūsei*, as a text, *works*. Rather than attempt to locate, in the form of national, ethnic, or linguistic difference, a *source* object, an original, a primal scene or mother, let us instead follow this novel as it unravels these suppositions, producing a kind of textual sociality that cannot be reduced, as much as a translation to its original, to priority, maternalism, or biography. Let us focus on the *technical* aspects of this novel as a written text and as a piece of writing which plays out the role of writing itself.

Text, Mother, Memory

Yuki no rensbūsei, as all of Tawada’s texts, is a play on signification. It revolves around a biography (自伝, *jiden*) which literally means a ‘self-transmission’ or, close to the German, a *Selbvorstellung*.

¹²² Tawada (2011), 65.

Throughout the novel, Tawada plays on this word's similarity to the Japanese word for bicycle (自転車, *jitensha*). In the origin myths of language, in Egypt and in China, writing is conceived as a curse: ghosts scream at the discovery of script by the Yellow Emperor, while in Plato's *Phaedrus* (and thus, famously, in Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy") writing is a *pharmakon*. A poison and a remedy. In each case, however, and this will be why Derrida takes up Freud at the scene of writing, writing *supplants* and *supplements* natural memory. It throws into chaos all that can be thought within *physis*, as natural, given, pure, etc. Writing is the first *techne* through which the opposition and status to *physis* will be established. I give this all too brief summary simply to note that writing is capable of mutilating the self-transmission of a biography even while it forms the only condition of possibility for such a transmission. The biography becomes a bicycle through a failure in seamless transmission (homophony), just as Tawada notes that the name Derrida, under the auspices of the word processor becomes a *tricycle* ("Dreirad"). If we are to read *Yuki no renshūsei* technically then it must be to show that memory functions along the conduits of writing, is bound up intimately with the written sign. Memory, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, is not the recall of a given life, a living being which recalls itself to itself, archon of its own archive. It is not a self transmitting itself (自伝) but a story of many selves caught in the relay of writing. Memory, thus, cannot underpin the dream of a seamless "memoir" or "biography", the "writing of life", the *grapheme* of the *bios*, but becomes something else entirely which still – as we have been stressing – bears a relation to an economisation of writing. An economy which encompasses both writing (mother tongue, *Ivan the Fool*) and commodity signifiers ("brand name").

We are alerted to this technical dimension in the first section of the novel, wherein the polar bear author has the following conversation with her landlady:

"If you want to forget something, you should try writing a diary." I was surprised she said such an unexpectedly intelligent comment, and when I asked her about it, she said that last week she had just finished *The Mayfly Diary*. The Russian translation had come

out, and though she didn't know how many were produced, she said it had sold out before it was even on the shelves. She boasted that due to her connections she had managed to get a copy. "Go for it, you should write too." "But a diary, that's for writing what happened that day, right? I don't want to do that; I want to remember things in the past and write them. I want to remember the things I can't remember by writing them out." "Not a diary then. You should write an autobiography," she answered, oddly curt.¹²³

Transcription, cathexis, memory, forgetting. And all this within a secret economy, a black market which operates within the national communist market; an economic horizon which cannot be escaped. But these differing modes of writing bear, thus, their own relation to memory: the diary (*nikki*) becomes, here, a record of forgetting, "an archive of effacement" – by placing an object into its representative or representation, one is capable of cathecting the memory, archiving it, and once it is secure, of forgetting it, safe in the knowledge that the prosthesis guards the memory by supplementation. This is easily demonstrable in the everyday operations of the calendar or day planner. But to "remember the things I can't by writing them out" would not belong to this order of writing, but to a domain of transmission that *Yuki no renshūsei* establishes in and of itself. It is not a biography as "life-writing" and especially not *expression*: far from being an *expression* of experience, a *self-transmission* (*jiden*), the writing of the autobiography brings out a memory that cannot be remembered organically, "naturally", but only *in and through writing*. And as we said previously, the "life" which writing would represent, the *bios* of the author of the auto-, recedes in the gap opened by the repetition required for representation:

Upon returning to Moscow I continued to write on stationery I had taken from the hotel, but writing up to that point seemed like painting over the same period of time, again and again, and I became increasingly frustrated with being unable to move forward. Like waves that break then recede once more, just when I remembered something, it too would pull away from me. The wave that came back was almost the same as the one that came before it, but upon closer inspection, was slightly different. Not knowing which one was the real one, I have no choice but to write, over and over, the same thing, repeating, over and over, the same thing.¹²⁴

¹²³ Tawada (2011), 18.

¹²⁴ Tawada (2011), 15-16.

Memory functions, here, in a decidedly Freudian sense. It is not necessarily that Tawada is rewriting or writing Freud, though she is familiar with his work — clear examples can be seen in “Bioskoop der Nacht” where, as Yasemin Yildiz notes, psychoanalysis functions as another language in that text’s multilingualism, or in “Tabula Rasa” where Tawada details the language of the dream — but rather that, for Tawada and Freud, memory functions similarly in its *technical operations* which are of the order of language, or writing, more broadly, encompassing both the pictorial and the commodity. Of this technical dimension, the psyche as memory machine, Freud notes in a letter to Fliess: “As you know I am working on the assumption that our psychical mechanism has come about by a process of stratification; the material present in the same of memory traces is from time to time subjected to a *rearrangement* in accordance with new relations to a transcription. Thus, what is essentially new in my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is registered in various species of “signs””.¹²⁵

For Freud, each new “rearrangement” within “new relations to a transcription” involves the repetition of memory, and the moment there is repetition, there is deferral (*Verspätung*) and difference, what Derrida will term *différance* – to differ and defer. But these relations of transcription are not limited to “verbal” representation; the dreamwork reworks all impression (*Eindruck*), every imprint (*Niederschrift*), every sign (*Zeichen*) of its species, even that of the commodity form (“brand name”), which is why it is so important to recall the connections between fetishism and the commodity-fetish, and the relation of perception to a world structured by the mode of production, which overdetermines the social, as Marx so trenchantly reminded us. As a “sign”, the commodity is quite capable of “overwriting” an original impression, of taking its place, but also, of leading back to the site of the erasure by dint of the representative itself. In the field of *gijutsu* (“technē”,

¹²⁵ Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes 1887-1902*, ed. Maria Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris; trans. Erica Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1954), 173.

“technology”) it is important to underline Freud’s commitment to the domain of the unconscious which cannot be dominated by the subjective technology of language. The unconscious, in this vein, is an instance where rationality meets what is incommensurable with it, just as translation occurs where there is a rupture in the linguistic field which translation is called on to manage. Each irruption of ‘nonsense’ alters the function of the ‘machine’ itself, however: the “rearrangement” along “new relations to a transcription”. The machine does not ‘dominate from above’ but accommodates, captures, and expands in accordance with each new element introduced.

To place this in the context of our first chapter: writing supplements natural birth, the law attempts to pin in place an event and a relation which it itself must fabricate, in order to secure its function as law, as repression, as civilisation itself. The twin functions of writing and machine come into play in understanding this, as Derrida remarks, in “Freud and the Scene of Writing”: “From now on, starting with the *Traumdeutung* (1900), the metaphor of writing will dominate *simultaneously the problem of the psychical apparatus in its structure and the psychical text in its fabric.*” Two metaphors,— text and machine — come to circulate in how Freud attempts to represent *graphically*, within a *graphics* of writing which is not linear, maternalist, or filiated, the status of an interior psyche which is conceived as a play of impression: “Dreams generally follow former frayings,’ said the *Project*. Topographical, temporal, and formal regression in dreams must thus be interpreted henceforth as a path back into a landscape of writing. Not of a writing which simply transcribes, the stony echo of muted words, but of a preverbal lithography: metaphonetic, non-linguistic, a-logical.”¹²⁶

These comments, in less dense theoretical terms, can also be found, importantly, within E.T.A. Hoffman’s *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*: “I think every strong psychic impression [*psychische Eindrücke*] at that period of development must leave behind a seed-corn [*Samenkorn*] which thrives with the sprouting of intellectual capacity, and so all the pain and pleasure of those hours of

¹²⁶ Derrida, “Freud and the Scene and Writing”, in *Writing and Difference*, 207.

morning twilight live on in us, and the sweet, wistful voices of our loved ones, which we seemed to hear only in our dreams when they woke us from sleep, were real and indeed, and still echo within us!”¹²⁷

Yuki no renshūsei plays with this biography of the tomcat Murr, and in its exploration of Kafka’s writing, has attracted interest in those involved in the field of animal studies.¹²⁸ Here, however, let us attempt to condense both Derrida and Hoffman: before the installation of the “seed-corn”, that is, the *kernel* from which sprouts “intellectual capacity” along the conduits of “pain and pleasure” and this, by extension, leads us to the question of the pleasure principle and what lies beyond it – recall that Freud reads Hoffmann elsewhere, in “The Uncanny”, to generate psychoanalytic terms. From the faintest glimmer of the human dawn, there remains another space or scene of writing, “preverbal lithography: metaphonetic, non-linguistic, a-logical.” Or as the polar bear author of *Yuki no renshūsei* writes:

I had become an author. I couldn’t get to sleep so I boiled some milk and had it with honey. I have had to sleep and get up early from the time I was a child. I had come to be taught that I had to be enthusiastic about my training. But before I became a child, I looked more at the moon, felt more keenly the light of the sun, had a firmer grasp on light and darkness, which every day slipped away. I felt as though I could sleep and wake more naturally then. To become a child is to have already lost what is natural. More than anything, I want to know what lies there, in that place before we become children.¹²⁹

Later, in the second section, “The Kiss of Death”, concerning the interaction between Tosca, grandmother’s daughter, and Ursula, her trainer, we see:

Tosca’s deep black eyes and nose seemed to float in the middle of a snowy landscape. If I connected the three black dots they would form a triangle. Her white body was camouflage in the snow, and I couldn’t see her at all, but I knew that those three points were Tosca, and so I faced them when I spoke. “But there’s no point in remembering when you were a child.” “Now when you were a child, my mother said that you have

¹²⁷ E. T. A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 68.

¹²⁸ See for example Timothy Baker, *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering, and Animality in Twenty-First-Century Writing* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

¹²⁹ Tawada (2011), 29-30.

to remember the time *before* you became a child.”¹³⁰

Writing: A Family Romance

What we are tracing, in the technical movements of memory in *Yuki no renshūsei*, is a form of memory which runs counter to what we perceive as memory within Platonism and its metaphysical heritage. Presence, correspondence, and truth – all these conceptual bastions guard the garrison of a critical field which mobilises them according to the schema I have termed biographism, reducing the heterogeneity of a text to an expression of experience, rather than this philosophical, or even counter-philosophical, questioning. In opening with the provocation of “the age when women were mothers is over” we attempted to show that this age has never *been*, or has “been” only as one moment within the history of Being itself. There, the question fell upon the history of the social and institutional reality of the concept ‘mother tongue’. Here, in *Yuki no renshūsei*, writing cannot function along the lines of biographism because the text itself stages and dramatizes the role of writing itself. The text leads back, regresses, to the “pre-linguistic”, “metaphonetic”, “a-logical”, and thus leads to the philosophical space of the *khōra*. The *khōra* is not sexual difference but the location without locus of the articulation of difference itself. It lies “before one becomes a child” and it determines and unmoors what attempts to situate itself there, *even within the narrative container of a family romance termed maternity*:

And yet, to follow this other figure (of *khōra* as the receptacle of the father’s paradigm—PMcQ), although it no longer has the place of the nurse but that of the mother, *khōra* does not couple with the father, in other words, with the paradigmatic model. She is a third gender/genus; she does not belong to an oppositional couple, for example, to that which the intelligible paradigm forms with the sensible becoming and which looks rather like a father/son couple. The ‘mother’ is supposedly apart. And since it’s only a figure, a schema, therefore one of these determinations which *khōra* receives, *khōra* is *not* more of a mother than a nurse, is no more than a woman. This *triton genos* is not a *genos*, first of all because it is a unique individual. She does not belong to the ‘race of women’ (*genos gynaikōn*). *Khōra* marks a place apart, the spacing which

¹³⁰ Tawada (2011), 132.

keeps a dyssmetrical relation to all that which, ‘in herself,’ beside or in addition to herself, seems to make a couple with her. In the couple outside of the couple, this strange mother who gives place without engendering can no longer be considered as an origin. She/it (*elle*) eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, and all truth. Preoriginary, *before* and outside of all generation, she no longer even has the meaning of a past, of a present that is past. *Before* signifies no temporal anteriority. The relation of independence, the nonrelation, looks more like the relation of the interval or the spacing to what is lodged in it to be received in it.”¹³¹

Our detour through Freud and Derrida leads us back to the non-place where the figure of a mother is *imposed* as the guarantee of philosophical ground. We began with this problem historically but here the mother operates as a metaphysical problem. As figure, this mother need not be reduced to the spindle of a sexual difference (the resolution of the movement of the subject through the Oedipal crossroads), but rather to a relation of *prosthesis* to that which should not need prosthetisation or supplementation. A father may be a mother, in the end, because even a biological mother is not truly a mother. In the figure of the *khōra*, despite what Kristeva and Melanie Klein will attempt to demonstrate, it is not the mother’s body which is the fulcrum of the “pain and pleasure” that we saw in the *Tomcat Murr*, and will circulate throughout all of Freud’s corpus, most importantly within *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but rather the experience of the death drive found *in* the mother’s body, from a *beyond* of the mother as much as a *beyond* of the pleasure principle, a disjunction in language, the real between “the signifier and enjoyment” – or death as the movement of *différance*.

All that we have detailed here should demonstrate that the very idea of a “mother tongue” cannot hold. I have demonstrated this at the institutional level in chapter one, and its condition is what makes possible this foray into the question of the mother, metaphysics, and writing. When we move beyond the mother as metaphysical figure we find ourselves more capable of comprehending the *technics* of writing, its effects, psychic impressions, its relation to spacing and temporalization, in *Yuki no resnbūsei* and by extension Tawada’s work in toto. This is detailed at the very beginning of

¹³¹ Derrida, “Khōra”, in *On the Name* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 214-215.

Yuki no rensbūsei, in the following passage:

Writing is an uncanny [*unheimlich*; *bukimi*] thing. When I stare at this thing I've written, my head starts to spin, and I no longer know where my self is. I am stuck in this story I have begun to write; I am no longer in the here and now. When I lift my eyes and look blearily out the window, I finally come back to it, this here and now. But where on earth is here, and just when is now?¹³²

Organic tie and assuredness of maternity, the very unhingedness that is opened by dint of writing, that is, its relation to *spacing* and *temporalisation* and thus to *difference*, assure us that, leading back to what evades the determination of Being (i.e. *kbōra*, the blank sheet which will receive the figure of mother who will thus couple with the “paradigm” as the figure of the world), the “mother tongue” as the conjunction *body and speech* cannot evade the disjunction which brings Freud to circulate the twin metaphor of *text and machine*. We cannot orient any meaningful analysis of Tawada's work, and least of all in relation to *Yuki no rensbūsei*, so long as this concept of maternity functions as a metaphysical conceit. The text itself tells us this, signals us to listen to the way in which it formulates an economy of memory and writing. But one would lose this the moment one attempted to read it *simply* as an analogical mode of representing *biography*. Something more uncanny is at work, and it behoves us to attempt to trace it. Not beyond maternity, but certainly toward it, toward where maternity recedes, and where the wave of memory washes clear, through writing, which will always, in its very movements, wish for the end to this pulsion toward its own obliterated birth: “Maternity is that which will never be done calling for and escaping impossible matricide. And thus impossible mourning. And it will never be done provoking writing. Watching over it and surveying it, like a spectre that never sleeps.”¹³³

Let us say, clearly, that the myth of the mother tongue, as much as the dramaturgy of the Oedipus complex, makes up for what is lacking in the disjunction between language and the world

¹³² Tawada (2011), 8-9.

¹³³ Derrida, “The Night Watch”, in *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 91.

(in Lacanian terms, “the real”). They emerge as narrative containers for the fundamental impasse: there, where the origin should lie, where one should be able to recall oneself to oneself, summon oneself and the memory of oneself, there is only the “effraction of the trace” — *writing*, in its broadest sense, the play of impression, trace, and sign, the redoubling and prosthetisation of memory and the capacity to follow the prosthesis back toward what is no longer there. Following the links of the chain, the metaphoric bindings, toward “the mother” at the heart of chain, one finds that this figure is itself a metonymic slippage, and the quest, of analysis itself, psychoanalytic or biographistic, requires us to return to an obliterated scene — a “primal scene” Freud tells us — and a *maternity* which does not necessarily belong to a mother. Recall:

“No, you have to write in your mother tongue. You have to pour your feelings out naturally.” “What’s a mother tongue?” “The words of your mother.” “I’ve never spoken to my mother.” “Even if you’ve never spoken to her, your mother is your mother.” “I don’t think she spoke Russian.” “Ivan is your mother, or have you forgotten? The time when women were mothers is over.”

We cannot, here, think of a biological guarantor, in the form of a mother, because anyone can be a mother (Matthis, Ivan), but maternity itself is something different from the *fact* of being a mother. If the world, structured by signification (language, commodity, sign, signifier) enters and establishes an interior space (conscious, unconscious, preconscious) and if this space is constantly at work and in play, in the necessary “rearrangement” of a given system of significations, then each thread we follow through the semantic configurations leads us back, calls us back, to where an origin *should be* within the logics of the logos. And yet it does *not*. And what rises from this “missing place” or break, this “lack” or this fundamental disjunction in language and thought, is the *dream* of maternity, a dream to which no biological fact of motherhood could ever compare. Concerning this, in the work of Jacques Trilling, Derrida makes some comments which have far-reaching consequences:

it is indeed possible to kill the mother, to replace her, to substitute one ‘womb’ for another. This is more possible today than ever, though the possibility is ageless. But

what is impossible to expunge is birth, dependency upon an originary date, upon an ‘act’ of birth before any birth certificate. One can of course curse this act of birth, this act without act, this act before the act, this act before the first act, [...] [but] in cursing one does no more than confess that some evil or some accursed thing has taken place, without any possibility of remission. In confessing, the curse confirms, repeats, reproduces, and makes endure that which it would like to repress. There is no sense in wanting to expunge this evil [*mal*] insofar as it remains the very condition for such a wanting. The wanting inscribed denegation within it: I do not want, I cannot want what I say I want: not to be born—or to die. Like suicide, matricide (the curse of being born) bears within it this contradiction. But far from paralyzing matricide, the contradiction motivates it. Compulsively, interminably—and writing comes to be inscribed in this repetition. It signs and countersigns it. [...] Yet this impossible remains the only possibility I have of gaining access to the experience of existence, to the ‘I am,’ as well as to time, to the temporality of time inasmuch as it is always the first of all my time, my ‘living present.’¹³⁴

And what is said, there, on the subject of Joyce (who, for Derrida, stands alongside Husserl as two polarities in the field of writing, univocity and equivocity), aligns with what has been said of Plato’s *Timaeous*, and the philosophical concept of *kbōra*:

In the space of so-called natural, spontaneous, living memory, the originary would be better preserved. Childhood would be more durably inscribed in this wax than the intervening times. Effacement would be the figure of the *middle* [*milieu*; Derrida plays on this word with its suggestion of ‘half-way place,’ ‘something that is only half place,’ *mi-lieu*—Tr.] both for space and for time. It would affect only second or secondary impressions, average or mediated. The originary impression would be ineffaceable, once it has been engraved in the virgin wax.¹³⁵

The wax, of a Platonic *Wunderblock*, bears secondary impressions around an indelible first which could not have been *first*. As for Plato, so for Freud, *chez* Derrida. But what we must draw out from all of this is that the *kbōra*, that ur-site of the origin, is also mother, nurse, receptacle of impressions and gold, in short, not even a metaphor, a “didactic metaphor”, but something that is only possibly thought *within* the constrains of metaphor, something which is and is not proper sense and thus, something which is and is not, cannot belong to ontology as presence, “the living-present.” And yet it is a necessity. Its impropriety guarantees what is proper in metaphor, sense, etc. There is

¹³⁴ Derrida, “The Night Watch”, 91.

¹³⁵ Derrida, “Khora”, 116.

something in this, between Freud and Plato, of the nature of impression, of writing, which belongs to the domain of “femininity” but only the figure of femininity, which comes to enclose something which exceeds it, for Lacan, “between the signifier and enjoyment”, or as Derrida puts it, “death is the movement of différance to the extent that the movement is necessarily finite.”

Or, to rephrase it in our own terms here, *mother* is simply the narrative container of a figure whose recession launches the infinite pulsion of a matricidal desire to be done, once and for all, with this call of the absent origin. The Derridean inversion of terms here, between Lacan and Freud (although Derrida is here, as always, dangerously close to Lacan), along the triangle of Oedipus, is to say that, within the history of metaphysics, desire and language, desire in language, is assigned a phallic function, but this phallic function is an originary denegation of the non-place of the khora, which is remembered in the very nature of the psyche which cannot be thought beyond a *graphic* metaphor of writing which would not be a “proper” metaphor or “proper sense”. When Tawada takes writing not as a metaphor but as an object, as we will see later in her engagement with Celan, she frees it from the “proper sense” of writing and expands it as a metaphysical operation into the very medium of art itself.

The Social Text

In our discussion of maternity, we have moved through two domains: biology and philosophy. In pitting Tawada’s work against biological essentialism, as in chapter one, it became possible to have a different *form* of maternity and the figure of a *Sprachmutter*. Moving from this, I have shown that while it may, at face value, be easy to dismiss biological essentialism, it is much harder to remove the imprimatur of a maternal genealogy from philosophy, which has used this maternal figure to guarantee culture and language of the mother tongue, showing that instead it is in fact philosophy, culture, and language which demands the *figure* of the mother to anchor itself. The mother comes

— biological or not — as a figure of salvation against the unmooring effects of writing. The *uncanny* effect of writing introduces, as the experience of finitude, death as the movement of *différance*, or the gap between the signifier and enjoyment. And it seems, to so many discourses, that writing, thus, becomes an unbearable burden. But in Tawada’s work it is not, as in Rousseau, that the letter is the death of the spirit, nor, for that matter, is it that the feminine outmanoeuvres or deconstructs writing. Rather a different form of *sociality* emerges in *Yuki no renshūsei*, and it is tied to writing in a way that cannot be thought within the paradigm of maternity in biology or philosophy.

It is here that we must set out to make sense of why in Tawada it should also, as in Freud, be the metaphor of a text and machine that comes to the fore. This is not a metaphor, properly, but a *literal* interpretation of the word for typewriter in German: *Schreibmaschine*, writing-machine. This metaphor, which in Tawada’s text becomes a *Sprachmutter*, does not belong to proper sense, but like the “mystic writing pad” of Freud, founds a crucial figure of thought with which we will approach the text of *Yuki no renshūsei* at what could be called its “meta” level, though this structure – of “meta” or “sub”, the above, the below, the beyond – much like the layers of the psyche Freud lays out — conscious, unconscious, preconscious — overlap, envelop, touch, embrace, contaminate, and annul each other. And no biographistic analysis, running through this network in the hope of capturing the phantom “Tawada Yōko” as the final figure of the text’s “mother”, could ever hope to master the overdetermination of these effects. The attempt — as in Wright — effaces the very possibility of a locus for an alternative articulation, a “third domain shared between animals and humans.” Indeed, believing in the biography as a means of filtration, one runs the danger of short-circuiting the relays themselves, in some cases with disastrous effects. Consider the following passage, where Tosca and Ursula are conversing in a space that is both a dream and not, referring simultaneously to the imprisonment of a biography which is *maternal*, the “legal fiction” of maternity:

“My mother wrote a biography.” “That’s amazing.” “She kept writing, through thick and thin, with all of life’s ups and downs, through hell and high water, she never gave

up.” Tosca’s voice was clear as ice. “But I can’t write anything.” “Why?” “I’m a character in that biography.” “Well then, I’ll write for you. A story of your own; I’ll take you outside your mother’s biography.”¹³⁶

It is always possible, to be trapped in another person’s biography, even when this biography of the other person bears the same proper name, designates, putatively, the perfect circularity of self-reference (自伝, *jiden*). By dint of the other, by dint of the social link and writing, it is possible to open this circle in order to seek new avenues and other modalities of biography, figuration, and relation. These were the entire stakes of “Portrait of a Tongue” and they are never missing from any of Tawada’s works. The human soul, Tosca tells us, is an error forged in this attempt, this brief flicker of light in the opening of the other. Everything laid out in our reading of “Porträt einer Zunge” applies to *Yuki no rensbūsei* also, in the problematics of figuration and knowledge that we came to us in the relation to “P” – provisional and poetic, practical and always *unbequem*.

In Tawada’s work one constantly encounters this “third space” and the opening of the text to operations that belong to the unconscious. One need only recall the proliferation of ghosts in Tawada’s work, in her first piece of published prose fiction, for example, “Das Bad”/“Urokomochi”, and true to form, *Yuki no rensbūsei* also includes this place, which is “not a normal dream, but a third province shared between humans and animals.”¹³⁷ It is an “ever-evolving world of ice”, with “no debt or profit or production No hospital, no school ... only words exchanged in the space between living things.”¹³⁸ In the space between living things where words are “exchanged” opens, necessarily, an uncanny, ghostly dimension. And it is this space that Tawada has continually sought in her texts. A point of specular annihilation:

when I started working here I was picked to be in charge of looking after the bears, and I read a lot of books by all kinds of explorers to prepare for it. In the travel diary of one researcher, it said that when the man came face to face with a polar bear and their eyes met, he thought he was going to pass out. It wasn’t because he was afraid of

¹³⁶ Tawada (2011), 111.

¹³⁷ Tawada (2011), 104.

¹³⁸ Tawada (2011), 124.

being attacked, but because the eyes gave nothing away, no reaction. Humans believe there's animosity in the eyes of wolves, and you can see love in the eyes of domestic dogs, when they looked into the eyes of polar bears, they say that their own image was not reflected there at all, and they were astonished.¹³⁹

When Tawada writes, here in the voice of Knut's carer Matthias, that people were astonished that their form failed to be reflected in the eyes of polar bears, the text gestures to the loss of figure we presented in the first chapter. When one seeks a relationship of configuration with a polar bear, they are faced with an empty mirror. This reinforces what we stressed in reading Wright: that the schema of co-figuration cannot serve as a tool in which the literary critic establishes a relationship with Tawada's texts, but rather, this *other logic*, an unconscious logic, which establishes a specular annihilation in which another relationship is sustained. And this relationship is sustained also, in writing which becomes thus the grounds for the mode of *hegen*.

Let us take, as one example here, the role of Kafka in Tawada's writing. Kafka's importance cannot be over-stressed — in an interview in the New York Times, Tawada states that it is Celan's poetry, Benjamin's philosophy, and Kafka's stories which are perhaps most important to her, that these three writers are men, that they are Jewish, that their language is German, and that this language and this identity bear a strained history, marked by the Holocaust and the cinders of Europe, escape biographism because a *female, Asian*, author cannot *anthropologically* share anything with these writers in terms of a shared *culture*.

If biographism stresses experiential status and its expression in the written form, to reinforce a “mother tongue” that demands these manoeuvres, prone as it is, always to failing, then it demands the filiation and the genealogy be possible and structured. That biographism necessarily distorts these filiations in its pursuit and its premise is never acknowledged, and even when the violence it does is seemingly innocent, its consequences are extreme. Take for example, Yasemin Yildiz'

¹³⁹ Tawada (2011), 186.

exceptional *The Postmonolingual Condition*: Yildiz' project is something with which I find myself in fundamental agreement, and this book in particular is undeniably important and timely. Yet in her chapter on Tawada she elects to align Tawada with Beckett,¹⁴⁰ for:

The common denominator that facilitates this liberatory view of bilingualism lies in both authors' relationship to the monolingual paradigm. Both Beckett and Tawada start out as monolingual subjects in a structure that recognizes their relationship to the 'mother tongue' as an unquestioned given. In contrast to the situation of exclusion from the 'mother tongue' and the monolingual paradigm, which, as I have shown, is constitutive for Kafka, these two authors are thus firmly *included* in the monolingual paradigm.¹⁴¹

First, to sever Tawada from Kafka by dint of her biography is to do a disservice to Tawada's continued engagement with this writer, whose import in *Yuki no rensūsei* cannot be overstated, along with that of E.T.A. Hoffman — recall the throwaway, “that tomcat that became famous after writing his biography had never suffered from a lack of paper”, when Ursula, of the second section (“Kiss of Death”), is attempting to write the biography of Tosca, just as E.T.A. Hoffman wrote a biography of his own cat, Murr, at the turn of the 19th century, with a novel that has been described as the first “post-modern novel” because this “biography” of the cat is *bifurcated* by pages of human biography. The animal and the human find themselves joined in those pages, as other sides of the same page. And this is always at play in “Kiss of Death” whose slippages between author and animal become a *mise en abyme*. But in the first section, “Grandmother's Theory of Devolution”, it is Kafka

¹⁴⁰ The differences between Tawada and Beckett proliferate, in terms of style, interest, and intent, even if “biographically” or rather, *biographistically*, it is possible to align them. And while no doubt in my own work here, I am treading a fine line of psychobiographic essentialism, the lily which classic psychoanalytic readings tend to gild, not all deployments of psychoanalytic logics are equal. Lacan deals with this in Freud's student Marie Bonaparte, in the seminal reading of *The Purloined Letter*, and while we are here laying out a relation to the mother, as the figure of the Drive which lies beyond castration, as the locus of a generative frustration which begets writing, it would be fruitful to contrast the dynamics of Tawada's text against Beckett's corpus in relation to his “mother tongue”. For a full detail of Beckett's relationship to his bilingualism, see Patrick J. Casement, “Samuel Beckett's Relationship to his Mother-Tongue”. While, in the end, Casement psychobiographic premise supports the fundamental relation “mother=mother-tongue”, we have here attempted to stress that this relation is an institutional imposition, a Romantic ideology which fundamentally distorts the nature of language we have detailed in the figure of the *Sprachmutter*.

¹⁴¹ Yildiz, 22.

who is invoked.¹⁴² Secondly, Yildz proceeds to then *invoke* anthropological knowledge of “Japanese women” who, in the 1980s and 90s, began to travel abroad under a longing (*akogare*) for the “foreign”. Now, Yildz then proclaims: “Awareness of this phenomenon provides a new perspective on Tawada and her writing that has so far been overlooked in scholarship. Having left Japan for Europe in 1982, her biography situates her as part of the early wave of this phenomenon, though her choice of German is unusual.” Yildz’ later discussion – invoking Naoki Sakai’s “heterolingual address” – captures much of Tawada’s critical manoeuvres, but overlooks the fact that Tawada has studied Russian literature, learned German in a school with links to Mori Ōgai, and has spoken of the fact that many people of her generation went to Russia for *political reasons*, rather than diffuse waves of middle-class women searching a more enlightened “West”. Tawada’s politics, and interests – no doubt for reasons of sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity etc. – diverge from her contemporaries who lauded the communist sphere as an *enlightened* “East”. While I agree with Yildz’ summation of Tawada’s “recognition that a mere switch from the Japanese to a ‘Western’ social and linguistic structure is not sufficient for liberated subjectivity” — but what, exactly, is a “liberated subjectivity”? — we must also note the ways in which the stress of biography (which I have also employed here, counter-point, to Yildz’ anthropological inflection) neatly distances Tawada from Kafka in favour of Beckett by virtue of *experience*, and then places her within an anthropological discourse which effaces the political stakes in favour of anthropological knowledge. The domain that the writer Tawada Yōko occupies here is experiential only – it cannot enter theoretical, universal knowledge. It remains located within a genealogical line governed by *maternity*, and it is this that, despite the elaborate analysis, the detailed work and what presents itself as all the best intentions, causes Yildiz to

¹⁴² Hansjörg Bay details the parallels and differences between the authorial gestures of Tawada and Kafka in “A und O. Kafka—Tawada”, in *Yoko Tawada: Poetik der Transformation: Beiträge zum Gesamtwerk*, edited by Christine Ivanovic, Stauffenburg Discussion, Vol. 208 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2010), 166—167. Kafka and Hoffman are both subjects of Tawada’s doctoral thesis, subsequently published as *Spielzeug und Sprachmagie*.

reinvoke the “family romance” of anthropological *experience*, and to transform a “liberatory” view of the “mother tongue” into a confinement into the *relation* what has to the narrative container of the “family romance”. That is, while Yildiz may undo the object of the “mother tongue” itself, she does not provide a technical alternative, and follows the consequences of a mother tongue’s ordering principle toward conclusions which verge on spurious. It is for this reason that we must hold at bay the lure of biography conceived of as anthropological category *as much as* the tropes of the mother tongue must be supplemented, transformed by following the tracks of a matricidal coursing toward a separate metaphor — Freudian, uncanny, text and machine — that will thus cascade throughout Tawada’s texts.

Schreibmaschine / Sprachmutter

Let us take a closer look at the conjunction of text and machine in “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter” (“From the Mother tongue to the Language-Mother”). There, frustrated with a pencil, a German woman in an office environment curses it. The pencil offers resistance (*Widerstand*, also the Freudian term for “resistance”) but the woman’s power lay in “that she could talk about the pencil, while the pencil remained silent.” Moreover: “She often cursed the pencil, to redress the imbalance in power between them. For the woman was very uncomfortable when she could no longer write. Whether it’s a matter of a pencil constantly breaking, or a lack of creativity, every person becomes desperate when he suddenly can’t write. He must then take his position as a writer back, by cursing his mute objects.”¹⁴³ An eerie repetition of this scene takes place in *Yuki no rensūsei*, where the first polar bear (grandmother), considers “breaking her brush” an idiomatic expression which means to give up on writing. And later:

“How is the autobiography progressing?” The moment he asked it, something in my heart rebelled and would not allow what I had written to be taken away. I decided to

¹⁴³ Tawada, “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter”, in Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1996). 14.

pretend I wasn't writing anything. "It's not progressing at all, really. A language problem." "Language problem?" "German is very difficult." Mr Jaeger stared at Wolfgang as if it were his fault and said, laughing, keeping his anger in check, "I believe we asked you to write in your own words. We really do have a wonderful translator." "My own words? I've forgotten what my own words are. I think they're some sort of Arctese (*bokkyokugo*)." "You must be joking, Russian is the most literary language in the world." "I just can't write it, not in Russian." "I'm sure that's not true. Take your time, use your own words. While you're writing you don't have to worry about money." A broad smile was plastered over his face, but from his sides the smell of lies wafted up. I understood then that from among human facial expressions, a smile is the one you absolutely cannot trust. People smile to put other people at ease, and to manipulate them, to foist their generosity off on them. I thought about asking Wolfgang for help but he had turned his back to us and was looking out the window. "If your book's published then you can live off the royalties. I have no doubt it will be a bestseller." Because of that visit, my pen once again withered. Expressions like "withering pen" are probably very male and don't particularly suit me. To put it in a male way, the less that came out of me the better. That way they had a better chance of survival. And better to be born in the depths of winter when it seems that everything has perished. You can't let people know about a birth. She-bears birth their cubs in caves, lick them clean and give them milk in pitch darkness, they let no one see the cubs until they are big enough. They are raised on touch and smell alone. When they are big enough the mother takes the child from cave used for hibernation. Sometimes a starving father bear will pass by, by coincidence, and eat his children without knowing they are his. This is a well-known story recorded in Ancient Greece. It's no use saying that father bears should take a leaf out of a mother penguin's book. I have heard that penguins take turns warming their eggs, and no matter how hungry the male is, he will guard the eggs in snowstorms, awaiting the return of the female.¹⁴⁴

One need not stress the overly simple phallic symbolisation, or have recourse to a caricature of psychoanalytic reading here, to note simply that within the play of writing, the phallus, the blank, the drive for mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) is at play in a complex series of denials, repressions, and denegations. But the domain of Tawada's texts is never simply this overly masculine domain of the pen; the polar bear breaks such an object as easy as a baby's arm – with a sort of monstrous maternity, she destroys the *Schreibzeug* as much as the *Mutterzeug*. And writing, its battery of male expressions, is immediately given over to a separate logic, which runs counter to the myth of maternal love, here by the divergent practices of maternity. Writing in this text immediately leads to

¹⁴⁴ Tawada (2011), 59-60.

the maternal logic of the *kbōra* where it is then relaunched otherwise.

Furthermore, we have mentioned the compound –mutter from “sieben Mutter” but there is also a compound to be found in *Yuki no rensbūsei, Rabenmutter*. The *Rabenmutter* is a different kind of maternity to that of the capitalist myth of the Madonna and of motherly love. Returning to “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter”, the “originary date” which secures birth, the mother tongue, and all the Romantic ideology surrounding it and the discourse of “genius”, come undone in Tawada:

There was also a female character (*weibliches Wesen*; female being) on the desk: a typewriter (*eine Schreibmaschine*). She had a big, broad body covered in tattoos, on an on her body was visible all the letters of the alphabet. When I sat down in front of her, I felt that she was offering me a language. Her offer didn’t change the fact that German wasn’t my mother tongue (*Muttersprache*) but it did give me a new Languagemother (*Sprachmutter*).

In the textbook it says that this “it” doesn’t mean anything (*gar nichts bedeute*; signifies *nothing*). This world only fills a grammatical gap (*grammatische Lücke*). Without “it”, namely, the subject of the preposition would be wanting, and that could not be the case because there must be a subject (*denn das Subjekt müsste sein*). I did not see why there had to be a subject.

What I particularly liked in the realm of stationary (*Reich des Schreibzeugs*), was the stapler remover (*Heftklammerentferner*). Its wonderful name embodied my desire for a foreign language. This small object, which recalled a snakehead with four fangs, was illiterate (*Analphabet*), although it belongs to stationary: unlike the ballpoint pen and the typewriter it could not write any letters of the alphabet. But I took a shine to him because it was like magic when he separated paper.¹⁴⁵

Continuing: “In a foreign language one has something like a stapler remover

[*Heftklammerentferner*]: It unstitches [*entfernt*] everything that clings together [*sich aneinanderheftet*] and clings to itself [*sich festklammert*].”

Consider also that in this essay Tawada writes that there are two figures which stand out in the German language: “Gott” and “Es” (God and It). When Tawada hears the word “God” she feels a “great power which would like to dominate (*beherrschen*) me” while “Es” is a pleonastic pronoun, e.g. the “it” of “it’s raining”. Tawada is not so sure that it simply designates a grammatical function. In

¹⁴⁵ Tawada, “Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter”, in Tawada (1996). 14.

this regard, she is close to Lacan's location of the pleonastic "ne" of French in the form of wishes where a negation forms a positive outcome (this is the logic of Freudian denegation) but also, if one is attentive, the Es in German is the Freudian term for the "id" of the unconscious. It is also for this reason that Freud comes to denote what was previously *das Unbewußt* (the unconscious) with *das Es* (the It) for the ego ("das Ich") can only ever fulfil the grammatical function of "holding place", a *lieutenant*, where the "I", as Lacan reminds us, represents only a subject to another signifier, i.e. that between two speaking-beings, language fulfils the function only of representing the subject of the preposition ("das Subjekt des Satze" – Tawada's exact phrasing in this essay) despite the fact that the subject of the enunciation (i.e. the subject of the unconscious, *das Es*) never *coincides* with this representation. In the relay, between the superegoic function (God) and the unconscious (Es) stands the *Sprachmutter*, which is not a *Muttersprache* but rather a series of traces, records, impressions.¹⁴⁶ The tool of the "analphabet", the illiterate, non-alphabet, which unjoins the mother tongue, which Tawada tells us, is "stapled to the human body". The four-fanged snakehead, which writes without writing, moving only to unpick the stitches where identity was sutured at the site of non-coincidence, the disjuncture between the ego and the unconscious, between representation and what it represents, between the mammal who is caught between God and the unconscious. A *willed* repression blocks the contingency of the event, the birth of new modes of relation, and the possibility of harbouring, *zu begen*. It is these sites which will appear, again and again, until it is possible to unstitch them – *die entfernen*.

This figure of the *Schreibmaschine*, the typewriter, or literally, "writing machine" is also that of the *Sprachmutter*. This "female being" (*weibliche Wesen*) in which is recorded all the possible variations of the alphabet, in an expansive body. She is not a mother, in the Romantic sense, she is not genetrix or matrix, the guarantor of the line, the uterine phantasy of a filiation, but the site where all possible

¹⁴⁶ *Eindrücken*, Tawada writes, which is also the Freudian *impression* Derrida takes up in *Archive Fever*.

configurations are *impressed* (Eindrücken), an archive, a matriarchive, a *Sprachmutter*. Which is to say: Tawada's texts are not works of genius, in the sense of *pure* birth, parthogenesis, autochthonic writing, the *expression* of *Geist* or spirit, or the *representation of experience*. Tawada's writing is simultaneously *writing* in the conventional sense (she does, after all, produce texts) and yet it is *also* this function of the snakehead, the metamorphic "staple remover", which moves through all the pieces of paper of a literary heritage, a filiation of matricides and phantasms of maternity, unstitching what is joined, weaving together disparate elements in a scene of disaggregation without final synthesis.

We have previously indicated that Yasemin Yildiz, in stressing biographical difference between Kafka and Tawada, kicks over the traces of the sustained engagement between Kafka and Tawada. The differences between them are exhaustively laid out, of course; and Kafka has access to a simple privilege that neither Tawada nor the polar bear author of the first section of the novel has. Immediately after she discovers that her "Ivan was nowhere to be found" (that is, writing *displaces* even as it gives access to recall):

A distrust of writing woke within me. When I couldn't write, I took what someone else had written. I knew that it was wrong to read, but if it was just rereading a book I had read once before then I considered it a minor offence. I reread "Investigations of a Dog". This dog was not making up a childhood and adolescence, but instead writing down what he was thinking, his doubts and dissatisfactions, the moment they sprang to mind. I wondered if it would be a good idea for me to write down what I was thinking. I had no obligation to write a story that seemed truthful or a story that seemed like me. The writer of "Investigations of a Dog" freely did things like become an ape and burrow into the world of mice. He didn't write autobiographically. Was it not the case that this author, in human form, went to work every day, and worked on his manuscript at night? I had gone to Prague for a day conference once before, but I had never heard the name Kafka. The spring had come to Prague. But this author, who was born long, long before that, who was born even before the establishment of the Soviet Union, perceived even then that the people around him were not free.¹⁴⁷

At the impasse of writing, it is *reading*, which inevitably comes to entwine itself in this text, the dialogic dimension or referential saturation which is a marked feature of Tawada's texts. Following

¹⁴⁷ 65-66.

an attack by neo-Nazis in Berlin, the author of “Tearful Ovations”, comes upon this peculiar dimension of language which *exceeds* the spatiotemporal fixity of recall, the temporary “here and now” and the charge of the memory-trace which writing excites in the play of repression:

The crossing to Canada itself was something about which I was uneasy. Sitting at my desk and glancing out the window, a young man appeared on a bicycle. It was a strange bicycle, one that put me in mind of a Dachshund. The boy pulled his arms up, suspending the front wheel mid-air, then rode round in a circle. He then twisted round in the saddle and rode backwards in the seat. He was practising tricks. Even when it went wrong, even when he fell, even with his knees torn to shreds, he didn't stop practising. And while practised, he mastered riding backwards, and next, challenged himself to do handstands on the handlebars. The word ‘free’ came to mind. Yes, free. I wanted to be free: free to control my own fate, and to write an autobiography to do so. My biographer was language. Not the writing of the past but the writing of the future. If I wrote it down in an autobiography, then my life was bound to turn out that way.¹⁴⁸

This last line is *jiden dōri ni naru darō*, or literally, ‘it will become according to the biography.’

Writing does not, here – and let us repeat the previous assertion that the polar bear author owes *no one* a story that is “true” or representative – master the past as a matter of representation, but *opens* a freedom (the search for this “outside”, an “outside” which is more than a desire for the seamless union of mother-child, which is carved by the homophonic *kaku*) to write the future. And what proceeds next, in this text which is at *once* a novel by the writer Tawada Yōko and the biography of a polar bear is the *repetition* of scenes from “migrant novels” which come to entangle themselves not as a representation of the polar bear writer’s “exile” or “defection” to Canada *but as its mystification* – and what we have stressed, in the originary denegation of Oedipus and the veiling of a matricide, is that this mystification is paradoxically a *true lie*, which is, after all, *fiction*. The “grandmother” thus writes a *prophecy*:

Writing this far, I collapsed gratefully into bed. I buried my ear into the pillow and arched my back. I fell into a light sleep holding the as-yet-unborn Tosca to my chest. Tosca, my daughter, would become a ballerina and appear on stage, dance in Tchaikovsky’s “Bear Lake”, and, eventually, give birth to a lovely boy. My first

¹⁴⁸ Tawada (2011), 71.

grandchild. He would be called Knut.¹⁴⁹

Writing is the only means by which one accesses the future, a future which unfolds by recalling, distancing, deferring, the past as the imperfect wash of wave.

Let us return to the scene in which Ursula offers to write Tosca's biography, so that she can *escape* this very biography "Tearful Ovation". The first polar bear writes a text which is a *palimpsest* of "Migrantenliteratur" *while at the same time* Tawada incorporates an extensive series of references to produce the text of *Yuki no renshūsei*. This is not a meta-textual operation but something else entirely – the machinic production of the *Sprachmutter* transforms *literature itself* into a foreign language, a new language, which could never be a *Muttersprache* but must always be thought as the combinatory *Schreibmaschine* because *originarily there is nothing but trace*. It is for this reason that it would be impossible to proclaim — as Deleuze and Guattari do, of Kafka — that while Tawada "has *paredre*-brothers of blood and affection-(s)he has no predecessor."¹⁵⁰ Xvi For it is *only* insofar as there is a predecessor, insofar as before there is a subject, there is the other, that such a thing as language, and by extension, literature, can exist.

If the author of "Tearful Ovation" comes to have agency, of a sort, over the field of writing (the archive of possible articulations, the interface of the *Sprachmutter*), if she traverses the uncanny out-of-jointness of writing itself, toward the vanishing-point of memory, something which would be not the central point, theme, or message of this novel but more its fulcrum (recall how, in a West Berlin bookshop, the clerk Friedrich's friend tells the polar bear author that in Kafka, it is "not minority experience" which is the point of Kafka's writing, but the way in which "vanishing memory" (*kiesou na kioku*) comes to become the main actor) then we see that this move is toward mastery without domination, a masterless writing, writing without writing, it is because in *seizing the*

¹⁴⁹ Tawada (2011), 75.

¹⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xvi.

mode of production, she gains this agency (if we risk this word) which is an agency always already castrated, always-already sundered by the signifier. Operative at a level which is not *beyond* (meta) the text itself, this book – *Yuki no rensūsei* – is also an artefact of this radical graftage of text where an array of references circulate within its economy: E.T.A. Hoffman’s *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, perhaps most notably; Kafka, always Kafka; yet also *Kagero Nikki*, *The Red Cavalry*, Marx and Nietzsche, Till Eugenspiegel, Don Quixote, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Juan Ramón Jiménez Mantecón, Jean-Genet, Mishima Yukio, Oscar Wilde, and more, but these literary artefacts become entwined inseparably with the *real* biographies of Ursula and Manfred, the *real* biographies of the polar bear lineage of Knut, something we see repeated, in the form of filmic narrative, in Tawada’s novel *The Naked Eye*. It is a radical reworking of life and text, *bios* and *grapheme*, in the deathly relay of the *Sprachmutter*. And this technique would not be possible within the mode of *haben*, and especially not within the identity politics of a generalised biographism: Tawada, as a Japanese woman, would be appropriating what *cannot* belong to her because it is proper only to a cultural space from which she would be divided by *cultural difference* thought within the limit of her maternity. And yet, what we are recalled to in Tawada, consistently, is that *what is ours is not ours*. Or rather, the abolishing of the ideology of private property as concerns the connections between beings, between Being and itself, all the domains which cascade and overflow the categories of the human and the animal, the living and the dead, which are joined and disjointed by dint of writing. To be trapped within these systems is to fail to be free; freedom does not mean one appropriates, as in the mode of *haben*, but that one *opens oneself along the hinge of the other*. To deem Tawada’s work, its referential abysses and riddles, as an appropriation of Soviet literature, or as a “learning” of Western literature, would be to misunderstand what is at stake; to decry that in denying the reader a “true” or “representative” story – or, what amounts to the same, in saying that a writer is denied “true” or “representative” writing –

is to fail to see that, as Derrida has insisted, *we have only one language and it is not ours*.¹⁵¹ All writing, all culture, in its monolithic systematicity, ideological apparatuses and socioeconomic edifices, is always-already *bricolage*; the mother tongue is *originarily* a *Sprachmutter*, and a mother is always-already not a mother, always-already killed but not killed, and always on the verge of some monstrous animality.

In our reading of “Grandmother’s Devolution” – where devolution is etymologically unclear, denoting both constitutional reform toward independence *and* a regression at the level of the organism – we have attempted to demonstrate that writing inaugurates and overdetermines a psychic economy, a self which will in turn be overdetermined in the opposite direction by the *political* economy in which it will find itself situated, i.e. predicated. The identitarian force of culture which then comes to subsume the self (the ego, *das Ich*) into culture isolates along the presumed homology identity-biography, which literary studies will then come to reinforce within the folds of an almost-invisible biographism. And yet in *Yuki no rensūsei*, the “mother tongue” as the battery of possible figurations is overridden by its connection to the pre-egoic as much as its connections to the field of a generalised literature itself - the capacity of the authorial-subject as the site of a palimpsest, to seize the mode of production (language) as its own “biographer”, as the means of rewriting the destination of the subject.

And yet, this biography, this *oracle* of the future, comes to enclose others within its narration: the bear Tosca, within the biography of her liberated mother, must find a way to free herself from this enclosure - the “invisible cage” which may be either the mother-tongue or simply the narrative of the self, the “family romance” of “identity” which is guaranteed by an originary denegation, an originary matricide – something which, without Tosca’s access to writing can *only* be accomplished with recourse to another person (Ursula) along the network of a transferential relationship in which each constitutes the other’s biography as the biography of the other. What appears, at first, to be the

¹⁵¹ See Derrida *Monolingualism of the Other*, translated by Patrick Menash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

biography of Ursula, meeting Tosca in dreams and writing Tosca's biography, all the while recounting *her own* biography as it is lifted from its repression by the energy of the signifier, is revealed in the end to be the biography of *Ursula* written by *another* Tosca, who, in turn, just like Ivan, comes to morph into one and the same. This is a gift, a very different "portrait", and an act of kindness:

Knut taught us all that even without practising an art, you can gather people's hearts, move them, inspire both love and respect from them. But that's his story, and I have no plans to take my son's story for my own credit, like the homo sapiens do in the protected regions of Capitalism. I believe my purpose here is to write down the story of Ursula, so often forgotten in the shadow of Knut.¹⁵²

Along the relays of the *Sprachmutter*, the inverse, originary mode of the *Muttersprache*, the mode of "haben" – *entäußerung*, alienation, appropriation, the *capitalist* mode – is sent astray by the "mononoke", the contingency of translation, the logic of the otherwise. So long as one is willing to harbour, in the mode of "hegen", to be *riven* by the signifier (ego, pregoic) and to delve this *basama*, this *mizō*, the signifier opens, then this openness can be the hinge of a social relation other than that of capture and exploitation. This relation is sustained by an economy *beyond* governing figure and beyond the figure of the other as knowable.

Tawada Yoko: Economy without Figure

We began our analysis with the invocation of an economy, of a figure without figure ("Portrait of a Tongue"), and the different modalities of *hegen* and *haben*. This difference, in *Yuki no rensūsei*, we have correlated with the difference for animals living between capitalism and communism – something which Tawada herself has stated as the opening question of that text. And to reach the point at which it is possible to relaunch this dichotomy – *hegen/haben* – we have traversed the

¹⁵² Tawada (2011), 163.

technics of this economy, the technical effects of writing: on memory, representation, and the commodity. And in so doing, we have also examined what is unleashed by the introduction of writing, namely, the desire for the figure of a mother who would anchor what drifts interminably in the uncanny oscillation of the signifying chain, something which escapes the spatio-temporalisation of writing (the “here and now” it establishes), which we have signalled within all the philosophical problematics of the *kbōra*. Writing, representation, Platonism, logocentrism – these call for a retreat into the pre-phonetic, the “semiotic”, the union of mother/child which is supposedly lost by the introduction of writing and, thus, the introduction of the father – or at least, in Lacanian parlance, the “Name-of-the-Father”. All of this can be located in the tropics of the “mother tongue”, which is, as Yasemin Yildiz notes, a family romance – a narrative container – just as much as Oedipus dramatizes this structure. Here we have insisted that not on the desire for the paternal metaphor, but of its inverse, not love of the mother, but matricidal desire, straining back to destroy that which cannot be destroyed, the “lost origin” which guarantees all subsequent signatures, desires, an interminable *maternity* which supersedes all biological facticity and all practical practices of mothering. We have noted that writing – with all its accompanying technics, the capacity of the interior psyche to be rearranged by the configuration of signs, of *Zeichen* – finds itself repeating this motion of return, guarded by the spectre of a mother who will always, in her sublime ideality, fail to be killed. But this motion – the movement of death *as* the movement of *différance* – is precisely what constitutes the figurative economy, the “archive” of the erasure of the living person Tawada Yōko beneath the authorial signifier “Tawada Yōko”. This proper name is what biographism rests upon, despite the technical straying opened by the movement of *différance* itself. It presumes, as its fundamental conceit, that an *object* named Tawada Yōko exists and that this object can be known through the identitarian predication: Asian woman, bilingual, migrant. *Yuki no renshūsei* knowingly parodies the appetite of area to capture a writing subject to leverage the identity politics of the West,

deftly weaving the absence of the subject as the conditions of self-representation itself. As we saw in the introduction, when asked for a ‘self-representation’ for the German Academy, Tawada instead provided an etymological adventure and back-translation. With *Yuki no rensūsei* she provides the same gesture: this book frustrates the protocols of biographism by gazing back from an empty mirror.

Wherever one looks in Tawada’s oeuvre – in either of its languages, which are not, let us remember, limited by “access” – one would be confronted with the fact that Tawada is insistent on the homophonic capacities of the verb *to write* (kaku). Knut, in *Yuki no rensūsei* claws at his box (掻く, kaku) to get “outside”, the first narrator writes (書く, kaku) and it feels as though *scratching* (掻く, kaku) an itch; this homophony is also dealt with at length in “Tawada Yōko Does Not Exist” – that is, as we have seen, Tawada’s writing is not concerned with the ‘surface level’ of representationalism or biographism, but precisely in carving open (掻く) a “third space” between living beings, another logic, the method of the stapler-remover and the *Sprachmutter*, which connect, disconnect, suture, and graft, the literary connections that constitute a text’s identity – a fantasmatic mode of identity, not the experiential connection forced by biographism – that put it in relation to a wider world where to rely on someone is, in itself, as Ursula reminds us, an art: “To rely on someone is also a talent. I’ll write your biography for you, leave it up to me.”¹⁵³ And art does not belong a *phylogeny*, an identity founded on the figure of a mother coupled with a father, as the genetrix and guarantee of the line. As Tawada reminds us in *Yuki no rensūsei*: “Art isn’t just passed down in the genes.”¹⁵⁴

It is this other dimension of connection that we have sought out in Tawada’s texts, in the hope of evading the closure of biographism, which, at heart, always runs the danger of imprisoning a text

¹⁵³ Tawada (2011), 125.

¹⁵⁴ Tawada (2011), 91.

within identitarianism and the logic of property - *haben*. *Yuki no rensbūsei*, in its final section, demonstrates the dangers of this logic, which is the logic of capitalism taken to its extreme, the right to life and death:

The newspapers said that custody rights actually belonged to the zoo that owned my father. In human society that kind of law is an anachronism, so I don't understand why the separate laws of the zoo go unchallenged. So one critic wrote. At any rate, under this law, the Neumünster Zoo said that the right of ownership lay with them, and consequently, the money I had earned was also theirs. In response to this, the Berlin Zoo replied, "We will give you three hundred and fifty thousand euros and not one cent more."

As for the fact that money had been made thanks to me, I had never really given it any thought. It seemed that it wasn't just that the number of visitors had gone up, but because of the sale of so-called Knut merchandise. I knew that hundreds of stuffed toys pretending to be me, even then, were piled high as mountains. There were small hard things, through to mid-sized soft and fluffy things, even fairly large things. When the shelves were empty, a van came from somewhere bearing a new mountain. And each of those thousands of clones was also called 'Knut'. No matter how I screamed, *The real Knut is here*, no one listened to me. And not just stuffed toys. Key holders with my face on them, coffee cups, t-shirts, dress shirts, V-necks, DVD's, CD's of Knut songs. I knew they were all being sold because I had seen it a long time ago on the television. There were also playing cards with my face for the king's, teapots with Knut on top of the lid. Notepads and pencils, tote bags, backpacks, mobile phone covers, wallets — all of them with my face on them.

There were lots of photos in the newspaper of people who had made a lot of money and built mansions, bought dresses and went out to parties. I had never taken much interest in those kinds of stories but, but I had read, once a long time ago, just one interesting story about money. A man suspected of corruption was put in handcuffs. Actually, that man paid a hundred thousand euros and got straight out of jail. I suddenly remembered that Matthias had explained something to me like that. It seemed there were certain circumstances where you could get out from behind bars if you had money. Surely I'd be able to leave the zoo if I paid?¹⁵⁵

All we have spoken about, in the form of displacement by representative, could be seen – within biographism – as a desertion of *real* being, of a failure in *true* representation, but that is not what is at stake here: the commodity form, like the sign in general, is capable of displacing, but this displacement is also the necessary condition for representation itself, even the form of deixis, *The real Knut is here*. It is rather that this technical operation – representation – is hemmed in by a *capitalist*

¹⁵⁵ Tawada (2011), 240-241.

economy: it is in the mode of *haben*, not *haben*. Taken to its extreme, it is possible thus, in the last instance of the logic of *haben*, to state:

The story Michael told me went something like this. A legal scholar specialising in animal law named Mr Albrecht brought a lawsuit against Jörg Junhold, the president of the Leipzig Zoo, over the euthanasia of a newly born sloth bear that was rejected by its mother. The Leipzig prosecutor's office rejected Mr Albrecht's accusation, stating, "The euthanasia was done to curtail a personality disorder that appeared once the hand-reared animal had reached adulthood." That was fine. Yet Mr Albrecht wasn't the animal lover I thought him to be at first. There are those who fish for a hobby, and those who hunt deer, but this man was a hunter whose game was an animal called the law, and next he brought a lawsuit against the Berlin Zoo who had raised a polar bear cub by hand after he was abandoned by his mother. Many polar bears raised by humans lack social skills. Unable to make friends easily or court female bears, they often fight. It would be for the greater good if these bears weren't alive. If the Leipzig Zoo were innocent, then the Berlin Zoo was guilty for not euthanising Knut. So Mr Albrecht proclaimed.¹⁵⁶

This is the extreme limit of the logic of private property, the law which underpins the capitalist system – it authorises, in the final instances, the right to life and death. Yet earlier, we stated that it is not a matter of opposing communism to capitalism within this novel – the many references to the *gulag* system in Siberia, as well as the opening conflations of the spring season with the Prague Spring, should serve to highlight the fact that Tawada is not historically nor politically illiterate or naïve, despite the dearth of comments on her work in this regard. Rather it is a matter of finding a way of *opening* by dint of writing the possibility of the figure without figure, an otherness which calls us, not to "complete" – as in Wright – but, precisely, even as one traverses a text, *to remain open*:

"I promised to write your story, but instead I've only written mine. I'm sorry." "It's fine. It's good for you to put your own story into letters first. If you do that, then your soul will pour out and you'll make a place where a bear can come in." "You plan to enter me?" "Yes." "That's pretty scary." We laughed together."¹⁵⁷

And that this biography is in fact, like a Matryoshka doll, written by a secondary Tosca, biography within biography, these stories cannot be severed by the clear demarcation of private

¹⁵⁶ Tawada (2011), 244.

¹⁵⁷ Tawada (2011), 138.

property. The connections multiply, between people, and between texts – the whole canon which *Yuki no rensūsei* reworks, at, for want of a better word, its “meta” level.

The machine of the *Sprachmutter* that Tawada sets in motion, with her pen as much as with the strange operations of the stapler-remover, stages an *encounter*, a relation that tells us that what we produce is never proper to us but only ever the admixture, creation, effraction, diffusion, of all that comes before us – the genius of the graft. The opening of the sign leads in two directions: to the mother, milk, a warm whiteness in which one can close one’s eyes and sleep, or to the whiteness of snow, clarity, a fresh page, ready to receive the histories so often lost in the shadow of other stories, the shadow of words left in the wreckage.

From “Portrait of a Tongue” to *Yuki no rensūsei*, we have seen that Tawada’s writing cannot be taken, as some commentators would have it, as an allegorical form of self-expression (“biographism”) but rather, as the New York Times article states, a demonstration of “profound empathy”. It would seem that, in her interest not just the question of language, or of bilingualism and its liberatory capacity (Yildiz), and not just in the question of *who we are* as identity predicates, but in the *failure* of language – “provisional, poetic” – as much as the failure of these identities, in the adhoc nature of words, their shadows, fragments, minutiae, the magical moments in which, it seems, something else speaks from beyond us, to a beyond inside us, that Tawada signals to us, an opening, an “outside”, a passage opened by language itself, in which it may be possible to constitute a relation of “hegen”, of harbouring. The field of literature, is, as expected, a privileged domain in this regard – and translation, as the movement beyond the principalities of the nation-states and their so-called ‘mother tongues’ – for it exposes us to a larger field of possible relations and histories beyond the naïve economies of race, gender, or “identity”. Indeed, beyond the economic spheres of capitalism and communism themselves. Or, as Tawada says, of the French children’s story “Jeanne-Marie Counts Sheep” (by Françoise Seignobosc) wherein Jeanne-Marie dreams of her sheep, Patopon,

bearing many lambs, and all the things she will be able to purchase with their wool – a loaded sign, remember, historically charged, for it was sheep-rearing that forced the system of enclosure, and thus the birth of capitalism itself, upon Europe – but Patapon has only one lamb. Jeanne-Marie, shown in the book’s ending as an old woman, can make only one pair of socks. And yet she tries her best to look happy, so that she doesn’t hurt Patapon’s feelings – Patapon herself is happy with her one lamb. And this relationship, mother-child, opened beyond biologically and cultural determinations, belongs to a much larger domain. One that cannot be subsumed into capitalism itself. For as Tawada says of Patapon, she “is happy with only one child” – because the child “is not capital for her, but love.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ “The Profound Empathy of Tawada Yōko”, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 4

TRANSLATION WITH THE EYE: YŌKO TAWADA READS PAUL CELAN

The Romans associated the god Terminus with boundary stones: border markers which bore his name, the *termini*. These stones marked the border of individual domains whose autonomy the god Terminus protected. To establish a boundary stone, offerings of bone, ash, and blood from a human sacrifice, along with votives of honeycomb, grain, and wine, were placed in the ground where two estates met.¹⁵⁹ The boundary stone or terminus was raised over this point. It is from Terminus and his eponymous stones that we have, in languages which share a Latin inheritance, words like ‘term’, as in technical terms, a fixed-term mortgage, or terms of endearment. A specialised language is called a *terminology*, wherein the word *term* is joined to the philosophically weighted *logos*. In German, not a Romance language but one with a particular, Lutheran relationship to Latin, the connection to the god remains legible: a term is *ein Terminus*, *Termini*, in the plural, which gives us words like *Fachtermini*, ‘technical terms’. The end-point of facts, meaning the culmination of a concept into a rigorously defined term. Even in Japanese, which does not frequently abound in Latinate terms, technical vocabulary is called *senmon yōgo*, the *kanji* for which — 専門 — refer to rights of privileged access to a gateway. And it is important that we keep in mind that a gateway always refers to a terminus: to a point where different domains meet.

Practicing translators are all too aware of the vexing nature of technical vocabulary. At the practical level, it requires knowledge and/or resources in specialist field of knowledge, like that of

¹⁵⁹ Not all sources agree on the presence of human sacrifice. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry describes a victim being sacrificed at the raising of a stone, while Dunstyn and Forsythe describe only the use of animal blood. Hugh Chisholm, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information* ([Cambridge] University Press, 1911). For a fuller, more modern overview see Gary Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). and William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

say, dentistry or botany. These specialist forms of language emerge within a conceptual history. It is impossible to think of modern biological taxonomy without a Linnaean framework, and consequently, regardless of the linguistic environment in which a researcher works, a working knowledge of Latin names becomes essential. This is why, when translating between English and German, for example, one could be forgiven for thinking that Latin terms like *radix*, *matrix*, and *calyx*, do not undergo translation from one language to another. They appear, to the eye, at least, to be *identical with* source and target language. In this way, technical terms appear like stones a language has ingested, or like proper nouns, which cannot be broken down in translation to the level of their semantics. The name *Pierre* does not become *Peter*, though both refer to a *stone* (*petrus*, in Latin, in French, *pierre*).¹⁶⁰ This framework of translation, in which some elements are transformed while others remain immune — such as proper names and proper nouns as well as, in this case, technical terms — is regularly employed at the level of day to day translation work. We are already working within two domains: *native* and *specialist* vocabulary, as much as *translatable* and *untranslatable* terms. Already at work, then, is a boundary stone of the second-order, a metacognitive limit at work *before* we can begin to think the separate domain of an individual language: English, French, German, Japanese. It is this metacognitive process that makes us aware that languages are separate. This metacognitive process is itself the very legacy of the Babelian myth. It establishes the difference, the spacing, *between* languages and make some languages *foreign*. This originary ordering of language is made perceptible at the level of translation where the word on the page jars like a thorn in the eye.

¹⁶⁰ Derrida also picks up on this instance of the French language in his “Des tours de Babel”, where it takes him toward Roman Jakobson’s *On Translation*. A stone, like this, which cannot partake in inter- or intra-lingual translation but becomes a mute sign in a transplantation. It is not even an intersemiotic translation because “Pierre” does not, in moving into English, become the sign of a stone though it does take up a relation of equivalence between the name Peter, which, to a greater extent, also forgets itself. This is why Derrida says, of the *name Babel*: “Translation becomes law, duty and debt, but the debt one can no longer discharge. Such insolvency is found marked in the very name of Babel: which at once translates and does not translate itself, belongs without belonging to a language and indebts itself to itself for an insolvent debt, to itself as if other. Such would be the Babelian performance.” Jacques Derrida, “Des tours de Babel”, in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).175

In other cases, reading, by necessity, involves the loss of the orthographic object in favour of producing meaning as a semantic totality. To read the name Pierre not as the word *pierre* requires that the visual phenomena, the alphabetic letters, be transformed into a semantic unit supposedly beyond the operation of translation.¹⁶¹

This visual aspect of the alphabetic letter, of the arrangement of writing, of its orthographic conventions, became the very field of creative work in concrete poetry which emerged most notably in Brazil in the 1920s. It was a modernist ideal to liberate the very *stuff* of poetry and to transform it into a poetic vehicle *ipso facto*. The contours of the modernist project of concretism were, however, shaped by what has long been used as the trope of the Other of writing: the ideogram. In brief summary, the transformation of writing, from pictographic to phonetic, is considered the hallmark of Western modernity, tied to central metaphysics conceits like linear time (based on an isomorphism of left-to-right, up-to-down directionality of writing) and a concomitant eschatology. In contrast, it has been thought that it is the Egyptian hieroglyph, and, by rhetorical sleight-of-hand, its inheritor, the ideogram, that retains an unrepressed pictographic, non-logocentric dimension. The recourse to the ideogram as the ‘outside’ of alphabetic writing is also the recourse to it as an escape from Western metaphysics and phono-logo-centrism. Some examples of such rhetoric can be found in Adorno’s “Prolog zum Fernsehen” (“Prologue to Television”) where he refers to mass culture as a "pictographic writing" (Bilderschrift) or "hieroglyphic writing" (Hieroglyphenschrift), a "language of images" (Bildersprache) as well as in “Schema of Mass Culture” (“Das Schema der

¹⁶¹ In describing technical vocabulary as beyond the operation of translation I do not mean that the words/ideographs themselves cannot be broken down: the possibility of this breaking is what is *denied* within the imposition of the law of the proper noun (as Derrida states) but also in the conventions which place, or do not place, technical terms (*Fachttermini, senmon yogo*) in the same *domain*. The Babelian terminus, the originary sorting of language into languages, can be seen working here as establishing the *domains* of vocabulary. This domain is never stable. A simple example: our style sheets tell us foreign words in English must be *italicised* to show that they are foreign, but some words, like sushi, have become fully part of the language and therefore do not require this same separation.

Massenkultur”) written with Horkheimer.¹⁶² Kristeva, in particular, is guilty of this legerdemain. Andrea Bachner, in *Beyond Sinology*, summarises: “Kristeva’s positive appraisal of the sinograph follows in the footsteps of Jacques Derrida’s book *Of Grammatology* of 1967. Derrida gives exemplary prominence to Chinese writing, as an alternative to the fixation on speech at work in the whole tradition of Western metaphysics. For Derrida, the sinograph, far from being the example of an aborted progress toward a phonetic script, as Western philosophers such as Hegel or sinologists such as Jacques Gernet sustain, becomes a prime example of a script that largely bypasses and exceeds phonetic principles. Logographic in nature, the Chinese script contests Western phonocentrism and confirms the importance of graphic, rather than phonetic, principles in signification in general.”¹⁶³ And yet even the hieroglyph contained *phonetic elements*. The pictographic illusion contains to hamper our understanding of writing in general. As Barry Powell writes: “The history of misunderstanding that characterized European approaches to the hieroglyphs reveals a good deal about how prejudice blinds users of an alphabetic system, ourselves, when attempting to understand a foreign system.”¹⁶⁴ This is because early interpreters of hieroglyphic writing tended to *allegorise* the image and thus to distort its interpretation beyond phonetic value, for example:

Horapollo records that the picture of a goose means “son” because geese love their children more than any other animal. Or the female vulture represents “mother” because there are no male vultures. In fact the picture of a goose is used with phonetic value to write a word that means “son,” and the vulture, too, can have the phonetic value of the Egyptian word for “mother.” In allegorizing the signs – goose means “son” because geese love their goslings, not because it stands for the sounds which in Egyptian mean “son” – the *Hieroglyphica* established an illusion that hampered the decipherment and has not disappeared today.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² See Miriam Hansen, ‘Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer’, *New German Critique*, 56, 1992, 43–73 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/488328>>. for an in-depth look at the effects of this rhetoric in terms of cinema.

¹⁶³ Of Kristeva, Bachner writes: “Chinese as a language, Kristeva claims, represents what Western languages have pushed to the margins.” Andrea Bachner, *Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cornell/detail.action?docID=1603498>> [accessed 15 October 2019]. 25.

¹⁶⁴ Barry B Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology of Civilization* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell [Imprint], 2012) <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781118293515>> [accessed 15 October 2019]. 85

¹⁶⁵ Powell. 88.

For such an illusion to function we require that the theorist be *unable* to decipher the ideogram, which keeps it in the domain of an orthographic form. No theorist of writing, from Friedrich Kittler through to Jacques Derrida, not Freud, Lacan nor Masao Miyoshi, has thought both alphabetic and ideographic writing as the same *material*. Already at work, in these highly sophisticated readings, is the figure of the hieroglyph and/or ideograph: from the social hieroglyphics of Adorno, through to Derrida, even those who have supposedly taken up after Derrida, such as Kittler.¹⁶⁶ This has meant that, as the condition of possibility for the analysis itself, the terminological dimension subsumes the material of the work itself. Hence why, in a discussion of Tawada as a writer of the avant-garde, Marjorie Perloff writes that Tawada ‘ideogrammasizes’ the alphabet. While this is, at a certain level, pointing out something important in Tawada’s work, it collapses it into Tawada’s Japanese origin and the ideograph of the Other of writing. I would like to suggest, here, that something more is at stake than the old figure of the empire ‘writing back’ and that it pertains to translation, or, more precisely, to a mode of translation which is opposed to another. This former mode Tawada calls *augenübersetzung*, or translating with the eye.

Perloff’s understanding of Tawada’s ideogrammasizing is understandable given the fragmented nature of Tawada scholarship. Of those who have taken up the daunting task of Tawada’s vast oeuvre, few have done so with the ability to read in Japanese and German, and the different languages seem to attract different types of scholarship. The German-language scholarship, which has made liberal use of literary theory, has for the large part paid little to no attention to Tawada’s Japanese texts. This is because, as Wright phrased it, they remain “inaccessible”, but more importantly, because Tawada

¹⁶⁶ I by no means here wish to suggest that hieroglyphs and ideograms are collapsible into ‘pictographic writing’. I am rephrasing here the rhetorical manoeuvre by which these theorists listed above have collapsed these forms of writing together. My point would not be to insist, to the loss of effectiveness, on the differences between them, but to insist that putatively phonetic writing *must be* included in pictographic writing. Only a sophisticated repression — Derrida frames it in Freudian terms, the *repression of the written sign* — allows the *gramme* to become *phone*. This has larger philosophical consequences which have been rehearsed at length elsewhere, most notably in *Of Grammatology*.

scholarship has time and time again taken up her biographic facts as a means of reinscribing her work within the logic of cultural difference (See “On Biographism”). If we are to appreciate fully the experimental nature of Tawada’s writing — as she puts it, in the “ravine” between languages — then we must pay attention to the ways in which she *dislocates* (*Verschieben*) writing itself. Even at work in the concept of exophony, as used in criticism, is a tendency to think *only* in terms of national difference (see “Sprachmutter”). To do so would be to lose sight of the letter of Tawada’s writing, what she calls “literature’s political and poetic body”.

In Tawada studies, the vast majority of work being done is by Germanists who make scant reference, if at all, to Tawada’s Japanese-language work. This makes possible the lacuna in readings of Tawada’s work in Celan which ignore it as a formal technique operating in both her Japanese and German-language work. I will follow the German here to show that the ‘play’ of writing Tawada locates in Celan is operative both in the putatively *phonetic* and ideographic scripts she works with, something that has been largely ignored by past commentators. I will follow Tawada’s experiment in translating with the eye in two directions. One, to show where and how Tawada develops a strategy that dislocates writing itself, a strategy which comes from her engagement with the work of the poet Paul Celan. The essays “The Gate of the Translator Or Celan Reads Japanese” and “The Crown of Grass: For Celan’s *The No-One’s Rose*” are my main focus in this regard. Two, to show how this strategy is put to work in both alphabetic and ideographic writing. Here, I rely on a variety of texts, such as “On Else Lasker-Schüler’s ‘My Blue Piano’” (“Zu Else Lasker-Schülers ‚Mein blaues Klavier““, “Breakneck wherever” (“Idaten doko made mo”)¹⁶⁷ and the novel *Brother-in-Law in Bordeaux* (*Schwager in Bordeaux*) to expand upon the overly simplistic idea of ‘ideogrammatization’ to Tawada’s use of eye-translation in ideographs themselves. By reading Tawada’s theoretical work

¹⁶⁷ 韋駄天 (*idaten*) is the name of a bodhisattva also known as Skanda/Wei Tuo. In Japanese, one can use his name adverbially to ‘run at breakneck speed’ (韋駄天走りに走る). As the story plays with puns on running, running down the clock, running out of time, etc. I have given it this provisional English title.

against the experiments she takes in her writing, I will show how Tawada's literary and theoretical work challenge the tendency of writing *in toto* towards semantic totality. I would like to ask what might happen to literature itself if we, as Tawada suggests, translate it with the eye.

Tawada, Celan: Content, Form

In an interview with *The New York Times* following the English-language translation of Tawada's novel *Yuki no renshūsei*, Tawada states that, for her, there are three German-language writers who are indispensable: Kafka's stories, Benjamin's philosophy, and Celan's poetry. Now, no writer's work can be reduced to their influences, and to reduce Tawada's German-language work to an engagement with these three men would simply fall into a dangerous tendency to reduce the work of female writers to that of great dead men. It is not my purpose to judge the greatness of Kafka, Benjamin, or Celan. They are important to Tawada's work but they are *reworked* by the work itself. As Borges says: "El hecho es que cada escritor crea sus precursores. Su labor modifica nuestra concepción del pasado, como ha de modificar el futuro."¹⁶⁸ (The fact is that each writer creates his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.)¹⁶⁹ As far as creating her own precursors in the context of these three writers, Tawada went so far as to translate Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" into Japanese; her reading of Benjamin informs her doctoral thesis, *Spielzeug und Sprachmagie*, and, importantly for our interest here, Tawada takes Celan far from conventional readings — of trauma, the Shoah, and the foreign violence of the German mother tongue — into a graphic dimension of ideographic play. Two essays by Tawada are remarkable in this experiment: "Das Tor des Übersetzers oder Celan liest Japanisch" and "Die Krone aus Gras: Zu Paul Celans *Die Niemandrose*". Both take up the problem of translation in different ways, one of which we might

¹⁶⁸ Borges, "Kafka y sus precursores", Elisa Martínez Salazar and Julieta Yelin, *Kafka en las dos orillas: antología de la recepción crítica española e hispanoamericana* (Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2013).

¹⁶⁹ Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors", in Jorge Luis Borges, *Everything and Nothing* (New York: New Directions, 1999).

condense to the problem of content and form.

Tawada's first essay bears three titles: "Das Tor des Übersetzers oder Celan liest Japanisch" ("The Gate of the Translator: Or, Celan reads Japanese") which was translated by Susan Bernofsky from German into English under the title "Celan reads Japanese". The Japanese title is "*Honyakusha no mon—Shuran ga nihongo o yomu toki?*" ("The Gate of the Translator: When Celan reads Japanese"). We are all familiar that much can go astray in translation, but considering that both titles emphasise the aspect of a "gate" of translation, and that Celan is temporally conditional in the Japanese title ("nihongo ga yomu toki") and optional in the German ("oder"), I would like to restress the figure of the gate in my reading: the "Tor" of the German, the *mon* (門) of the Japanese. For this reason, I will hereafter refer to this text as "The Gate of the Translator" rather than Bernofsky's "Celan Reads Japanese".

Tawada's "The Gate of the Translator" begins with a comment from the German literary scholar Klaus-Rüdiger Wöhrmann, who had asked Tawada for a copy of the Japanese translations of Celan's *From Threshold to Threshold*, at which time it was he who pointed out, "daß das Radikal 門 [Tor] für diese Übersetzung eine entscheidende Rolle spielte" ("played a decisive role in this translation") and when he did so, Tawada writes, "blitzte eine Idee durch meinen Kopf: Genau dieses Radikal verkörperte die "Übersetzbarkeit" der Literatur Celans" ("an idea flashed through my head: It was precisely this radical that embodied the "translatability" of Celan's literature.")² Tawada goes on to say that the "translatability" of Celan's poetry lies in the fact that, for Tawada:

Tawada's reading of Celan operates in a kind of miracle that exceeds that of the mundane mixing of alchemy. *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (*From Threshold to Threshold*.) This is the title of a book by Paul Celan, read by Tawada Yoko in her essay, "Das Tor des Übersetzers" — "The Gate of the Translator". In the poem, "Ich Hörte Sagen" ("I Heard it Said"), the first from the collection *From Threshold to Threshold*, Celan writes

I heard it said, that there lies
a stone and a circle in water,
and over the water a word,
that placed the circle on the stone.¹ (Translation modified)

What is the function of the word (*Wort*), here, which is never for Celan, fully coincidental with language (*Sprache*)? The word lies over the water, where there is a stone, and a circle. The circle, presumably, being the ripples of the water that are made by the stone's entrance. It is in this moment, where the stone and its after-effects, as *form* (circle), are held together, that I would like to suggest we find the function of the word: it focalises elements in relation. But the word is not conceived of in its immediacy — it is heard in reported speech (“*ich hörte es sagen*”) in the subjunctive tense (“*es sei*”) appropriate for this form of indirect quotation in German. The presence of the scene is immediately mediated. Its mediation is not, let us stress, the corruption or degradation of an originary presence, but the only way in which this presence can even be perceived, because it requires the focalisation of the word (otherwise, the circle could not be placed over the stone, but would dissipate). Celan continues:

I saw my poplar go down to the water
I saw how its arm reached down into the depths
I saw its roots pleading skywards for night.

To this Tawada responds: “The world beneath the water is behind the threshold. The ‘I’ in the poem sees how the ‘poplar’ dips down into the unfamiliar world of the water, but the ‘I’ remains an observer and doesn’t hurry after it.”² It is important for my reading here that we stress that the “I” here observes, witnesses, pays attention to the mediation and the deferral. Celan does not chase after the experience to be found in breaking the water, which would be more in keeping with, let us say, the concept of confessional writing which marks the *shishōsetsu* or “I-novel” — writing as a transcription of experience (ultimately illusory). I want to stress in my reading here that Celan does not write within the presumption of an immediacy of experience to be found in writing, he is patient,

he does not rush:

I didn't hurry after it,
I merely gathered from the earth a single crumb
with the form of your eye and peerage
From your throat I took a chain of sayings [die Kette der Sprüche]
and lined it round the table, where the crumb now lay. (Translation modified)

We are reading this poem here, with Tawada, as an allegory of poetic creation: into the scene, which is transmitted second-hand (“Ich hörte sagen, es sei...”), an original text, the poplar, “my poplar”, descends, its roots pleading for the night sky (what is deepest and most connected, thus, thrown open in an appeal), breaking the stasis imposed by the strange stillness of the word. And in this disjunction, the “I” does not seek to join the experience, but to remain in its position as observer, patient on the threshold: “Das Ich steigt nicht ins Wasser, sondern bleibt auf der Schwelle und treibt ein magisches Spiel: Der Stein und der Kreis werden mit Hilfe der Krume und der Kette nachgezeichnet, und so wird das Bild, das unter Wasser zu sehen sein soll, auf dem Tisch wiederholt.” (“The ‘I’ doesn’t descend into the water but rather remains on the threshold pursuing a magical game: The stone and the circle are copied with the help of the ‘crumb’ and the ‘chain’ and so the image said to be visible beneath the water is repeated upon the table.”)¹⁷⁰

Dieses magische Spiel wirkt wie ein Übersetzungsvorgang. Der Übersetzer bildet das Bild, das sich unter Wasser befindet, auf dem Schreibtisch nach. Die Pappel ist dagegen keine Übersetzerin. Ihr Körper verschwindet im Wasser.

This magical game has the effect of a process of translation The translator copies the image that exists beneath the water on the desk. The poplar, on the other hand, is

¹⁷⁰ Tawada, “Das Tor des Übersetzers oder Celan liest Japanisch”, in Yōko Tawada, *Übersetzungen.*, 121-134, 125; translated by Susan Bernofsky as ‘Celan Reads Japanese’, *The White Review* <<http://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/celan-reads-japanese/>> [accessed 14 September 2019].

not a translator. Its body disappears in the water.¹⁷¹

But Celan is not a translator, here. The “I” of the poem is a poet. This magical game *works* like a translational process, ‘vorgang’ like ‘process’ related also to ‘proceed’. The poet and the translator are conflated in their function: “to copy the image that exists beneath the water on the desk”, to mediate through mediation, and to create something that was not there previously — poiesis, in the Greek, meaning “to make”, a function remembered in Scots, which designates the poet as a *makar*, the one who makes. It is, in effect, a scene of writing: “If one were to equate the unfamiliar world [die frembe Welt — the *foreign* world] beneath the water with the realm of the dead, then the magical game would be a translation of the language of the dead into writing. [...] The translator hears the word of the dead and reads it ... and places it upon the desk, i.e. he writes.”¹⁷² Compare this to a sentence from Tawada’s “Sieben Geschichten der Sieben Mütter” (“Seven Stories of Seven Mothers”): “I prefer to work in a womb with two doors: one which leads to the realm of the dead and the other to a world of clear language.”¹⁷³

Translation itself is a scene of writing — one connected to the dead, and to clear language (*klaren Sprache* is closer to transparent language, not the Benjaminian formulation of *reine Sprache*).¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 125. Bernofksy’s translation.

¹⁷² Yōko Tawada, “Sieben Geschichten der Sieben Mutter“, in *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1996). I have commented at length on this text in the first chapter.

¹⁷³ The concept of what Harry Zohn translates in Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” as “pure language”, and Benjamin’s rhetoric of *reine Sprache*, has plagued translation studies with a Babelian performance. Each interpreter translates and insists on their interpretation of what Benjamin *will have meant*. The *reine* in German refers to purity, an unalloyed metal, although some have said that Benjamin’s concept should be taken as *mere* language. In the spirit of translation with the eye, perhaps we should say that when Benjamin, the translator of Flaubert, writes *reine Sprache* he is inscribing in the visual field the possibility of a ‘queen’ (*la reine*) which would complicate his discussion of translation as a ‘royal mantel’ (Königsmantel, a king’s cloak) as well as Derrida’s insistence that translation, in keeping which his French, is a feminine mode (*la traduction*) that defers and defies Benjamin’s messianism. Benjamin’s monumental “The Task of the Translator” can be found in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), with the German original in Walter Benjamin, *Sprache und Geschichte: Philosophische Essays* (Reclam Philipp Jun., 1992). This topic will never be settled between critics, but useful volumes on the issue include Samuel Weber, *Benjamin’s -Abilities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008) and Antoine Berman, *The Age of Translation: A Commentary on Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator’* trans. by Chantal Wright (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

This may seem obvious, but given the logic of derivation which haunts the concept of translation, and the subsequent derision of the translated work, which lacks “authenticity”, we would do well to recall that the ‘translatability’ (*Übersetzbarkeit*) of the work is not the capacity to create a duplicate, as in a “mechanical reproduction”, but rather, as Tawada writes, “sondern ob seine Übersetzung auch Literatur sein kann. Außerdem wäre es nicht ausreichend, wenn ich sagen würde, Celans Gedichte seien *übersetzbar*. Vielmehr hatte ich das Gefühl, daß sie *ins Japanische hineinblicken*.” (“whether its translation can itself be a work of literature. Besides, it would be insufficient if I were to say that Celan’s poems were translatable [*übersetzbar*]. Rather, I had the feeling that they were peering into Japanese [*ins Japanische hineinblicken*].”¹⁷⁴)

In this sense, Tawada continues, it becomes meaningless to read Celan’s poems in terms of *content*.

If I imagine a poem as a receptor for rays of light, it becomes meaningless to look for something ‘typically German’ in a German poem. For what it picks up is always foreign to it and never the poem itself. Perhaps there are also German poems that have been made of German soil. But the poems that most interest me are the ones that correspond to constellations of foreign languages and ways of thinking that they had not previously encountered at the time of their composition. I am describing foreign systems of thought here as constellations because every sign within them is like a star casting its light on the original. When you read the poem STRÄHNE [‘Strands’], you can imagine that while the poet’s mouth might consist of earth, his words cannot. This mouth senses the starlight and speaks the words that differ from the familiar language.¹⁷⁵

The poem’s significance does not come from its semantic content but the way it *relates* to the constellation of meaning around it: every sign in the system emanating, in and of itself, light which alters the apprehension of the original poem. It is important in this regard to remember that, in Tawada’s view, Tawada’s reading does not come from her own capacity to read Japanese but precisely from her bringing to the reading another set of eyes. Tawada writes concerning the revelation of the significance of the radical 卍 in Iiyoshi Mitsuo’s translation of Celan: “denkt man

¹⁷⁴ Tawada, “Das Tor des Übersetzers oder Celan liest Japanisch”. *Ibid.* 121-122. Bernofsky’s translation.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 127-128.

beim Lesen nicht darüber nach, welche Bedeutungen die einzelnen Bestandteile eines Schriftzeichens haben, sondern man erfährt das ganze Zeichen als solche. Deshalb würde ich alleine nicht auf die Idee gekommen, über ein Radikal bei Celan nachzudenken. Nur der klare Blick von außen konnte mich darauf aufmerksam machen.” (“when you’re reading, you don’t think about the meaning of the individual components of each character but instead grasp the entire sign as a unit. For this reason, it would never have occurred to me to think about the role of a radical in Celan’s work. Only the clear gaze coming from the outside could draw my attention to this.”) It is for this reason that in respect to Perloff’s argument, we must beware anchoring this “outside” in an ethnic or national context. Celan’s poems, Tawada writes, must be thought “wie Tore zu betrachten und nicht etwa wie Häuser, in denen die Bedeutung wie ein Besitz aufbewahrt wird.” (“as gateways rather than as buildings in which meaning might be stored like a possession.”) “Celans Wörter sind keine Behälter, sondern Öffnungen.” “Celan’s words are not containers, they are openings.”¹⁷⁶

Translation is an operation at work *already* in Celan’s poetry, and it is this that makes the gateway (Schwelle) important even as a graphic figure: 門. This ideogram, which means a gate, encloses an empty space in its centre. When combined with the ideograph for *sun*, as in a source of light at the gate, it becomes *ma* (間). I do not believe it is a coincidence that the ‘empty gate’ of the *mon* plays such a vital role in Tawada’s essay here. She has written extensively on *ma* itself, an important spatial concept from Nō theatre, both in “Body, Voice, Mask: The Correlation Between Heiner Müller’s Theatre and the *ma* of Nō” (“Karada/koe/kamen—hainā myūra no engeki to nō no ma no koō”)” and in the context of her MA thesis on *Hamlet Machine*.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 130.

¹⁷⁷ For a thorough discussion by Tawada on Nō theatre and *ma* 間 see “Body, Voice, Mask: The Correlation Between Heiner Müller’s Theatre and the *ma* of Nō” (“Karada/koe/kamen—hainā myūra no engeki to nō no ma no koō”), 168-182, in Yōko Tawada, *Katakoto no uwagoto*, Shinsōban. (Fōkyō: Seidosha, 2007). The same volume also contains Tawada’s other essays on Heiner Müller, the subject of Tawada’s MA thesis, in “From Hamlet Machine to Hamlet” (“Hamuretto mashin kara hamuretto e”), 155-168.

It is into the openness of this gate, and the space there, between living and dead, of *ma*, Tawada takes writing *as* translation. Translation with the eye is nothing if not this mode of writing that Tawada sees in Celan, where the gaze of translation falls on the original in its composition. It requires us to think of writing *as* itself always-already translation. It is “The Crown of Grass”, Tawada’s next significant critical writing on Celan, that brings translation more completely into the domain of the eye. The problem she explores there has less to do with refusing the poem as a container of content, as in “The Gate of the Translator”, but of the reassertion of the importance of the graphic *form* of writing, of its *Schriftbild* or typographics. Of writing as a form of translation and translation as a form of transmutation.

The title of Tawada’s essay, “Die Krone aus Gras”, is the German for the Japanese *kusakanmuri*. This radical, meaning *grass*, is a vital component in all *kanji* which thus partake in its meaning. The ideographs composed with this radical are not simply botanical — 草、茎、薔薇; *kusa*, *kuki*, *bara*; grass, stem, rose — but like the idea of ‘Terminus’ stones, metaphorically extended: 薦る, *susumeru*, to recommend, originally referring a 薦 *komo*, a straw mat. *Hanabusa*, 英, refers to a calyx, in botany, but also to England, when we speak in the register of nationality. The crown of grass, in modern Japanese, is written in simplified form. Its older orthography resembled two tridents: 艸. In a related discussion, in her reading of Celan’s poetry collection, *Die-Niemands-Rose*, *The No-One’s-Rose*, Tawada says that she sees this ideograph in the double-t’s of Celan’s words, in particular the words *Bettstatt*, *Gott*, and *Mutter*. When Tawada reads the word *Bettstatt* in Celan she is sure that this word has some connection to botany and grass.

As in “The Gate of the Translator”, for Tawada in “The Crown of Grass,” it is the visual aspect of the ideogram brings to the fore a thought hidden or *sub rosa* in Celan’s work. Once again let me stress that what we see here it is not a matter of, as Marjorie-Perloff calls it, Tawada’s inability to

resist “the tendency to ‘ideogrammatize’ the individual letters”¹ of phonetic script. In approaching Tawada’s reading, we must bear in mind that, as Derrida has exhaustively demonstrated, phonetic script is produced by imposing the term phonetic on the graphic form of writing. In the context of Tawada’s reading, we might deploy the *term* (*Terminus*) *Schriftbild*. This word, which combines ‘writing’ (*Schrift*) and ‘image’ (*Bild*), under normal conditions means handwriting or typeface: the *image* of writing. Tawada’s idiosyncratic use of the German might be better retained by rendering it as ‘typographics’. And writing, in its graphic dimension, threatens to impede the capacity of language to rush toward a semantic totality. Tawada takes this problem up in “The Crown of Grass” when she reads Celan’s poem “Wine and Loss”:

With wine and with loss, with the dregs (*Neige*) of both:

I rode through the snow, do you hear,
I rode God into the distance - the closeness, he sang,
it was
our last ride over
the hurdles of men.

They ducked, when
they heard us above them, they
wrote, they
deceived our neighing
into one
of their bepictured languages.¹⁷⁸

Tawada’s reading is focused here on the word *Neige*. “When people read the alphabet exclusively as a phonetic script,” Tawada writes, “the word “*Neige*” (dregs) cannot be connected to the French word “*neige*” (snow). Both words have the same letters, but not the same sound. Celan begins with the graphic form of the word “*Neige*” and unfolds a story with snow and neighing. And

¹⁷⁸ Paul Celan, “Bei Wein und Verlorenheit”, quoted in Tawada; translation modified from that found in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s “Catastrophe: A Reading of Celan’s ‘The Meridian’”, translated by Andrea Tarnowski, in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. by Aris. Fioretos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).153.

although the English word “neigh” (Gewieher) differs orthographically from the German word “Neige”, it presents a graphic similarity rather than a phonetic one.”¹⁷⁹

Celan, remember, is not writing in an ideographic language but one that is putatively phonetic. This graphic impediment — this thorn in the eye, a thorn from a rose, Celan’s no-one’s rose — grinds the flow of speech to a halt. The moment it is seen, a decision has to be made: is *Neige* German or French, here? How would it even be possible to incorporate the echo of the English *neigh* into this word, reproducing a graphic and not phonetic similarity? How is a translator to deal with this aspect of Celan’s work, its confusion of languages, registers, and terms? Tawada tells us “we could call a translator who sees the word “Neige” and thinks immediately of “snow” a translator of the eye (Augen-Übersetzer). I undoubtedly belong to this type of translator, the Augen-Übersetzer, when I see the “crown of grass” as a radical in the word “Bettstatt” and think that the word has to do with plants.”¹⁸⁰

To translate with the eye (*augenübersetzen*) or to overturn with the eye (*me de hirugaeru*) are part of the same process. It is not a matter of, as Marjorie-Perloff puts it, ‘ideogrammizing’ phonetic script. Such an argument runs the risk of reinscribing an ethnocentric logic into Tawada’s reading strategies. As someone who reads ideographic script, Tawada’s is capable of unravelling the composition of an ideographic sign. Remember, however, that it was only the gaze “from outside” that could interrupt Tawada’s Japanese-reading eye from transforming the ideogram into a full unit. It is even possible to suggest that, unlike what has been put forward under the dream of the ideograph as the Other of phonetic writing, ideographic script is actually read in the same cognitive process as phonetic writing. It has been observed that even readers of phonetic script perceive words as blocks in which letters are assembled; however, for speed of reading, the eye automatically

¹⁷⁹ Tawada, “Die Krone aus Gras: Zu Paul Celans *Die Niemandrose*”, in Yōko Tawada, *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2007). My translation.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

arranges them in an order that renders even jumbled text comprehensible. This cognitive effect is referred to, in the realm of typed letters, as ‘typoglycemia’, or more broadly, as ‘chunking’:

a cognitive shortcut that our brain uses to divide random information into more meaningful parts so that the information can be recalled more effectively. “In a way, chunking is a type of mnemonic device,” [Ashwini Nadkarni] says. “For example, if you were to speed read a page, you might utilize chunking by breaking down the page into individual paragraphs, then reading each paragraph by comprehending it as a single unit rather than a string of sentences. Similarly, in typoglycemia, we read and comprehend individual words as a whole.”¹⁸¹

‘Chunking’ in this way is the transformation of phonetic inscription into blocks; it renders phonetic writing pictographic inasmuch as a series of marks in a given ‘block’ becomes meaningful in the same way as an ideograph. This is picked up on, in particular, in a lecture by Tawada given at Cornell, “The Letter as Literature's Political and Poetic Body” (文学の政治的詩的の本体としての文字) where a new translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* becomes popular in Japan. The text is transformed into separate blocks in a way that, Tawada argues, is easier for eyes used to reading manga, that is, of perceiving several components or ‘blocks’ in one totality. “I sometimes have the feeling that a manga picture can be read like an ideogram,” she writes.² In this case, it is not a matter of ideogramming phonetic script, but of reading pictures in terms of ideographic lexis. Tawada’s discovery in this reading of Celan goes one step further than the previous: in the first essay I have taken up, Tawada discovers that Celan’s poetry’s power lies in its capacity to ‘touch’ other sign systems in a way that cannot be reduced to Celan’s biography. In the “Crown of Grass,” Tawada discovers that the orthographic object of the letter can itself be transformed into a different sort of writing, and of a transformative form of poetry through the method of translation with the eye

¹⁸¹ ‘Chunking: The Brain’s Shortcut to Understanding and Recalling Information’, *Observer*, 2017
<<https://observer.com/2017/03/chunking-typoglycemia-brain-consume-information/>> [accessed 14 September 2019].

Poetry in Practice

In what follows, I would like to expand on the significance of Tawada's translation with the eye by looking at the ways in which Tawada has utilised translational processes themselves, in their engagement with orthography as a component of her creative practice. While many commentators on Tawada's work have naturally focused on translation as a key motif or theme in her work, much of it has reduced the play of form and content back into issues of ethnic and cultural difference. In reading Tawada's engagement with Celan, however, we focused on the 'interruption' of the reading process: the ideograph is restored to a pictographic sign as much as the alphabetic is placed into relation with it, because poetry connects not to an interior content which the poem, in Celan, expresses, but to the poem's relation to systems of meaning whether they be botanic or political.

Take, for example, Tawada's essay in *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte*, where she responds to Lasker-Schüler's "Mein Blaues Klavier". Here Tawada writes that she discovers the word "la vie" in the word "Klavier" even though she does not understand French ("Da ich kein Französisch verstand"). Transforming this further:

Außerdem ist das Klavier im Wort 'Klaviatur' mit einem ‚a‘ geschrieben, also es gibt kein ‚Leben‘ (la vie) mehr darin. Dafür fand ich das Wort ‚via‘, das einen Weg oder eine Zwischenstation andeutet. Das Leben (VIE) verwandelt sich in einem Übergang/Durchgang (VIA).

Furthermore, the piano ('Klavier') in the word 'piano door' ('Klaviatur') is written with an 'a' and thus there is no more life 'la vie' in it. Instead I found the word 'via', which indicates a way ('Weg') or a stopover ('Zwischenstation'). Life ('vie') transforms ('verwandelt sich') into a transfer or passage (Übergang/Durchgang) ('via')¹⁸²

In the context of the poetry of Celan and Lasker-Schüler, the alphabet's visual framework, or if one wishes to borrow a term from Celan, the *Sprachgitter*, allows semantic content of language (*Sprache*) to be reworked through the condensation and displacement of elements on a grid (*Gitter*).

¹⁸² Tawada, "Zu Else Lasker-Schülers ‚Mein blaues Klavier‘", in *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte* (Verlag Claudia Gehrke: Tübingen, 2007), 45-48, 45. My translation.

This metamorphosis opens a way: a *Weg*, a crossing over and through (*via*). In this, Tawada shares similar interests with the techniques of the surrealists (as Bettina Brandt has continuously demonstrated), but also, of interest to us here, with the creative thinking of the autistic writer and translator, Daniel Tammet. In *Every Word is a Bird we Teach to Sing*, Tammet writes of an experience in London where his linguistic capabilities as an autistic person are being tested. Fifty words are on a sheet of foolscap (and one cannot overlook the word ‘fools’ cap’ hidden in this material) which he was to read out loud:

“Chord,” I muttered to the invigilator. It was the first word on the list.
“Please go on,” she said. Her voice was glassy.
I wanted to say, “It is a golden word. Gold, white, and red. Like the colors of the flag of Nunavut. And if you retype the word in small letters, reordering them to spell *dcorb*, and then trim the tops off the tall letters, the *d* and the *b*, do you see the anagram *acorn*?” But I didn’t say any of this.³

How does one ‘see’ the word *acorn* inside the word *chord*? This capability — irreducible to but yet unthinkable without Tammet’s autism and synaesthesia — is what we are attempting to sketch out here within the concept of ‘translating with the eye’. As a foreign object, the word becomes mutable. However, this is not ‘ideogrammizing’ but a general cognitive process called typoglycemia, or more commonly, as ‘chunking’. To a young generation of readers, today, blocks of text that fit into the ‘block’ of a smartphone, kindle, or iPad, are easier to read than the unwieldy length of a paragraph in classics of word literature. It cannot be thought as an effect of cross-cultural interaction but of global social transformation in terms of writing technologies:

The children at the German schools where I’ve given readings have shown far more interest in the Chinese characters than my texts. Maybe this has something to do with the texts. Even when I write in German, image-based script in the broadest sense is still present in my texts. I don’t know if the growing interest in ideograms can be explained more by the interest in manga culture or China’s economic growth. No matter whom I come in contact with—employees at a computer store, academics, people at arts organizations or the artists themselves—everyone wants to know more about ideograms. Perhaps this is part of a global process in which visual thinking is

taking on a more central role.¹⁸³

Tawada's strategy, in general, we could say, is a disruption of protocols of reading that yield to 'semantic totality' and 'the flow of speech', to the 'chunking' or 'blocking' of preconceived totalities. This, she writes, is something she discovers in a 'destroyed' relationship to the 'mother tongue' (see "Sprachmutter") in which one becomes a 'word fetishist': "One becomes a word-fetishist. Every piece, or even every letter, can be touched and changed; you no longer see a semantic totality (*semantische Einheit*), and do not allow yourself to be taken into the flow of speech. One stays still and takes close-ups of the details."¹⁸⁴

The waystation, transfer, and gate are all figures that can be comfortably thought within the graphic figure of the radical known as mon (sometimes *mongamae*) (門). This question of the graphic details of words takes on a different valence in the context of non-signifying or untranslatable elements. Before we referenced these elements in terms of technical terms and proper names, to which we will return, but one of the other written elements that, at first blush, appears untranslatable is punctuation. Tawada takes this up, again in a reading of Celan, in "Rabbi Löw und 27 Punkte" ("Rabbi Loew and 27 Puncta"). There she writes: "The translation of the name into numbers appears to be one of the most important movements in Celan's literature."¹⁸⁵ By "translation into numbers" she refers to something almost impossible to imagine within the received idea of translation as "transfer" between languages: translating form. In this vein, Tawada asks the question: How to translate punctuation?

The ten points in this poem stayed in my memory like grains of sand in soup. Punctuation marks are foreign bodies to phonetic writing as much as for ideographic. They are foreign to the original text and they remain, in the translation into their new environment, which lies in another language, foreign. In this sense, they are the only "transferrable" ("übertragbaren"): mark in Celan's poetry. This means that they do not

¹⁸³ "The Letter as Literature's Political and Poetic Body | The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus" <<https://apjif.org/-Tawada-Yoko/3208/article.html>> [accessed 14 October 2019].

¹⁸⁴ Tawada, "Schreiben in Netz der Sprache", in Yoko Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, 1996).

¹⁸⁵ "Rabbi Löw und 27 Punkte: Physiognomie der Interpunktion bei Paul Celan", in Tawada (2007). My translation.

open themselves in the process of translation, but rather move from the original to the translation with their bodies closed. I thought for days about the ten dots in Celan's poem. But I came to no conclusion.¹⁸⁶

It is later in her reading that Tawada performs an incredible feat, the result of an obsession which didn't "resemble a hunt for meaning. It resembled instead the passion of an anagram-poet."

Tawada is reminded of another poem about Rabbi Löw, "Einem der vor der Tür stand":

diesem
spreize die zwei
Krüppelfinger zum heil-
bringenden Spruch.
Diesem.

.....

Wirf auch die Abendtür zu, Rabbi.

.....

Reiß die Morgentür auf, Ra- —¹⁸⁷

In these punctuation marks — mysteriously multiplied in the Japanese translation of this poem — Tawada attempts to obey the magic homophone of Celan's name: *Zähl an!* (*Count!*) She counts these puncta and notes thirteen in the first instance, and fourteen in the second. The numeral 13 (as opposed to the 'number' 'thirteen') resembles a capital 'B'. Fourteen can be rendered as 13+1, with the numeral 1 resembling a letter 'P'. In this way, this translation of the puncta, which remain *a foreign body to meaning*, Tawada reconstructs the letters: B, B, I, which are cut off at the end of the poem by a dash — in the magazine version of there are three dots: *Ra...*⁴ Tawada's point in this reading, drawing on Kabalistic tradition, is that not only is the golem of Prague animated by letters, the Rabbi himself is made of letters, capable, at any moment, of dissolving back into a certain

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ John Felstiner, 'Kafka and the Golem - Translating Paul Celan', *Prooftexts; Baltimore, Md.*, 6.2 (1986), 172–183. It should be noted that in Felstiner's translation there are *sixteen* puncta therefore his translation also smudges any message written in the translation of name into number, as Tawada suggests.

arrangement of numbers.¹⁸⁸ “Through this game of letters I show that the “Rabbi” also consists of a combination of letters. And these letters can be read as numbers as well as letters. I counted the puncta that seemed to me like hard nuts to rack, but there was no need to crack them, but count them. *Count them! Zähl an!* That is the magic word for readers of Celan. Hard nuts don’t need to be cracked; they contain no hidden meaning. They have to be counted and read at the same time.”¹⁸⁹ A similar operation occurs with Tammet, when he sees the word “lollipop” as a child and is immediately taken with it: “One day intent on my reading, I happened on *lollipop* and a shock of joy coursed through me. I read it as 1011ipop. One thousand and eleven, divisible by three, was a fittingly round shape, and I thought it the most beautiful thing I had yet read: half number and half word.”¹⁹⁰

Which is to say: the written sign is a mutable medium. It is only a convention of reading that prohibits us from seeing this: when we look at words we do not *see* them but apprehend them as a semantic totality. Tawada interrupts this process, she carves a space, a gateway (門) into it. Here I show that Tawada uses these translational processes to create art that is not at the level of expression but *in relation* to modes of signification. That is, Tawada’s work, and Celan’s, has the effect it does precisely insofar as they are composed within a view that does not presuppose a homogeneous linguistic environment; they incorporate the eye of the foreigner, and the trace of the future. These experiments and wordplays have long been noted as a feature of Tawada’s work. But as stated

¹⁸⁸ This has important consequences for other readings of this poem, particularly Derrida and those who follow after him. If circumcision ‘cuts’ the word ‘Rabbi’ in this poem then its displacement into other signs would need to be read in conjunction with all the theses Derrida puts forward. For brevity, I will not deal with these questions here. For more information, see Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), as well as Michael G. Levine, ‘Spectral Gatherings: Derrida, Celan, and the Covenant of the Word’, *Diacritics*, 38.1/2 (2008), 64–91.

¹⁸⁹ Tawada, “Rabbi Löw” (2007), 43.

¹⁹⁰ Daniel Tammet, *Every Word Is a Bird We Teach to Sing: Encounters with the Mysteries and Meanings of Language*, First edition. (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2017).

previously, few studies have dealt sufficiently with Tawada's use of the ideograph as a means of translating with the eye. I would like to take this up in what follows.

Ideogram

When Tawada writes that she has the feeling manga can be read *like* an ideograph, it begs the question of how Tawada *uses* ideographs. I have attempted to show that, after her engagements with Celan, and especially after the exophonic relationship Tawada has cultivated to language *as such*, Tawada's reading of the ideograph is not 'natural' or 'Japanese' but a literary experiment at the level of its typographics. No story is a better example of this than "Idaten doko made mo", a short story which appeared in the anthology *Hen'ai Shōsetsushū*.¹⁹¹ Here is how the story begins:

生け花をしていて、花が妙なモノに化けることもあるが、たとえばそれは草の冠が見えなくなってしまった時である。「化け花」はこわい。
趣味をもたなければどんな魅惑の**味**も**未**だ口に入らぬうちに人生を走り抜くための**走**力を抜き**取**られて老衰する、と言われて、東田一子は夫の死後、生け花を始めた。

Sometimes, when doing ikebana, the flowers change into strange things, like when the crown of grass (*kusa no kanmuri*) vanishes. 'Changing blooms' are scary. (A play on the Japanese for 'monsters' as literally 'changing things' [化け物]—PM)

After her husband's death, Higashida Ichiko said to herself, that if she didn't have a hobby then she would run out of the strength to run down the clock, and grow old never without every tasting something exquisite, and so she began ikebana.¹⁹²

For ease of presentation, I have formatted the above to read left-to-right. In the original, however, it is written right-to-left. While this may seem like a small matter, this story relies on the conventions of reading as its very material, and as such, a content-based translation would fail to render what is present in the text. To summarise: the ideograms in bold are elements of ideograms which preceded them, either the radical or the phonetic element. The word *hobby* (*shumi*, 趣味), a

¹⁹¹ 恋愛小説集日本作家編 (*Hen'ai shōsetsu nihonsakka hen*), ed. by Sachiko Kimoto (講談社, 2018).

¹⁹² Yoko Tawada, "Idaten doko made mo", in Sachiko Kimoto, ed. My translation.

two kanji compound, is thus systematically deconstructed: first, the second character of *shumi*, read *mi* in the compound becomes the word *aji* meaning ‘taste’ (味). This character is then broken down further into its components: *mada*, ‘yet’ (未だ), and *kuchi*, ‘mouth’ (口). Then the first character of *shumi* is broken down into its radical, *hashiru*, ‘to run’ (走) and *toru*, ‘to take’, (取). The characters are ‘interrupted’ in their tendency towards semantic totality, the unity of the sign. To these ideograms which, the same as phonetic script, are usually read as a single unit, Tawada applies her ‘word fetishism’. She breaks ideographs down into their components. She focuses on the details, takes close-ups. And yet, and this is crucial, the breakdown is itself generative: the narrative proceeds *from* this ‘breakdown’ in meaning. And this, *mutatis mutandis*, is itself a form of translation which produces something that is at once a narrative and, undeniably, graphic.

One must resist here the critical tendency to focus on this as an element only achievable in ideographic writing. Such a manoeuvre would reinscribe ideographs as the Other of writing while assuring, in the trope of the Orient, that Western thought, philosophy, and typographics remain unchallenged or untampered with. We have seen, in the context of “My Blue Piano”, that Tawada distorts the alphabet to generate words from a foreign system of meaning — French words, words in a language Tawada doesn’t speak, birthed from a *graphic reading* of the word Klavier. But, as in the example of concrete poetry, this is not something that comes to alphabetic writing from its outside but a founding principle of writing itself. English-language writers have also employed such experiments. Consider, for example, Joyce in *Ulysses*: “Eyes front. Mark time. Table: able. Bed: ed.” And *Finnegan’s Wake* is nothing if not the graphic instability of the sign Tawada sees in Celan’s dregs (Neige): the letter taken to its point of maximal signification.¹⁹³ Tawada’s work, in the play of

¹⁹³ This point is made in many of Derrida’s essays on Joyce, but importantly within *Speech and Phenomena*, and the introduction to Husserl’s *Origins of Geometry* where Derrida describes Husserl’s work as a transcendental parallel for Joyce’s: “If a radical equivocality precludes history, in effect, by plunging it into the nocturnal and ill-transmissible riches of “bound” idealities, absolute univocity would itself have no other consequence than to sterilize or paralyze history in

ideograph against/as letter and letter against/as ideograph, raises the technique a degree, and takes it into a dimension beyond both Celan and Joyce.

One of the most fascinating points of “Idaten doko made mo” is that of the characters: one, Higashida Ichiko, 東田一子, the other, Tsukada Jūko, 東田十子. These names have the same number of strokes, but one line in a different place: 東 becomes 束 and 一 becomes 十. In this change, neither of the characters can tell who is who, or who came first, mirroring the relation of translation to its original. Secondly, the transformation at the level of content makes ‘East’ (*bigashi*, 東) into a bundle or sheaf (*taba*, 束) while the second is numeric: one (*ichi*, 一) becomes ten (*jū*, 十). The transformation and translation between letter and number and botany and form should be signalled to us as relevant to Celan due to the inclusion of the crown of grass. “Idaten doko made mo” was published only recently while the pieces on Celan are some years old. It is clear that, in this play of the ideographic principle is still at the forefront of her thinking. And this question cannot be reduced simply to the level of the written form itself. In her novels, Tawada has also sought to use and expand this technique to the level of a greater narrative. The novel that demonstrates this best is *Schwager in Bordeaux*.

the indigence of an indefinite iteration. Since equivocity always evidences a certain depth of development and concealment of a past, and when one wishes to assume and interiorize the memory of a culture in a kind of recollection (*Erinnerung*) in the Hegelian sense, one has, facing this equivocity, the choice of two endeavors. One would resemble that of James Joyce: to repeat and take responsibility for all equivocation itself, utilizing a language that could equalize the greatest possible synchrony with the greatest potential for buried, accumulated, and interwoven intentions within each linguistic atom, each vocable, each word, each simple proposition, in all wordly cultures and their most ingenious forms (mythology, religion, sciences, arts, literature, politics, philosophy, and so forth). And, like Joyce, this endeavor would try to make the structural unity of all empirical culture appear in the generalized equivocation of a writing that, no longer translating one language into another on the basis of their common cores of sense, circulates throughout all languages at once, accumulates their energies, actualizes their most secret consonances, discloses their furthestmost common horizons, cultivates their associative syntheses instead of avoiding them, and rediscovers the poetic value of passivity. In short, rather than put it out of play with quotation marks, rather than 'reduce' it, this writing resolutely settles itself within the labyrinthian field of culture "bound" by its own equivocations, in order to travel through and explore the vastest possible historical distance that is now at all possible.” Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (Stony Brook, N.Y.: N. Hays, 1978). 102. For a thorough reading of this, and the play of univocity and equivocity Derrida takes up in Husserl, see Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

“Itaden doko made mo” is a complex text whose graphic play makes it impossible to translate. Moreover, its preoccupation with the graphic form may obfuscate a larger deployment of the techniques Tawada develops in her engagement with Celan: the restoration of the graphic form as a medium and the generation of narrative through an ideographic principle engaged with that medium. To this end, rather than “Itaden doko made mo” we should turn to *Schwager in Bordeaux* as a guide.

Schwager in Bordeaux is comprised of a series of vignettes, each detailing a general overarching story of a protagonist called Yuna who travels to Bordeaux. And yet, like much of Tawada’s fiction, the protagonist is a secondary character; the characters of the alphabet or ideographic characters shape the narrative more than any personal subjective autonomy. Consider the following:

駅

Yuna schaltete ihr Mobiltelefon an. Eine lokale Telefonfirma meldete sich sofort mit einer fremdartigen Tonfolge. Gleich danach klingelte es. Es war Maurice. Yuna fragte, wo er sei. Er antwortete. Sein Wort wurde durch ein elektrisches Zischen unterbrochen, sodass sie nur Bahnhof verstand. Der Hof vom Bahnhof klang wie Huf. Ein schwarzes Pferd stand vor der Brasserie. Es galoppierte los und verschwand geräuschlos in der Glaswand. Pardon? Maurice wiederholte seine Antwort. Er sagte tatsächlich Bahnhof auf Deutsch, aber Yuna hörte das Wort nicht, weil sie kein deutsches Wort von ihm erwartete.

駅

Yuna turns on her mobile phone. A local telephone company answered immediately with a strange series of rings. Then the call connected. It was Maurice. Yuna asked where he was. He answered. His word was interrupted by an electric hissing, so that

she only understood Bahnhof, train station. The ‘HoF’ of ‘Bahnhof’ sounded like hoof (‘Huf’). A black horse stood in front of the brasserie. It galloped off and disappeared silently in the glass partition. Sorry? Maurice repeated his answer. He actually did say the word Bahnhof in German, but Yuna didn’t hear the word, because she hadn’t been expecting a German word from him.¹⁹⁴

This is typical for this novel: each section is preceded by an ideogram, which in some way, shape, or form sheds *light* on its content without necessarily subordinating it. Like a radical, the ideogram can be metaphorically extended. Just like a boundary stone – a real, solid weight – can become the conceptual underpinning for ‘specialist vocabulary’. So too can a word like ‘飛’ (*tobu*, to fly) become instead ‘Sein Herz flog in den Himmel’¹⁹⁵ (His heart flew in the sky).¹⁹⁶ While the ideogram for a train station (*eki*, 駅) foregrounds a scene *in* a train station with the radical for horse (馬), the ideogram *tobu* does not prefigure the contents of its section. Instead, like light from a distant star, it alters the meaning of the contents in relation to a writing system which is not, on the surface, part of the narrative. It is important to note that in the Japanese version of this text, the ideograms are printed *backwards*. Their direction points somewhere different; they are not directly coordinating the meaning of the narrative. It seems important here to underline the implications: even the ideograms, when placed in an ideographic text, become foreign bodies to it. This externality of the ideograms, even in a Japanese text, opens a door. In the space of that gateway the graphic and phonetic dimension of writing play, unstable, ever-shifting. From their energy comes the

¹⁹⁴ Yōko Tawada, *Schwager in Bordeaux: Roman*, 1. Aufl. (Tübingen: Konkursbuch, Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2008). 8. My translation.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 128.

¹⁹⁶ Brett de Bary has an incredibly insightful discussion of the eye, Tawada, Barthes, and Russian formalism in Brett de Bary, “Fiction, Theory, and the Lightness of Translation: The Experimental Project of Tawada Yōko’s *Schwager in Bordeaux* / *Borudō no gikei*”. This essay is forthcoming in the edited volume *Tawada Yōko: On Writing and Rewriting*. I would like to thank Brett de Bary for making this essay available to me prior to its publication.

narrative of Tawada's texts. Not simply a language game, or if simply a game, one played for larger stakes.

In moving from the minute detail of "Itaden doko made mo" to the larger ideographic play in *Schwager in Bordeaux*, we can trace a line of thought that can be found in texts that appear to have nothing to do with writing or ideograms. Take, for example, *The Naked Eye*. Much lauded for its engagement with cinema, the problems of vision and postcoloniality, this book weaves movies starring Catherine Deneuve into it as a form of ordering the narrative by an external element. In this way, Deneuve becomes the 'radical' of an ideogrammatic object — a movie. Each movie, whose meaning is defined by Deneuve, thus stands over each chapter of that book like the ideograms in *Schwager in Bordeaux*. The technique Tawada develops in engaging with Celan extends beyond and through writing, to use Derrida's terms "in the narrow sense" in order to occupy and alter writing "in the larger sense". To say that the alphabetic is ideogrammatized captures only half of Tawada's magic; the ideogram is *itself* subjected to a *graphic reading* which fundamentally alters the logic of typoglycemia toward 'semantic totality'. In seeing this logic at work in texts which cannot be thought along a division East/West — and *The Naked Eye* troubles this precisely by altering the global axis to the East/West of Communism versus Capitalism, much like *Yuki no rensūsei* — we follow a through-line in Tawada's creative work that comes from, passes through, and finds its expression in her writing. A vast literary corpus spanning 'two languages' and the space between, around, and through them. Reducing Tawada's work to ethnic or cultural difference denies it the critical edge it develops through multiple elaborations and experiments. Experiments which, I argue, can be brought back to bear upon the critical apparatus that surrounds Tawada's texts.

Border Stones

And yet this line of argument heads toward a dangerous precipice: in aligning the unconscious and

the ideogram against the positivism of rational science and general grammar, do we not posit the ideograph as the Other of the alphabet and the unconscious as a remnant of the magical thinking of savages? I have no intention of closing the reading of Tawada and Celan on this, of sealing, with a boundary stone, the expansive experiment with the orthographic dimension to a mere rebellion against the rational positivism. If, following Tawada, I have demonstrated, as I hope I have, that the ‘eye’ as encoder along the axes of sound and vision always has the potential to re-open the semantic unity of the sign, it is precisely to bring it to bear upon the discourse that threatens to subsume it within the easy gesture of Orientalism. It is not a matter of, as Marjorie-Perloff puts it, ‘ideogramming’ phonetic script. Such an argument runs the risk of reinscribing an ethnocentric logic into Tawada’s reading strategies. As someone who reads ideographic script, Tawada’s is capable of unravelling the composition of an ideographic sign. Remember, however, that it was only the gaze “from outside” that could interrupt Tawada’s Japanese-reading eye from transforming the ideogram into a full unit.

I spoke before of the “stones” which discourse swallows — *termini*. And the figure of a stone — *isbi*, *Issbi* — plays in many places in Tawada. Perhaps, most importantly, in the way she describes her practice between languages: in German, as placing *stones* slowly, in Japanese, being lost in the flow of water. These terms are also the way Tawada frames Celan’s poetry within the frame of translation. At this, for want a better word, “meta-level”, I would like to put into question the *terms* of criticism itself. This is because in the reception of Tawada as “boundary crossing”, or as a “outside perspective”, her intellectual and experimental rigour have been co-opted as *content* without altering the form of the reception. Plainly: even such daring concepts as exophony contain within them demarcations that govern the capacity of signification *itself*. In the question of the word *Neige* the letters are as they are — one wonders what Tammatt’s eye might make of this word, what colours it would produce, what tastes and textures — a simple *orthographic object*. And yet, the eye,

‘encoded’ by language, *translates* the object into a semantic unit by ordering it according to the *terms* “French” or “German”. In Naoki Sakai’s terms, following Kant, the idea of national language is a “regulative ideal”. In the language we have developed here: they are products of a border, a physical, geographic border which, in our present age, is no longer physical but *metaphorically extended*. This is why theorists such as Mezzadra and Neilsen speak of translation in terms of “bordering”. Where does France begin and end after Empire? There is a physical border in the European continent. But this line has expanded and contracted over the past century: Vietnam, Montreal, Senegal. Even without the physical marker — the *Grenzstein* — the *terminus* functions as a regulative ideal demarcating a domain of knowledge. By it, the semantic unity of “Neige” — *snow* or *dregs* — is guaranteed. If these terms — “French”, “German” — are not structurally altered, then we will remain within a semantic concept of translation. Translating with the eye, however, opens up the unity to different *systems* of meaning and in so doing makes poetry out of the *field* of language itself.

It would not then be a matter of *cracking* the terminus open; there is no hidden meaning, no essence to the bordered domain, as much as there is no national, cultural, or racial *essence*. We do not get anywhere by taking seriously the question of *Japaneseness* inherent in the regulative idea of “Japanese language”. Rather it is a matter of seeing the ways in which to manipulate the interplay of the *sēma* — of sense, of *Sinn* — and the *forma* on the lattice or grid (*Gitter*) in which the play of language takes place. Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi remind us that in recent translation studies the word ‘translation’ has “reverted from its figurative literary meaning of an interlingual transaction to its etymological physical meaning of locational disrupture.”¹⁹⁷ Rather than a site of rupture, however, Tawada states that translation opens a gate into a language through which the translation

¹⁹⁷ Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi, “Introduction: of colonies, cannibals and vernaculars”, in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 1999). 12.

refracts the light of the original: “a translation shouldn’t manipulate the feelings of the reader, but rather open the first gate to the original.”¹⁹⁸

When I was in high school, I read *The Brothers Karamazov* in the translation by Masao Yonekawa. I also bought a Russian edition as a first-year university student, but it was too difficult for me, and so I continued to rely on the Japanese translation. This didn’t make me sad, I enjoyed the Japanese words and expressions I hadn’t known before. This translation dating from 1927 was linguistically far more unfamiliar to me than, say, the stories written by Kawabata Yasunari around the same time. It seemed to me as if the translator had collected Japanese words from a number of regions, classes, times and places and masterfully assembled them to translate a foreign culture. Therefore this translation made the range of the Japanese language appear much larger than the Japanese literature of the time did. But this quality of the translation also demanded patience, calm and persistence on the part of the individual reader. I would try to extract a cultural concept unfamiliar to me from an unusual combination of two adjectives. Certain concepts would appear in unexpected places and glow. I learned a great deal about the uncompromising nature of a competent translator. Reading a bestseller, on the other hand, I never had the feeling that there was something I couldn’t immediately understand. Indignantly I rejected the secret that bestsellers sometimes offered the weary reader as a pick-me-up. I was interested in more radical drugs and looked for them in the Dostoevsky translation, which was difficult to digest.¹⁹⁹

Translation opens a gate through which the target language is not simply ‘enriched’ by rearranged; it is not the Romantic sense of what Antoine Berman terms the ‘épreuve’ of the foreign, the trial or endurance of it, in order to attain the classical sense of a cultured person in terms of a *Bildung*. The counterexample of Kawabata is deeply telling in this regard as he has a propensity for using *yamatokotoba*, ‘native Japanese words’ in opposition to those which have *kanji* compounds. The word *benji* for example, in *yamakotoba* is *kaerigoto*. Kawabata’s longing for these words is deeply symptomatic of his nativism, while for Tawada, it is the jumbling of languages *into* Japanese that makes it a useful language:

When I write Japanese, it disturbs me to see how many Anglicisms and stiff Sino-Japanese words have crept into the language, but this doesn’t mean I would want the Japanese language to be completely pure. On the contrary. The Japanese spoken today seems to me like the garbage can of linguistic history, and this is one reason why I like the language so much. A

¹⁹⁸ Tawada, “Namida”, in Yoko Tawada, *Akzentfrei* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2016). My translation.

¹⁹⁹ ‘The Letter as Literature’s Political and Poetic Body | The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus’.

garbage can is an important source of inspiration, because often we throw away what is most important. Without making the acquaintance of the German language, I never would have noticed that I am in possession of a garbage can that can be my treasure chest²⁰⁰

For Tawada, the linguistic excess of translation — and Hölderlin and Celan are prime examples of this — is not simply a matter of feeding a national language but of providing it with material that is difficult to digest, indeed, rubbish that in some cases is indigestible. This process expands the language; its belly swells with strange history and neologisms as it attempts to accommodate a foreignness or *Fremdheit* that translation brings to the table. This is the difference between alchemy (the mixing of elements) and the miracle of poetry. In Celan translation is never simple; it requires the negotiation of so many *termini* which coexist *among* different spheres. This is what makes translating Celan so difficult; and it is what makes possible the miracle of his poetry in which we see the Kabbalistic tradition of cryptographic techniques: “*notarikon*, the use of acrostics to decipher hidden messages; *gematria*, which uncovers mystic relations by using the numerical value of words derived from numbers corresponding to each Hebrew letter in the word; and *temurah*, exegesis by anagrammaticizing passages, phrases, or words”.²⁰¹ Even the root and the mother can be treated this way, as Celan shows with the words *radix* and *matrix*. Tawada asks us to think beyond the forms shaped by these *termini* — roots, heritage, mother-tongue — and to move beyond them, *soto e*, where we would find ourselves at a threshold, surveying all we know in the starlight that shines through the gate. One does not step through this gate: this would be mere assimilation. Rather it is a matter of learning to eat the strange material produced when the starlight of the original is placed in the crucible of translation.

Are we justified in putting together the question of poetry with language in general or that of a foreign language? Tawada tells us yes: to ask whether or not understand a foreign language is the

²⁰⁰ “The Letter as Literature’s Political and Poetic Body | The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus”.

²⁰¹ Arslan.

same as asking whether or not one understands a poem, both are connected not to an interior essence but to something to some Unspoken (“etwas Nichtsausgesprochen”) as much as to something unspoken (“etwas nicht ausgesprochen”). To think translation as moving to this place where the circle stands over the water for a moment — a moveable frame — rather than the sedimented boundary of terminus throws its roots — the radicals — into the air, they call for this miracle of poetry which is alchemy raised a power. The stones themselves ask for a miracle: for a discourse that can make them bloom.

Terminus Ohne Grenzstein

We began with a border stone — the stone of Terminus — and end with a rose. Such transformation is nothing new to those familiar with Tawada’s work or the process of translation. When translation overturns a boundary stone — *Grenzstein* — we find disciplinary roots (radices) thrown to the sky, like a poplar, in an appeal. To whom?

In “Das Fremde aus der Dose”, the narrator of Tawada’s story becomes friends with those who resist learning the German language. In “Transsibirische Rosen” Tawada connects the figure of roses with the figure of immigrants: “I do not know what is more sinister to me: the naturalization of roses or the naturalization of men. The roses do not get citizenship, do not walk on a citizenry walk. In the case of naturalization, the immigrant is declared a part of the nation and thus the nation becomes part of nature.”²⁰² Take, for example, Jhumpa Lahiri, an American-Indian writer who writes now exclusively in Italian. She belongs, undoubtedly, in a taxonomic sense, in a terminological sense, to the terminal stone of exophony: she writes outside the mother tongue, which according to Lahiri would be Bengali. And yet there is a troubling moment in the essay collection *In Other Words*, where Lahiri writes that she cannot contradict a native speaker nor defend her choice of words because “in

²⁰² Yoko Tawada, “Transsibirische Rosen”, in *Akzentfrei* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2016).

Italian”, she says, she is “partly deaf and blind”. How can this be true? How can a multilingual writer, someone capable of, as Tawada writes ‘peering in’ or *hineinblicken* into other languages, be *blind*? Is Lahiri not paradoxically moving within a domain circumscribed by the boundary stone of Italy, a national term, graphically representable with the radical 伊, blind only to the fact that this radix controls what is possible within her language and thought? This would mean that even the literature of exophony — this movement, as Tawada calls it, outside the mother tongue — can still traverse a terrain circumscribed by the boundary stone of national literature, in this case, *Italian*. In taking up Italian, like those other people, in “Das Fremde aus der Dose”, Lahiri contains herself within a specific space. A canned foreign. Meanwhile, Tawada writes: “When translating, a word can replace, displace, distort, move, remove, suck, destroy, or expel a different word. But I’m thinking much too territorially. There ought to be a completely different space in which existence is possible without taking up a place for itself.”²⁰³ The point of the exophonic experiment would not be to move from one stone to another and preserve them as natural units, but to transform the *terms* of movement themselves. No term is privileged beyond this transformation — not even a proper name. In the computer program of a man named Kurt, for example, Tawada writes that the name “Derrida” is registered as a typo and the suggested correction was “Dreirad” (tricycle). This anagrammatic play is anathema to a regime of translation which holds itself accountable to bringing into representation a “canned foreign” or even writers who take upon themselves the process of “canning” themselves into semantic totalities that are easily digestible. The stones sit in the stomach of language. How much sadder it seems that they have forgotten that they can be opened.

A border stone, like a full stop, closes a semantic field. But as Tawada demonstrates, this closure can be reopened in the crucible of translation. It is for this reason that in order to move in

²⁰³ Tawada, “Transiberische Rosen”, *op. cit.*, 18.

difference spaces — beyond the domain of the boundary stones — we must learn the kind of miracle Tawada sees in Celan’s poetry. Where words such as *radix*, *matrix*, and *colon* mix in different registers in an unstable polyphony, where the word *Neige* traverses the graphic and phonetic, conjuring a reproach against these all-too-human hurdles in meaning. Tawada tells us that Mandelstamm, in the 1913 essay, “On the Interlocutor”, writes that there is no lyric without dialogue. That each poem is always *addressed*. But this address is not a simple discussion between neighbours, but an exchange of signals with Mars. “It is a good that that no one can “know” how beings on Mars think.” Tawada writes. “Otherwise one would aim for a specific reaction from the interlocutor (Gegenüber) in writing.” While John Felstiner may claim, transposing a quote from Kafka to explain Celan, that writing “is a form of prayer”,²⁰⁴ this prayer is not addressed to god — “In the word “Mutter” (mother) just like the word “Gott” (god),” Tawada writes, “I see the double T — the crown of grass. Both crowns are absent: the first has been murdered and the second is not coming”²⁰⁵ — but to another voice entirely, something unspoken, some great unspoken in text. It cannot be filled in with a cultural expectation, a political politesse that would be controlled by the *radix* of thought. This expectation — this ability to understand in advance — is what I have attempted to sketch out here, under the burden of the boundary stone. Think of Yuna, in *Schwager in Bordeaux*, who could not understand the word ‘Bahnhof’ because she was not *expecting* a German word from Maurice. This expectation in the address of the interlocuter always determines, in advance, the domain of what is permissible: words travelling between them can be transformed, like the Hof of Bahnhof into a Huf. Even the distortion of phonology by the weight of the terminus can be utilised as poetic material: this expectation on Yuna’s part produces a phantasmal horse in the

²⁰⁴ Felstiner. *op. cit.*

²⁰⁵ Tawada, “The Crown of Grass”, *op. cit.*, 70.

train station, a horse which could only be produced by productive interference of language in relation to the ordering principle of the boundary stone.

When we think this way, when we allow transnational movement to be thought only within the respective domains of these termini — Germany, France, etc. — we forsake the miracle translation in favour of a facile admixture. We lose sight of the miracle of poetry, which for Tawada is always, as she puts it, “magically illegible.”⁴ Even the full stop itself can be counted, not cracked open for an essence but refolded back into meaning, susceptible to the magic of poetry. In this way, even the full stop, umlaut, or diaeresis can be thought “as gateways rather than as buildings in which meaning might be stored like a possession.” Waystations, transfers, passages. *Zwischenstation, Durchgangen, Übergangen*. The text’s features down to its very physiognomy “are not containers” but “openings.”²⁰⁶

In 1996, Tawada began with the question of translation in Celan and found a door through which found a Benjaminian arcade of “literalness”. The engagement with Celan, or, rather, with what Tawada sees in (*hineinblicken*) Celan’s poetry has structured her literary practice to this day. This has hinged on a form of translation that takes similarity (visual and phonetic) literally by restoring the orthographic object to a manipulable dimension, a grammatological form of writing which attempts to escape closure. While it is tempting to transform this project by domesticating it, like a wayward flower that must be trained on the trellis of a taxonomic grid, by taking its stakes seriously at the level of the orthographic object, I have argued, it is possible to comprehend how Tawada transforms *all* writing — ideographic and phonetic — by disrupting the ordering principles of knowledge itself. The opening of *Termini* and boundary stones, even the domain of knowledge — *Terminus ohne Grenzstein* ^ — are transformed fundamentally by the poetic dimension of translating with the eye. Not as a matter, of Foucault’s characterization of, let us say, a Freudian exegesis: *make the stones talk*. But rather to note that silence itself is *spaced* — the space of light in a

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 130.

gateway, of *ma* (間) — and therefore already registered in multiple domains of signification. The *puncta* do not speak to a truth, not even to a truth of the unconscious. Rather, in Tawada's writing we rediscover this fundamental axiom: translation as/is metamorphosis (*Verwandlungen*). I would like to suggest that this this reminds us of something we have, by necessity, forgotten: that a stone, when it remains in the domain of minerology, remains a stone. But a terminus, a term or termini, when overturned in translation, may find itself, at last, capable of blooming like a rose.

CHAPTER 5

JAPAN DOES NOT EXIST: KENTŌSHI & CHIKYŪ NI CHIRIBAMERARETE

Introduction: Airmail

From the ceiling of an artist's studio in Berlin hang a myriad of red threads. Affixed to these red threads are the "wishes of those who are absent" "which above and below connect closeness and distance with each other." In this studio, which belongs to the artist Shiota Chiharu, the writers Marion Poschmann, Ursula Krechel, Ulf Stolterfoht, and Jan Wagner read their poetry among these wishes of the absent, tangled in red thread. The event is titled "Abendmahl der Abwesenden" ("Communion for the absent"), and took place on the 17th of June of, 2021. Tawada Yōko curated this event for the Poesiefestival Berlin, the eighth poet's evening or "Dichterabend" for the festival, and was the last poet to perform. Her reading incorporated performance by the jazz pianist Takase Aki and the dancer Kawaguchi Yui. (Figure 1.) As the opening of the event description states:

If there is no more exchange of ideas we will gradually lose the diversity of the present and of the past from our view. The dead no longer have anything to say, neglected corners of the city remain sunken in shadows, sad people are shut out and far-off countries slip further into the distance. We need to make what is absent present again. To make present what is absent, what cannot be missing from our lives, we need the corporeality of language — we need poetry.²⁰⁷

The "corporeality of language" I have dealt with in the previous chapter, as the medium, like grass, through which the language of the dead is transmitted through the poem. In this event description, I find my main concerns for this chapter: space (absence, presence, distance), time ("the diversity of the present and of the past"), and the connection, the knotting of thread, in a text — text, whose etymology takes us to *textura*, a tapestry. My contention is that, after the triple disaster of Fukushima, Tawada's writing begins with a gesture of placing under erasure certain effects of time

²⁰⁷ Taken from: <https://poesiefestival.org/en/media/poets-evening-8/> [Accessed June 17th, 2.021]

and space, for example, historical epochs and geographic formations, as the condition for a new textuality and a new sociality, a new “world” that does not rise to the level of phenomenological totality, which even words such as “planet” risk, but exists amid multiple realms, domains, and boundaries marked by multiple stones, like Celan’s poetry, simultaneously. To understand this we must move from the *Ordnung*, the ordering, of the natural sciences, to the *Ortung*, localisation or emplacement, of the world imaginary. In this novel, space and time collapse into a no-place, a *u-topia*, which is set out within the concept of *ma* and is produced by the movement and journey of writing itself.

The first poem Tawada read at the poet’s evening of the Berlin Poetry Festival, somewhat tellingly, was an excerpt titled “Ohne Gitter” (“Without grid”; unpublished), which recalls Celan’s *Sprachgitter* or language-grid. And though the writings on Celan were undertaken much earlier than 2021, the publication of *Paul Celan und der chinesische Engel* (*Paul Celan and the Chinese Angel*) in 2020 speaks to a continued engagement with translation with the eye and with Celan in general. And important for us here, with a possibility or *ability* (“Fähigkeit”) that this “ohne” (“without”) makes possible, which, I will argue here, is the possibility of world literature as something other than the pluralisation of monolingualisms and the reification of a global imaginary shaped by capitalism, which imagines the globe as a space of simultaneous exchange, as in the famous annihilation of space by time in Marx’s *Grundrisse*.²⁰⁸ David Harvey has elaborated as an essential part of his own work in terms of time-space compression.²⁰⁹ I believe that it is important to add to this Doreen Massey’s critique of time-space compression insofar as she calls for understanding this warping of

²⁰⁸ “Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange - of the means of communication and transport - the annihilation of space by time - becomes an extraordinary necessity for it.” Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1993), translated by Martin Nicolaus, 524.

²⁰⁹ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990)

time and space as an erasure of the “local” by capital which must be understood “socially”.²¹⁰ With this, Massey remains both faithful to Marx’s insistence on understanding the social relations of production and inflects the proposition in order to render it capable of apprehending discursive regimes operative within any “location”. Massey, as an anthropologist, is patently aware of the danger of universalism and of the universalism of “man” in particular. If people who are read as women do not have access to public transport or to driving, can one speak of time and space in the same way? If a man can make a journey in ten minutes safely but it takes an hour and a half for a woman, then it is not space within a “pure geometry” we are talking about but a space-time continuum that is shaped both by the social and material relations of production and by the social conditions of the locality, especially in relation to gender and caste. Massey’s work underlines, in fact, how important it is that we also question the idea of “location” in relation to “world” as this geometric universalism of the coordinate system, which enables a letter sent in Japan to wend its way to an artist’s studio in Berlin.

My primary interest in the writing of Tawada Yōko is that, as exophonic literature, it presents a challenge to the disciplinary apparatus that attempts to digest it and the disciplines within which I work: German Studies, Japanese Studies, and Comparative Literature. I say that Tawada’s work, as exophonic, presents a challenge to these disciplines, but to be true to the project of exophony as Tawada sees it, and as I have argued elsewhere (see Chapter 1), is not to simply work from one language to another. Multilingual writers are, after all, no modern phenomenon and in no short supply. One could here invoke the names of Nabokov, Conrad, or more recently, Jhumpa Lahiri, whose novel *The Namesake*, Tawada invokes in an essay in *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte*. One could also note that over fifty percent of the world’s population is at least bilingual. Therefore, it is not simply the coexistence of languages in the plural that creates this challenge of translation and

²¹⁰ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

exegesis, where writing resists being dissolved into meaning like a stone in the gastric juices of national language. Rather, the project of exophony Tawada pursues is in line with the thinking of the sociolinguists Makoni and Pennycook, who argue that for multilingualism to move beyond monolingualism it must be something other than the *pluralisation of monolingualisms*.²¹¹ If Tawada, like Celan, in the last chapter, writes in such a way that confuses the territorial logic of the boundary stone, then we must also resist a second impulse, which aligns itself with the third of our disciplines. That is, if Tawada’s exophonic text resists being thought within the protocols of *Germanistik* and Japanese Studies as disciplines whose primary output is national discourse, then it would appear that Comparative Literature, a discipline whose entire purpose is the juxtaposition of different languages and literatures as well as, in our current historical juncture, the reserve of continental philosophy and critical theory more broadly, might be capable of accommodating the literature of exophony.



Figure 1: Tawada Yoko and Takase Aki; behind, the installation “Lyrische Luftpost” (“Lyrical airmail”) by Shiota Chiharu

²¹¹ See Sinfree Makoni and Alastair Pennycook, eds., *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages* (Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2007) and Till Dembeck and Georg Mein, “Philology’s Jargon: How Can we Write Post-Monolingually?”, in Till Dembeck, Liesbeth Minnaard, *Challenging the Myth of Monolingualism* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Time: Fukushima as Singularity

Since the Fukushima triple disaster in 2011, one can note a change in Tawada's writing, particularly those texts which focus on Japan. By taking the signifier "Japan" as a natural object by which to orient our understanding of these texts, however, we risk overlooking the ways in which such a "place" is constituted within the frame of the "globe" and the "world". That Japan is a country made up of four islands is a commonplace, and of Japan's putatively unique cultural traditions and much-touted homogeneity, geography is often deployed as tautological rationale. Japan, as a geographically isolated terrain, has – and here is where we must pull back from a precipice – *naturally* formed an insular culture through a relation with the earth. Insular, coming from *insularis*, ultimately from *insula*, an island. The writer Ōba Minako captured this irony when she named the title of her collection of travelogues to many of Japan's smaller islands 島の国の島 (*Shima no kuni no shima*), meaning, 'the island(s) of the island country'. Even within the stable centrality of the unit "Japan" there are edges, peripheries, tensions, and differences. The imagination of the insular threatens to erase not just the historical record of this difference in the pursuit of a unified articulation of the nation, but also the creative possibilities enabled by engaging with the ways in which places are themselves constituted.

First, a note on the historic record. Japan, despite the claim to be an island country, is not an island but an archipelago, and its geographic composition has changed greatly since the time in which the nation-state claims its pre-history. In the modern period, Hokkaidō, the largest of the 'four main islands' was the first land seized in the formation of Japan's colonial enterprise and turned into agrarian farmland via the dispossession of indigenous Ainu people in 1869, one year after the onset of the modernisation process that began with the Meiji Restoration of 1868. At the height of the Japanese Empire, in 1942, it laid claim to approximately 7,400,000 square kilometres, with colonies, mandates, and occupied territories, which, to varying degrees, enforced Japanese

language and culture through assimilationist policies. Perhaps most notable in this regard is Taiwan. It should be noted, however, that the idea of assimilation and naturalisation were fraught topics even among imperial ideologues. Within imperialism, we must remember that there was no internal, natural homogeneity so much as forces fighting for consensus from above and below, despite the convenience of the figure of the Emperor as father of the nation.²¹² Though history, presented in linear chronology, depicts the actions of nation-states as though they were analogous to those made by subjects of rational consciousness, the actions and identity of this thing called “Japan” is in fact historically contingent. And so, in arguing that Tawada’s texts after Fukushima change in their relation to Japan, I must borrow from the understanding of the “unit” that comes through her engagement with Celan. That is, rather than understand “Japan” or “Japanese” (language) as containers, we must look at how the contingent condition of space (geography) and time (history) form a constellation with which it is possible to produce poetic material. In the introduction, we saw Tawada use the botanic remnants of the Japanese Empire, the cherry trees planted as the imperial army advanced into Siberia, as the material for a poetic and critical reflection on the traces of colonialism in the present — one could say, following the title of Tawada’s novel, that these traces are scattered across the globe (*chikyū ni chiribamerarete*). Tawada is, nevertheless, talking about *sakura* — cherry blossoms — and this should serve to demonstrate that even the most well-worn national images can be given a critical edge if deployed with acumen. This poesis uses the same elements — botanic, mineralogical, and historical — as the nation-state yet its form remains fundamentally different and at points entirely opposed. It seems apposite now to recall that Walter Benjamin’s “Task of the Translator” begins with this declaration: “translation is a form.” (“Übersetzung ist eine

²¹² The modern use of the emperor system has, since Meiji, been as a method of population control. For a study of how this was used by the US in its occupation of Japan, see T. Fujitani, “The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese American Soldiers,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 379–402.

Form”).²¹³ One could think this critical reappropriation of historical conditions as itself a form of translation; translation in its broadest sense, to paraphrase Derrida’s reformulation of writing in *Of Grammatology*. This kind of translation involves a return to the original text not in search of a relation that inscribes itself between the human and the earth as a gesture of appropriation, a trope at its most philosophically sophisticated in Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art”.²¹⁴ Instead, I find in my reading of Tawada textual strategies that cannot be reduced to the inscription upon the earth but of a return to the earth as the site of possibility for metamorphoses and (re)translation. When it comes to the nation-state of Japan, which has been inscribed through figures of islands and insularity, it is still possible to retranslate this “text” whose canonical status threatens to overwhelm other possibilities of interpretation, imagination, and praxis. As we shall see in the case of Fukushima, such insular thinking threatens the future of the planet itself.

I consider the following texts representative of this shift toward planetary thinking in Tawada’s oeuvre: the novels *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* and its sequel *Hoshi no honomekasarete, Kentōshi* (*The Emissary*), itself a development of the short story “Fushi no shima” (“The Isle of the Undying”), and a series of lectures given by Tawada immediately following Fukushima, published in a French translation by Bernard Banoun and Cécile Sakai as *Journal des jours tremblant: après Fukushima; précédé de Trois leçons de poésie* (*Diary of Quaking Days: After Fukushima; preceded by Three lessons in poetics*).²¹⁵

²¹³ Benjamin uses the Latin *Form*, a Latinate pebble which draws on Scholastic philosophical tradition after Plato, but most specifically the valence appears to be Kantian, meaning that the purity of “reine Sprache” (“pure language”) can be thought within the same use and subsequent critiques of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*). It is important to recall then that for Kant a Form is derived from experience, and that space and time are the Forms (*Formen*) of sensible intuition.

²¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), edited by David Farrell Krell, 139-212.

²¹⁵ Yōko Tawada, *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2018), untranslated; *Kentōshi*; published in English translation as *The Emissary* in the US and *The Last Children of Tokyo* in the UK; “Fushi no Shima”, in the anthology *Soredemo Sangatsu Wa Mata* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2012), published in English translation as “The Island of Eternal Life”, in *March was Made of Yarn* David James. Karashima and Elmer. Luke, eds., *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012); *Journal des jours tremblant: après Fukushima; précédé de « Trois leçons de poésie »* (Paris: Editions Verdier, 2012). The sequel to *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, *Hoshi ni honomekasarte* (*Told by the stars*), was published by Kodansha in 2020 and as such could not be incorporated into this study.

However, just as we must resist the haste with which we proceed in accepting the unit of Japan as already comprehensible, we must also resist thinking that we know, or that one can know, what Fukushima means. Fukushima signifies at once a geographic location, Fukushima prefecture, in which, after the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, the nuclear power plant Fukushima Daiichi experienced a nuclear event classified as level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale. It is a painful irony that both evacuation zones, created ad hoc by people fleeing and then later appropriated by the government as a guide to compensation, and the epicentre of both the earthquake and nuclear radiation, are measured in the same circles that a stone leaves as it falls into water. The word “Fukushima” holds all these elements still, the lines on the surface of the water in temporary suspension, and anchors their meaning to the date March 11, 2011. The effects “after” Fukushima cannot be isolated in this way, however; they cannot be held solely within the geographic territory of Japan, nor the smaller enclosure of Fukushima prefecture. As radioactive material leaks into seawater, we are faced with the fact that the life-world of the nation-state is surrounded by an ecological world, the environment, an ‘around-of-the-world’, which the German word *Umwelt* retains. The most notable aspect of Tawada’s writing in relation to a world “after” Fukushima is that it engages in the negation of time (modernity) and space (Japan) as the conditions for poetic work. Tawada writes in an essay to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the triple disaster, “Ten Years After Fukushima”:

When the ‘core’ of 2011 melted down, we were all deeply shaken and developed an unfathomable fear—it was not just fear of radioactivity, but much more. What kind of core had melted in that moment? The core of trust for continuity, without which we cannot put strength into our daily work, cultivate human relationships, or build a house, a school, a business. The atomic machine can destroy the meaning of life at any given moment and thus, it always contaminates us inwardly—through its existence alone.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Yōko Tawada, “Ten Years After Fukushima”, translated by Elizabeth Sun, *TRANSIT* Vol. 14, No. 1. 93-94. 93. Translation of “Zehn Jahre nach Fukushima”, <https://www.konkursbuch-shop.com/2021/03/11/zehn-jahre-nach-fukushima-von-yoko-tawada/> [Accessed June 2nd, 2021]

The “core” of the nuclear disaster is not an incident that can be easily dealt with, by political or psychological repression. Tawada goes on to say of these “horrors”, that “[t]o repress them, they are loaded into black plastic bags or secretly thrown into the sea.” In contrast to the idea that the ocean is “a giant washing machine”, Tawada instead says that they are “like a highly sensitive network of nerves that have been 46 billion years in the making.” Human industry cannot process the toxic effects of its own activity, and so the unbearable devastation, this inward contamination, is projected onto the ocean, whose complexity as life and a form of life gives way to the imagination of the oceanic body as beyond the inscription of earth, national border, and thus beyond responsibility. To this, Tawada responds: “No substance disappears by silencing itself to death.” This is the nature of psychic repression: nothing is ever hidden except in plain sight. A bag of contaminated earth in the water remains visible, though its contents can apparently be kept out of mind.

It is, however, the “core” that interests us most here — the “core of trust for continuity”. In this, I read Fukushima as collapsing the ordering of continuous linear time as the passage of generation to generation. Time and space collapse in the ambit of the triple disaster as a singularity. While I am wary of borrowing too inexactly from the natural sciences by way of metaphor, I believe it is useful to think the place name of Fukushima, which is code for a series of interrelated events involving disasters in environmental management, capitalist company structures, governmental negligence, and cost-cutting measures, along with natural phenomena such as earthquakes and tsunami, as a punctum (*Punkte*) a point or dot into which nature, the human world, literature, and language are drawn into a dimension which can no longer be neatly thought within Euclidian space as the enabling condition of coordinates. Without this, there is no globe, conceived of as a sphere wrapped in a net of longitude and latitude, whose political spaces are determined by what Carl Schmitt called the nomos of the earth.

Nomos is, as Schmitt recognises, polysemous; hence the fourth chapter of *The Nomos of the*

Earth, in which we are confronted with *nomos* a) and law b) as ruler c) with Homer d) as fundamental process of apportioning space. It is this last element which is of most interest to us here in thinking translation as an operation beyond spatialisation, that is beyond territory and beyond the globe itself. The *nomos* “constitutes the original spatial order, the source of all further concrete order and all further law”, which, as Rory Rowan points out, means that the *nomos* “indicates the foundational acts of land appropriation that establish such a relationship between order and space and make order possible. It is a concept that indicates both a form of *institutional order* grounded in space and *foundational acts* that produce new forms of spatial order.”²¹⁷ Here, the order of the natural sciences we dealt with in the previous chapter comes up against space as its condition of possibility. I would like to take us through the spatial order of the *nomos* to the spatial imaginary of the globe via *Kentōshi*, which will bring us to *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, which I believe constitutes the negation of *Kentōshi*’s sovereign territory raised a power.

In *Kentōshi*, Japan still exists approximately ten years after Fukushima. Building on the central premise of the short story “Fushi no shima”, in which the young grow sick and die early while the elderly are undying (不死, *fushi*),²¹⁸ in *Kentōshi* it is the outside world that is cut off. In this scenario, Japan has become increasingly insular and contaminated, and from one generation to the next people can longer recognise foreign loan words, whose use is prohibited, but nevertheless use words which are loans because they have simply forgotten their origins as such. This returns us to the destroyed “core” of Fukushima, and Tawada’s central question from “Ten Years After Fukushima”: “What is the half-life of memory?”

²¹⁷ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 2003, 48; as quoted in, Rory Rowan, “A new *nomos* of post-*nomos*? Multipolarity, space, and constituent power”, in Stephen Legg (ed.), *Spatiality, Sovereignty, and Carl Schmitt: Geographies of the Nomos* (Routledge: New York, 2011), ; *ibid.* 154.

²¹⁸ Margaret Mitsutani translated this story as “The Isle of Eternal Life”. Here, I prefer to emphasise Tawada’s formulation of the lack of death.

If the core mechanism of historic transmission is destroyed by the singularity of Fukushima, then we are left with children who no longer remember “tradition”, “modernity”, “loan words”, “native words”, or the border between these. This leads them to state, in a blithe interpolation typical of Tawada, that a map is a lie. In the following scene, I believe *Kentōshi* offers us the strategies by which to understand it:

The next thing Mumei knew he was saying, ‘The earth’s round, you know,’ in a gentle voice that carried well all the same. He hadn’t known what he wanted to say; the words came out on their own. The other kids gave him puzzled looks. Mumei started to flap both his arms like the wings of a bird. He simply didn’t know what else to do, though to the others it looked like he was fooling around, imitating a crane. The teacher’s eyes narrowed in a smile, ‘Yes, that’s right. The earth is round,’ he said, ‘This map is a flat drawing of a sphere. I’d forgotten to tell you that.’ He pretended to scratch his head in embarrassment.

‘Round? What do you mean? So this map’s a lie?’ Yasukawamaru shouted, angry at having been betrayed.

‘So that’s it. Round, huh?’ Tatsugoro, too, was dumbfounded.

Yonatani didn’t know how to answer them. He hadn’t meant to trick them. What he’d wanted to tell them seemed more important than the fact the earth is round. Yet perhaps the shape of the earth was important, too.²¹⁹

Here we see the children, outraged at the map as a lie, not because it does not represent the original ordering of space by political concern (nomos), the historical contingency of geographic space, or the tributary system to China which shaped Japan for centuries (*kentōshi*). Rather, the children say that but because the map is a two-dimensional object it betrays the fact that the earth is round. As a two-dimensional representation, the map is, of course, useful; navigation, coordination, and world trade rely upon it. And yet this other kind of knowledge, which Yonatani can’t quite articulate to the children, seems to rest upon the fact that the earth is a specific shape, round. A lie, Yasukawamaru says. Yonatani doesn’t know what to say. And Mumei, literally ‘Nameless’, flits between human and animal, trying to fly like a crane, the mutant form of his mother, and beyond the understanding of those around him. In this scene, where the limits of the map are questioned, so

²¹⁹ Yōko Tawada, *The Emissary*, trans. Margaret Mitsutani (New York: New Directions, 2018).

too does the line between human and animal begin to blur. Remember also that, affronted by femicide, the natural world has enacted its resistance by transforming human sex over the course of a lifetime so that no one can be firmly located between ‘male’ or ‘female’. Mutation here occurs at the level of sex and of the species in response to the imposition of two-dimensional taxonomy and order; in this Japan after Fukushima there are still roses growing, but they are adapting to the strange new reality of the near-future.

In contrast to the map, the globe is a round object; it has no breaks but connects seamlessly, just as all landmasses are connected save for the bodies of water which slowly erode them as the climate continues to change. It is only national borders that cut across the surface of its smooth space and impose this order which is an affront, the novel tells us, to nature. But where did it come from, this map? Where did Japan come from, and where did a literature written in a language called Japanese? The early tributaries of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries are written into the text by the title itself. *Kentōshi* is an antiquated word in Japanese and its use here as a title by Tawada is highly selective, conjuring both the undeniable fact of Japan’s cultural intermixing in antiquity to the precarity of its future in the present. The kanji in which the title are written are not the standard ones for *kentōshi* but homophones whose ideographic value would mean ‘light-bringer’ (献灯使), but whose phonetic value remains the same. And it is through reference to this tributary system of earlier centuries that *Kentōshi* is, at heart, a “mirror” that reflects the past of the Tokugawa Era on to the blank space of the future. The Tokugawa era lasted nearly three hundred years, from 1603 to 1868 BCE. The Tokugawa clan’s military command, the bakufu, kept Japan removed from the world for around 220 years in order to preserve the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. This time period is also known as the Edo Period as Japan’s previous system of capital cities, which changed with each new emperor, was finally centralised into the city of Edo, what is now Tokyo. The borders within Japan were established during this period also, creating what are now known as prefectures but

which were originally the domains of feudal warlords, also known as daimyo, though this is what is popularly imagined to be samurai. As power became consolidated within Edo, so too did the major languages of the archipelago become standardised and in this process produced what would go on to become the modern Japanese language. With the period of modernisation from the Meiji Period onward, loyal retainers, or samurai, as well as feudal subjects, will go on to become citizens of the Japanese nation-state. With this novel, Tawada is clearly taking aim at the foundations of Japanese modernity and the foundational myth of its insular society: three hundred years of supposed isolation. It comes as no surprise, then, that Mumei's grandfather Toshiro wanted to publish both a historical novel with the name *Kentōshi* but was rebuffed by publishers on the grounds that transgenerational understanding was no longer in place – the young do not understand the old, as the “core” mechanism of generational transmission is missing. And the article he wanted to write, the knowledge he wanted to transmit, was on the history of the isle of Deshima, where the majority of international trade occurred during Japan's so-called isolation, and the title of this article is: “Japan Was Not Isolated”.

In *Kentōshi*, Tawada manipulates a historical paradox in order to demonstrate a point of speculation regarding the future of the Japanese archipelago. In placing Japan under “isolation”, she is highlighting all the ways that this isolation is untenable, and that intermixing and hybridity are foundational for the nation-state though it may try to project the myth of homogeneity backwards in time. A historical understanding between generations, there were the “core” is threatened by Fukushima's singularity, comes as a bright glimmer of hope; but like the light-bringer of the novel itself, Mumei, such hope seems destined to fall, unceremoniously, into an ocean awash in nuclear waste. In this novel, Tawada inverts the negation of the outside world to show the contours of the nation-state and the source of its modernity in *Kentōshi*. Meanwhile, in *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, which I consider the spiritual successor to *Kentōshi* as a novel “after Fukushima”, we are faced with the

opposite future: this time, after Fukushima, it is Japan that no longer exists.

Space: Panska as Literality (Wördigkeit)

To say that Japan no longer exists may set off alarm bells for some. And, as the premise of the novel *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, Tawada is all-too aware of this. The novel's first narrator, Hiruko, is a student who was studying abroad in Sweden when the country in which she was born and raised ceased to exist. After this, she appears on a Danish television to discuss her invention of a pan-Scandinavian language called Panska, she receives a call from a worried viewer:

“The sense of danger that the motherland (*bokoku*) is falling (*horobiru*) is itself right-wing,”
said a call I received. Of course, saying things like “if things keep on this way the fatherland (*sokoku*) will fall”, was in the past the standard thing said among substanceless conservative xenophobes. I knew then that I had to be careful. I had no intention of saying that the fatherland had been lost. Words like “sokoku” and “horobiru” are just not in my vocabulary.²²⁰

Here, Tawada's character seems to echo a concern the author herself might share; that in writing a novel about Japan's destruction she is treading a path well-worn by protectionists, conservatives, and xenophobes. Most obviously, in Tawada's word-choice, this seems like a deliberate swipe at the reactionary *The Fall of Japanese in the Age of English* (日本語が減びる時, *Nibongo ga horobiru toki*) by the author Mizumura Minae. Mizumura's book is not about the “mother country” or “fatherland”, though it does use the verb *horobiru*, to fall (as in civilization), be destroyed, come to ruin, etc.²²¹ So Hiruko tells us she must be careful in presenting the thesis that Japan no

²²⁰ Yōko Tawada, *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2018), 46. Translations are my own and refer to the Japanese pagination.

²²¹ Minae Mizumura, *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, trans. Mari Yoshihara (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Minae Mizumura, *Nibongo ga horobiru toki: eigo no seiki no naka de* (Tōkyō: Chikumashobō, 2015). The decision to render Mizumura's title as “language” rather than “Japanese” is both shrewd and disingenuous on the behalf of the publisher. We should note that Mizumura consistently uses the term “bokokugo” in reference to the Japanese language, in, for example, Minae Mizumura, *Shishōsetsu from left to right* (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1998). Ironically this formulation of ‘mother-country-language’ comes in large part from the debates around the status of Japanese as a language among resident-Korean writers in the 60s. Mizumura attempts to protect a unity that is already constituted by montage; in this, she belongs firmly to the projected insular world of *Kentōshi*. See also, Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, *Mother-Tongue in Modern Japanese Literature and Criticism: Toward a New Polylingual Poetics* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018). From the

longer exists. And the same goes for Tawada. In taking the premise of the loss of national space as its premise, Tawada runs the risk of creating a narrative that plays into reactionary fears over foreigners ruining society. I believe that this novel is, in fact, the opposite, however. I read this novel's use of space and language as an extension of eye-translation into the creation of a new sociality. In doing so, it mobilises common elements of nationalist rhetoric – the fall of civilization, the presence of foreigners, etc. – in order to make possible a future *other* than that presented in *Kentōshi*'s insular thinking. In short, where *Kentōshi* laid bare the destroyed “core” after Fukushima, in *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, we find, not the restoration of the “core of continuity” to be found within the nation, but the creation of a new “core” of the social that is created through language, translation, and in a space created by the nomological power of language itself.

As proof that this novel is not “haitashugiteki” or “xenophobic”, let us look at the dramatis personae of *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*. To begin, we have the aforementioned Hiruko, a woman from “the land of sushi” (魚の国, *sushi no kuni*), a country which ceased to exist while she was studying abroad in Scandinavia; Knut, a linguist whose grandfather was a left-wing Arctic researcher and who wishes to map Hiruko's mother tongue; Akash, a trans Indian woman who lives in Germany and always wears a red Sari, whose name in Marathi means “sky, space” and is one of the five elements of classic Vedic philosophy; Nora, a German woman who rescues and takes in Tenzo/Nanook and whose name is a reference to Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (*Et dukkehjem*, 1879); Nanook, an “Eskimo” from Greenland who, upon living in Denmark, begins to pass as, and then play the part of, a person from the “land of sushi” under the name “Tenzo”, and whose original name is a reference to the first piece of ethnographic cinema, *Nanook of the North* (1922); and Susanoo, a mute person also from “the land of sushi”, from Fukui, and the son of a roboticist who leaves his home in

perspective of truly minority languages, such as Gàidhlig, say, Mizumura's anxiety is deeply telling of a post-imperial mentality; the endangering of Japanese as the majority language in Japan is patently ludicrous. Tawada's novel, as we will discuss later, is a sustained rebuffing of Mizumura's nativism.

order to avoid the displacement of people by machines and the discomfort of the tales the robots tell in the “PR Center” on why and how they came to replace humans.

Without a grounding national space in which to think mutation, as in *Kentōshi*, we must look to language first as the precondition of space. This is what is inherent within Schmitt’s idea of the *nomos* as the ordering of space; it can be done so only with a discourse capable of sustaining power-relations within it, and as such, language becomes conflated with space itself, in formulations such as Anglosphere, Sinosphere, etc. Here, however, language plays a different roll: *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* is a composite novel without omniscient narrator, written in “Japanese”, but told in ten chapters by different characters who, at various points, are signalled as speaking in English, German, Japanese, Marathi, and the “artificial language” (人工言語, *jinkōgengo*) Panska, which is a Japanese-style contraction of *pan*, as in pantheism, and Scandinavian. If the first languages might grant us regional access to belonging, mapping back into origins all that has been said about joining *grapheme* with *bios*, then we must examine what is at stake in the artificial language of Panska.

Hiruko states that in Panska she wanted to instill a “strangeness” (*fushigisa*) into the linguistic feeling (語感, *gokan*) of the language. In the name ‘Panska’, Hiruko attempts to bring the polysemic strangeness of the word ‘polska’ which ‘Panska’ echoes. *Polska* is a Swedish ethnic dance called whose name indicates an origin in the 17th century Polish court, though the dance’s origins are said to be Scandinavian, and the word *polska* is a homologous with the Swedish word for the Polish language. The ‘language’ Polish, outside itself, becomes a kind of performance, and a kind of dance. One can feel, linguistically, the presence of the dancer from the Berlin Poesiefestival who joins poetry and music into performance, a bodily sense (*taikan*). This strange, temporary holding in relation of the performance is what Hiruko aims at with her invention of this language, Panska. This also helps us understand what is at stake when Hiruko describes Panska thus:

My Panska is not something made on a computer or in a lab, but made out of the

words that somehow manage to get across when I'm speaking. What is important is to talk as much as you can every day, taking only whether or not it gets across as the criterion. Discovering this kind of ability in the human brain is the greatest bounty. It isn't deciding what language to study and then using a textbook to study that language, but about taking the voices of the people around you into your ears, picking up sounds, repeating sounds, and enunciating them while feeling their systematicity as a rhythm — in doing this, one new language comes into being.²²²

Panska marks the intersection of the linguistic with the bodily senses (*gokan*, *taikan*) and revels in a kind of ironic logic typical of communication models of language and translation – whether or not there is transfer (*tsujiru koto*) – between source and target language. Its rhythm is the very *systematicity* (*kisokusei*) that emerges from this kind of montage of everyday sounds. Here is an example of one Hiruko's sentences, written is what we, by visual conceit, recognise as “Japanese” – *kana-kanji-majiribun*, kana-kanji mixed lettering, but which the text tells us is an utterance in this language:

わたしの紙芝居への夢は巨人。紙芝居としてのキャリアはネズミ
Watashi no kamishibai e no yume wa kyōjin. Kamishibai toshite no kyaria wa nezumi.
“My dream toward the kamishibai (picture-story-show), giant. A career/carrier as a picture-story-show, mouse”²²³

What is perhaps most conspicuous is that, in the sentences produces in Panska, we can find the copula ‘to be’ (*dearu*) omitted, occurring only once or twice in its usual sentence-final location, and apart from that limited to subordinate clauses. Instead, we see clauses left hanging or ending with nouns instead of verbs. With this language, Hiruko decides to put on a kamishibai, a picture play, so that it wasn't just words but “showing images” too. The collapse between phonetic, sound, language, non-language, syllabic, pictorial, becomes collapsed in this language. As to why it should be necessary, Hiruko says: “Many migrants in the past aimed for one country and went there, and stayed there until they died, and so it was fine just to learn the words that were spoken there. But I will keep moving forever. And so I speak words that appear like a landscape as it passes by.”²²⁴

²²² Tawada (2018), 38.

²²³ Ibid. Note: “Career” and “carrier” are written the same in katakana and so remain undecidable in reading.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Some critics may view Panska as an attempt to write ideographically in an alphabetic medium. From our reading of Celan, we can see that this is only partly true. More important is the element of *systematicity* and *arrangement*. For example, when asked whether or not the word “kosupurei” (“cosplay”; a Japanese shortening of “costume play”) is an English word “costume-play”, Hiruko says that the word is undoubtedly “a word made in the country in which I was born and raised” (“watashi no umaresodatta kuni de dekita kotoba”); if we consider it a Japanese word, then in the terminology of linguistics, this is called *waseieigo* (Japan-produced English) which is, of course, a contradiction in terms. Here, Hiruko lays out the the specific style of linguistic *combination* that corresponds to the “land of sushi”:

“Cosplay (kosupure) is a word made in the country in which I was born.”
 “But cosplay is English, right?”
 “No. Englishers (*eigojin*) do not shorten costume to cos. They do not shorten play (purei) to *pure*. The components may be English, but the style of montage, non-English. (*hieigo*)”²²⁵

I believe here we can see evidence for the poetic attitude we laid out previously in discussing both *Kentōshi* and Tawada’s use of cherry blossoms in her introduction to the German academy, and of the care with which she and Hiruko are taking not to rearticulate right-wing talking points. The *components* (*buhin*) may be the same as that used by the nation-state in its imagery – cherry blossoms, for example – but the *form of montage* can differ to such an extent that it is possible for it to deviate from national standards enough to invent itself anew, a kind of parthogenesis that is mirrored in the artificial language of Panska. It is tempting to say this kind of montage is “Japan-produced English” (*wasei-eigo*) but *Chikyū no chiribamerarete* would render the proposition impossible because this country no longer exists: instead, it is *unEnglish* (非英語, *hieigo*), not an ideographic logic but a form of lexis applicable to all forms of meaning-making, but especially relevant to those produced with the

²²⁵ Tawada, “The Crown of Grass”, 31.

authority of the origin is negated. To attend to the origin in this mode, to transform it without fidelity to the original as source but rather to the original as a constellation, is the kind of translational process we charted in Tawada's writings on Celan. Here, I believe with Panska, we see a return to 'eye-translation' but this time in the mode of what she calls in that essay 'the way of transplanting words' or 'Weg der Wort-Ümsetzung'. Of Celan's "Bei Wein und Verlorenheit", Tawada writes: "Perhaps we could imagine behind this poem the figure of a translator who perceives the text only visually and thereby takes the unusual path of transplanting words (Weg der Wort-Umsetzung) that, at first, appear "wrong"."²²⁶ Here, Hiruko's literal transplanting of sounds into sentences that will simply cross over, *übersetzen*, becomes a kind of literal translation of sounds into the absurdly logical language of the everyday. Recalling Tawada's comments about literal translation and Walter Benjamin in "The Gate of the 'Translator'" will be instructive here:

I compare Celan's words with the gates and remember that Benjamin describes literalness in a translation as an 'arcade': *True translation is translucent; it does not conceal the original, does not block the light from falling upon it, but allows pure language—as if intensified through its own medium—to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax, which proves the word rather than the sentence to be the primary element [Urelement] of the translator. For the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, and literalness is the arcade. An arcade consists, if you will, of many gates placed one behind the other. If each one of Celan's words comprises a gate, the poem as a whole might resemble an arcade.*²²⁷

If, in the subsequent development of translation with the eye, Tawada reads Celan as this poet who takes the path of "Wort-Umsetzung", then we understand how one term, like a rose, comes to stand in for a unit of time, like an hour — "seven roses later" — and in so doing creates the miracle of Celan's poetry at the level of the placement of its words, while translation with the eye disarticulates the words themselves into typographics or *Schriiftbild*. At the level of its syntax, this kind

²²⁶ Tawada, "The Crown of Grass", 68.

²²⁷ Yoko Tawada, "Celan Reads Japanese," *The White Review*, accessed September 14, 2019, <http://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/celan-reads-japanese/>.

of *Umsetzung* provides us with ‘literalness’ (*Wördigkeit*) in a translation, which is most effectively rendered by syntax. In Hiruko’s invention of *Panska*, I read a literalness in translation as montage, ironically inflected by maximum ease of transmission (*Umsetzung*), and enabling a linguistic community that proceeds not from the global, but by the arcade this operation of translation opens. It is such an arcade of literality that I consider the space proper of *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, rather than simply the “globe”; a world inside a world, alongside the world, its *Urelement*. This space is not outside the world; it runs alongside it, along its faultlines, it opens windows, gates, and openings, so that starlight might fall into bordered territories and reveal a hidden text, awaiting, as Benjamin might say, the translator of the future.

Across the Globe: “The World”

This brings us to a preliminary distinction that must be made in order to make sense of the novel’s manipulation of space. So far, I have provisionally used the English “world” in its general meaning, as a social sphere or terminological domain, the world of botany, and so forth. I have distinguished this from the globe as a three-dimensional construct aligned with the flow of capitalism within globalisation. And as a third term, I have favoured planet over earth in order to delineate a dimension that is in excess of the earth as the site of human inscription. In this, the planet becomes necessary in order to sidestep political philosophy in the vein of Heidegger and Arendt. And yet these terms operate within an Anglosphere, and their conceptual history remains fraught. How is “the world” rendered in Japanese, for example? And does it share the problematic role of assisting globalisation within a “world market” for “world literature”, in which “world” is a byword for territories, cultures, and languages outside of European provenance?

While at first glance it may appear that the globe of the title, *chikyū*, is aligned with globalisation, this is a false equivalence; globalisation is rendered in Japanese as a loanword, *gairaigo*, that class of

words whose fixed domains become untenable in *Kentōshi*. グローバル化, *gurobaruka*, and ワールド, *wārudo*, are usually translated-terms (訳語, *yakugo*) for globalisation and world, respectively, with world in this sense usually associated with sports, such as the world cup. On the other hand, there are a variety of words with historical attestation within the Japanese language that are not the equivalent of “world”, which remains in English incredibly elastic in its usage, but refer to social connections, a bounded sphere, the totality of living beings. 世間、世界、世. *Seken, sekai, yo*. This last 世 (*yo*) is a component of all three. The globe of *chikyū* stands in contrast to these words, and refers to navigable space, the planet as a sphere, and most importantly, as a space through which it is possible to *move*. It can productively be thought as analogous to the term *globe (Globus)* in Schmitt’s history of geopolitical space, when the “form [Gestalt] of the emerged as a real globe – not just sensed as myth, but apprehensible as fact and measurable as space – than there arose a wholly new and hitherto unimaginable problem: the spatial ordering of the entire earth [Erdenballes] in terms of international law.”²²⁸ The “global spatial-image” (*globale Raumbild*) that thus orders the geopolitical world qua totality emerges between this initial apprehension of the incomprehensible *Globus* as an *Erdenball* (ball of earth). The *chikyū* of the title serves as useful literal translation – *chi*, earth, *kyū*, sphere - for *Erdenball*, though it is telling that Schmitt’s thought remains tight to the “earth”, in which the sea forms of the limits of the *nomos* which render it “free” and a matter of *res nullius* or *res omnium*, properties without owner or owned by all. The property that was held in common by the nation-state that held the country of sushi as its *res communis*, however, has vanished, and with it, a small piece of “the world” is taken away. For our reading here, “Japan” as a regulative unit no longer functions, and “the world” as comprised of post-Westphalian national territories has lost one vital component of its pattern. This loss leads to the spherical space of the globe, into which the

²²⁸ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York, N.Y.: Telos Press, 2003), 86; Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des jus publicum Europaeum* (Köln: Greven, 1950).

novel focuses on a scattering or dissemination, and dramatizes the consequences of the loss of the regulative unit in a scene between Nora and Tenzo that will be useful to examine in contrast to our earlier discussion of Chantal Wright.

In Chapter 2, we dealt with the sophistication inherent in biographism: the protocols by which texts, artefacts, and peoples are read as sites of knowledge-production by which it will then be possible to interpret them according to schemata that will then be stabilized by the act of interpretation itself. In short, ethnography by other means, conducted through reliance on the metaphysical conceit of conjoining *bios* with *grapheme*. To demonstrate this, we read a text translated by Chantal Wright *as though* there were a Japanese original when the text itself did not in fact mention Japan or the Japanese language and was written entirely in German (if we apply the terminology of national languages). In *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*, there is no mention of Japan or the Japanese language either. Instead, it is named, appropriately, through periphrasis, a kind of kenning that is typically found in Old Norse and Old English poetry, where what we can only assume to be Japan, based on the place names of Fukui and Niigata as well as descriptions of its practices and society, is referred to as “the country in which Hiruko was born and raised”, “the land of sushi”, and so on. “Japanese language” (*nibongo*) is rendered consistently as “Hiruko’s mother tongue” and speakers of the language as “people with whom Hiruko can speak in her mother tongue”. The only instance in which Japan is written in the text is as a modifying adverb using the English-language name “Japan”: ジャパンと, where it functions as onomatopoeia for the sound of a drop of water falling into a puddle, *japan*, and in one other place where Tawada writes that somewhere “was not Japan” (*nihon de wa nai*). As a regulative unit, neither Japan nor the Japanese language, appear in Tawada’s novel. In contrast to Wright’s reading of “Portrait of a Tongue” however, I read this erasure as an enabling condition of *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* itself.

One place in *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* that has immediate references with the points made

concerning Wright's sophisticated translation within the ethnographic mode of biographism is in the character Nora's first encounter with the character Tenzo, who Nora *interprets* to be ethnically "Japanese". Consider the following:

The boy's face was quite exotic, but he responded in fluent German. Even having fallen over, he had a comfortable way of speaking in which the German came out in a second. It would be rude to ask someone like that where they came from, but it wasn't just the boy's features, the aura of his whole body was distinctly foreign. ... Thinking to get some sort of clue about his past, I asked him his name and he replied with "Tenzo", a name I had never heard before. The vowels lined up in "Tenzo" are the same as those in "Fernando". Maybe he's from a country that was formerly under Spanish influence. The Philippines? South America? But there was something about his face that put me in mind of Siberia. The strength of a core somewhere in his body that drew nutrients in from the cold.

If I can help it, I never want to think about where someone comes from. I always thought that being particular about countries was something only people who had no confidence in themselves did. But the more I tried not to think about it, all I could think about was the country someone came from. A past dictated by where, where did you come from. A past dictated but what kind of early education they had in a country. A past dictated by being a colony.²²⁹

Here, Nora attempts *interpret* Tenzo without the regulative ideal of "Japan". The sound of the word "Japan" (ジャパンと, not 日本語 *nibongo*) leads her under the Kaiserthermen, the Imperial Baths, at Trier. Describing Tenzo, she says he looks "exotic" (エクゾテイク) and foreign (異国的), though he speaks to her in a German that sounds fluent and familiar, and that because the sounds e, n, and o are in his name, like the name Fernando, she assumes he must come from a country formerly under Spanish influence — the Phillipines or South America, though his features "bring to mind Siberia". The 'scattering' across the globe is not simply the movement of bodies into different countries; this is the logic of globalisation. Instead, the phonology, physiognomy, and etymology of Tenzo qua phenomena are grounded back into the regulative idea of a piece of the world. The appearance of phenomena scatters on the globe like water on hot metal and retreats into

²²⁹ Tawada (2018), 91.

the stability of the episteme. Disarticulated, the phenomena are rearticulated in such a way that they restabilise the regulative idea of “world” itself. That which is not part of the world, then, cannot appear as itself but only through a priori understanding. There is no difference as difference. All heterogeneity has already been mapped into this thing called “world”. The placing under erasure, the loss of “Japan” as a regulative unit of this world, lays bare the operations which make it possible. Unable to map difference into the repository of “Japan”, its attributes are channelled into different locations and the interplay of history, discourse, and power. Physiognomy, phonology, and personality become objects of ethnographic knowledge which, no matter how hard one may try not to, one ends up using as tools by which to decipher the appearance of a stranger. Nora’s encounter with Tenzo here echoes that which Chantal Wright had with Tawada’s “Portrait of a Tongue” in Chapter 1.

In a gesture typical of Tawada, then, it should come as no surprise that this man called Tenzo is in fact called Nanook, from Greenland, who has begun to play (*enjiru*) being somewhat from the land of sushi. If the reader is amused at Nora’s “misunderstanding” (誤解, *gokai*) then it is because they believe that there *is* a regulative unit called Japan which will later render “Tenzo” as comprehensible *as* Japanese or *nihonjin*. This is not the case, however. Tenzo/Nanook, through a series of events, comes to work in a sushi restaurant in France. He becomes an expert in dashi and sushi. And therefore of the qualifier that enables the periphrasis “land of sushi”. It is the non-native, the student, the exophone, who is allowed “the archipelago” to be recognisable within this syntagm. Susanoo, who also works in sushi, is mute, however, and it is here we must understand that in comparison to each other, Nanook and Hiruko, though Nanook is not a native speaker, understand each other, while Susanoo, who says nothing because he is *mukuchi* (literally. No mouth), is understood by Akash who does not need words to understand him. For Hiruko, the non-native speaker creates a new relation to her mother tongue, and for Akash and Susanoo, the “wordless”

still functions as communication. A ragtag crew of people brought together by their various relations to betweenness, of the sexes, confusion of tongues and ethnicities, all brought together through this strange inversion of the nativist presumption of the community enabled by the fatherland as constituted by the mother tongue. Here, in an adventure and journey set in motion by Hiruko's invention of Panska, these people have been drawn together by this artificial language, and the space it makes for them. Such space seems valuable, like Patopon; valuable beyond value, and valuable beyond words, in excess of trade networks and the global sphere. It is in the scattering, in this arcade where they come together, that something else is made possible. This is why such translational practice is important as it reworks and makes space in which the encounter with difference is truly possible. To practice some of Tawada's own penchant for critical reworking the hackneyed and cliché, we might say: this space, this arcade of literality embodied by Panska, means the world to us.

Utopia: 合縁奇縁 (Aienkien)

If I opened with the installation from Shiota, with its red threads, it is to underscore an important scene in *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete*. It is the moment when Akash meets Hiruko, and is told from Akash's perspective:

Since I decided to live as a woman, I wear a sari made entirely out of red thread when I go out. It's not that I was thinking I'd dress up like a particularly Indian-looking person, but German women the same age as me hardly ever wore skirts and I didn't want to be the only one wearing one. Plus, in one of those looks they wear with the trousers, I'd just look like a man. And for some reason, I feel that, in the past, my heart had been made of red silk with gold design embroidered on it. If I could just read the design woven into that embroidery, then I'm sure I would be able to tell what kind of story I'm living in. But even when it proved impossible for me to decipher it, I was content just to idly stare at the sheen of the silk.²³⁰

The symbolic valence of red thread in an East Asian context, as we can see in "lyrische Luftpost", is

²³⁰ Tawada (2018), 54.

based on a folkloric belief in the ‘red thread of fate’ that connects two people, usually a man and a woman, through a romantic destiny. The string comes from the heart and reaches out to the pinkie finger and stretches out and around the ankle of the partner. In Shiota’s piece, wishes written in multiple languages are tangles in these threads, which hang vertically, and the messages – comprehensible or incomprehensible – themselves form the connection between the threads. In the case of Akash, this sari made of red thread is not based on any sort of identitarian performance of appearing “Indian-looking” (*indojinrashi*). Akash is, rather, navigating the imbrication of clothes with gender presentation, in a way that feels authentic to her “heart” (*kokoro*). 心 (*kokoro*) is not reducible to 心臓 (*shinzō*) — the ‘heart’ as a psychosomatic concept is not reducible to the organ. But Akash feels that her heart, in its widest range of meanings, is comprised of this red thread which she then presents, though there is also a hidden design on the embroidery of the heart written in gold, and this message remains undecipherable, even to herself. This mysterious, occulted design, if understood, is precisely what would enable her to understand the dimensions of the narrative (“monogatari”) she is living — but there is also pleasure in admiring the glance, the sheen, of the indecipherable in itself. Strähne, we might say, starlight, that comes through a barrier, like a window to the past, or a gate made of stone.

It is not by chance that the red thread is used in Tawada’s novel and in Shiota’s installation, as both draw on the common symbolic repertoire of the red thread of fate. Both introduce important changes, however: the messages themselves make the connection in “Lyrische Luftpost”, and in Tawada’s novel, the connections are not bound to a heterosexual dyad but find themselves searching outside of the self for a connection that will, in some way, render the design of one’s own heart decipherable to oneself. This is not the thread of fate or predestination. It is instead, as I read it, a means of symbolically encapsulating what is at stake in thinking a sociality beyond the totalizing effects of globalism and the atomization of national containers. The connections between the

characters of *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* involves precisely their common breaking or distortion to the spatiotemporal system of coordination. This distortion is also what Tawada in describing the relationship to the mother tongue described as a “Verschiebung”. And it is not into the world (世界) they are scattered, but the globe as the material condition of chance encounter.

Akash, thus, is not connected to Knut as his soulmate or bestarrd lover. Rather, they find a commonality in a strange way. This is most evident when they go to Trier and the Roman ruins of the black gate. Knut and Hiruko meet after Hiruko appears on a television show. From there, they hear about an “umami festival” being held in Trier. Two places are of particular important about Trier: one, it is the birthplace of Karl Marx, and thus, according to the tourist information put out and the large amount of tourists from the People’s Republic of China, the birthplace of communism; two, it has the oldest Roman ruins north of the Alps, perhaps most importantly, the so-called Porta Nigra or ‘black gate’. Tawada’s choice of this location, given the echoes of Marx in *Yuki no rensūsei*, and the importance of darkness and gates in her readings of Celan, seems particularly apt. To my eye, after Tawada’s work on Celan, even windows of these Roman ruins, the *Kaiserthermen* or Trier Imperial Baths, are comprised of multiple iterations of the kanji 門. And indeed it is again, here, the figure of the gate that comes to the fore.

What seems to be common ground between Akash and Knut is that in Pune, where Akash is



Figure 2: Kaiserthermen, Trier. Trier Imperial Baths. Image from WikiCommons and reproduced under fair use.

from, there is a similar structure: the Gate of the Shaniwar Wada. If translation with the eye, or here, the morphological similarity between structures, seems untenable because it is not historically grounded, then the following scene from *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* will be instructive:

Knut half-closed his eyes and repeated the word “Shaniwar Wada”, then, ‘Do the two structures look that alike? Is there some historical reason why that would be?’ he asked, curiosity lighting up in his eyes.
‘Well, I’m not sure. If you look at them objectively then I suppose the form isn’t that much alike, but the feeling the stones give off when you get close to them is the same. A kind of trust, respect, safety, I suppose.’²³¹

While the Shaniwar Wada and the Kaiserthermen may be very different architectural structures (*kenchikumono*) there is nevertheless something about the *gate* and the *stone* that transmits a feeling of respect, trust, and safety. If there is a feeling given (“aetekuru kimochi”) by the stones, then it is because they form a medium of emotional transmission that cannot be captured by morphology, form, or objectivity; the stones bloom, transform, become nodal points in an emotional relay that then shares similarity with a structure that is geographically and culturally “distant” within the coordinate system. In the communication system of stones, however, there is no such distance, only proximity. The spatial difference is effaced in the immediacy of perceptive time, but this perception does not obey the system of *Ordnung* nor *Ortung*. It weaves together out of an emotional space of trust, respect, and safety; it attempts to *harbour* the chance connection, the contingency which is at the heart of both translation and of a writing that belongs to the mode of the translational.

The privileging of such a relation, through the *horobita bokokugo*, the ruined tongue of the motherland, is placed in direct contrast to the native connection between Susano and Hiruko, the two who share a mother tongue, early education, and history, those commonalities of a shared identity that Nora assumed would allow her to understand Tenzo. Though Hiruko meets Nanook, who speaks Japanese because he learned it as part of his removal of himself from the context

²³¹ Tawada (2018), 59.

imposed on him by the move to Copenhagen, it does not put an end to the journey toward the “mother tongue” speaker, who it is revealed is a man named Susanoo. When the novel reaches its climax, when it achieves the goal of uniting Hiruko and Susanoo, however, the reader is not rewarded with a scene of emotional reunion: Susanoo remains mute, while Hiruko continues to try to initiate a conversation. At first, she blurts out the word “anata”, the second person pronoun that can also mean something like ‘darling’. Hiruko herself is confused as to how to appropriately address Susanoo. In an aside to herself she says: “Who in earth is ‘anata?’” (*Ittai anatette dare darou*). She then switches to “kimi”, another second-person pronoun, and then back to “anata”, eventually breaking down and saying: ““Your voice, I want to hear it. I want to hear your voice too. Your voice, let me hear it. Voice, I want it. I want to hear it, your voice.” (“Kimi no koe, kikitaino. Kimi no koe mo kikitai yo. Kimi no koe, kikasete. Koe, kikitai wa. Kikitaindesu, koe ga.”)²³² Susanoo for his part remains silent.

It is at this point that Hiruko suddenly remembers Nanook, the second-language speaker of Hiruko’s mother tongue:

It was then that I suddenly remembered Nanook the Eskimo. Nanook’s pronunciation was fresh to me. When he said “hajimemashite” (pleased to meet you), the “ha” broke tore the air apart, the “ji” was closer to “ju” and produced a juku (cram school), and there was a little space after the “me” (eye), after which the “mashite” (not to mention), drew a circle into which I felt like I fell into when I remembered these things. Every word Nanook spat out contained a strange resonance that I had never heard before. Even if Nanook had been shown to be someone with whom I don’t share a mother tongue, I wasn’t disappointed. However, I came to realise that this would never be as important as the fact that the unique phonological organism (*watashi to iu dokutoku no hatsuonseibutsu no sonzai*) I have met with the existence of the unique phonological organism that was Nanook.

If Nanook the Eskimo was a false compatriot, then the Susanoo standing in front of me was a genuine one. It wasn’t just that this genuine thing wouldn’t speak to me in familiar words, but that he wouldn’t even speak unfamiliar words. If this is how things are, then I want him to just say something, anything. English would be fine. The language of snakes would be fine. I’m sure that if he would even just make a *chuchu* sound then I’d be able to feel like I’d been given some words. Or even if he would just *kaa* like a crow. Kaa the kaa of okaasan (mother). Just with that some sort of meaning

²³² Tawada (2018), 263.

might begin. But Susanoo didn't change into an animal, but remained a rock. And I was the wave that crashed against that rock.²³³

Again, just as in *Kentōshi*, we find at this point of indeterminacy the appearance of animal life, the crow, whose call is a homophone for the word *okaasan*, mother, in which we can hear a distinct echo of *Yuko no rensūsei's Rabenmutter / Ōgarasu no okaasan / raven mother*. Between the genuine (*honmono*) person from the same place (*dokyōjin*) and the false one, it is the pretender, whose “*hatsuonseibutsu*” or ‘phono-organism’ (*hatsuon* meaning pronunciation, *seibutsu* an organism; I cannot find any attestation of this compound in any dictionary), it is the *distortion (Verschiebung)* of the phonological arrangement, the grid (“Gitter”), that brings in a freshness and the vividness of memory for Hiruko. The collision of two paths of national-subjects does not result in the unification of the national community; that there is no nation here comes through the fact that between Hiruko and Tenzo, there is no sympathy, no feeling in common, and thus no community of sympathy and exchange, as Adam Smith envisioned in *The Wealth of Nations*.²³⁴ Here, the lack of “*natsukashisa*”, nostalgia, tenderness, longing, sympathy, marks the encounter as something other than a national drama, and turns Hiruko instead toward an appreciation of what the non-native does to the experience of language and to the life of language itself. It is this, Hiruko says, that remains the most important, above and beyond any nativism.

It is precisely the failure of this nativist join that *produces Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* itself. Without this breakdown in the community of native speakers there would be no text to speak of, because the journey of *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* is one that is propelled by the search for a language, the mother tongue, only to be translated into a language which evokes the feelings of the gate for both Akash and Knut: trust, respect, warmth. The “*natsukashii*” language is presumed to be the mother tongue,

²³³ Tawada (2018), 264.

²³⁴ See Lisa Herzog, “The Community of Commerce: Smith’s Rhetoric of Sympathy in the Opening of the Wealth of Nations,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 46, no. 1 (2013): 65–87.

but in fact, is in the displacement of this very system itself. And so it is from the no-place, this site of non-connection, that a new kind of sociality appears that is grounded in a different logic. *Aienkien* — chance encounters, strange, but nevertheless in some way important. This is the kind of connection forged within the impossibility of the singularity. *Aienkien*, Hiruko explains to Susano, means: “Though people are connected by fate with an invisible thread, this thread appears to them as something strange.”²³⁵ Hiruko then reflects that though Panska had allowed her to remove herself from the concept of “en” (縁), a circle of social connections and relations, and this deterministic idea of fate, here she finds herself accidentally coming out with the word against her own wishes. The parapraxis reveals that this idea of connection, beyond the traditional constrains, is on Hiruko’s mind. One is recalled here to the threads of Tawada’s performance at the Poesiefestival in Berlin, and the red threads of Akash’s sari. It is not a sociality that comes from the predestination of national origins. It is a series of connections that occur through the precipitating cause of Hiruko’s invention of Panska, and the people she collects along the way, in this scattering and dispersal within global space not as the easy movement from source to target, but as a series of disruptions which open the arcade and allow a different relation to the imbrication of language and space as they operate upon the planet.

The nativist search for a connection, a “core” that would operate within the enclosed space of the nation-state under the auto-immunity of *sakoku*, fails dramatically in *Kentoshi*. What makes *Chikyū ni chiribamerarete* more compelling, to me, is that it dramatizes the interweaving of multiple destinies (“red threads”) not by a matter of *origin* (*Herkunft*) but of *destination* (*Bestimmungsort*). Such convergences (合) remain fundamentally weird (奇) but nevertheless form a connection, a circle, even (縁). If one lays this circle over the globe then it becomes possible to produce a text by a poetic

²³⁵ Tawada (2018), 263.

practice based upon a community of difference in common. The space of this community is forged through the world, but by an operation of translation as transposition, of *Ümsetzung*, which creates the space of an arcade that cuts through the space of the globe. Here, another community becomes possible. Here, the “core” of continuous dissemination is renewed within the cast of characters themselves, who will go on with their journey, two years later, in Tawada’s *Hoshi no bonomekasarete*. The journey of the non-native continues along the arcade, peering into containers, finding encounters filled with strange meaning enabled precisely by the distortion that opens this non-place within the seamless space of the fatherland and mother tongue. Here, something new can be made within all the idealism of an open future, even one after Fukushima, even one that proves impossible. As Hiruko says to Knut in Panska, following her interaction with Nanook: “A mother tongue speaker is not someone from the motherland. The native, everyday; the non-native, utopia.”²³⁶

²³⁶ Tawada (2018), 220.

CONCLUSION

Word, Image, Thing

If, in invoking the god Terminus, we sought to bring to the forefront the problem of a site, a gateway, a waystation or transfer, between different domains of knowledge, it was precisely to elaborate on how Tawada, following Celan, takes poetry as the vehicle, not to pass through the gate — we are warned in “The Gate of the Translator” about this — but to *hineinblicken* into the domains that lie beyond and around these boundaries. The Translator of the Eye, the *Augen-Übersetzer*, is engaged in a form of poetic practice that by necessity partakes in and problematizes epistemic boundaries. What bearing does it have upon, as I have called it, the ‘critical apparatus’ around Tawada’s work?

This is not a disagreement, nor a slight, in toto or ad hominem, against the scholarly work around Tawada but an examination of the epistemic protocols which structure the study of literature in general and to which literary analysis, up to and including my own, falls prey. These conditions belong to the mode of thought that marks literary studies as a historical discipline emerging, in a rudimentary and all-too-brief tracing, from German universities and ideas of national-citizenship. In *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault demonstrated that Renaissance thought, which broke with Medieval European thought, created three positivities: “life, labour and language”. In many ways, my analyses in this volume have been in keeping with these fields, following the ways in which Tawada’s work resists being brought into these positivities. Remember that *Les mots et les choses* — translated as *The Order of Things* in English, and *Die Ordnung des Dinge* in German, though the Japanese title *Kotoba to mono* (言葉と物) retains two words which are indispensable to orienting oneself in Tawada’s work — begins with Foucault’s laughter at Borges’ Chinese encyclopaedia.

In our traditional imagery, the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space; we think of it as a civilization of dikes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky; we see it, spread and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by walls. Even its writing does not reproduce the fugitive flight of the voice in horizontal lines; it erects the motionless and still-recognizable images of things themselves in vertical columns. So much so that the Chinese encyclopaedia quoted by Borges, and the taxonomy it proposes, lead to a kind of thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place, but are rooted in a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications. There would appear to be, then, at the other extremity of the earth we inhabit, a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of space, but one that does not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think.²³⁷

In Foucault's preface we see many of the themes we have dealt with already: ideographic writing as the Other of the alphabet; the classical trope of the Orient outside "our culture" — Foucault's Eurocentrism is well-known — and of the ideograph, a writing which *orders space* but does not distribute things within in the "grid of taxonomy", which, following Celan, we might say as language which does not distribute the objects of its representation within the "Sprachgitter". In Foucault's terms a language not brought to the level of *mathesis*. Foucault conjures the ideograph as the repository of this *otherwise* of phonetic writing as an area "between the 'encoded eye and reflexive knowledge", "a middle region which liberates order itself", "anterior to words, perceptions, and gestures, which are then taken to be more or less exact, more or less happy, expressions of it". In short: Foucault is searching for an experience, in *Les mots et les choses*, which language, economy, and the natural sciences have diminished in their drive to order. Foucault wishes to historicise and examine this non-object of the human sciences as their pre-condition. He does so, however, with reliance on: one, literature (Borges); two, an *unseen translation* from ideographic to phonetic writing. This leads Foucault, in "Labour, Life, Language", to the well-cited section: "At the moment when language, as spoken and scattered words, becomes an object of knowledge, we see it reappearing in a

²³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Psychology Press, 2002). xx-xxi.

strictly opposite modality: a silent, cautious deposition of the word upon the whiteness of the piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being.”²³⁸ (This last in the French is: “rien d’autre à faire que scintiller dans l’éclat de son être.” In German: “nicht anderes zu tun hat, al sim Glanz ihres Seins zu glitzern.”)

Magisterial in register, Foucault’s argument nevertheless threatens to seal shut the letter of literature, its poetic and political body. Language, precisely at a time when it is being ordered into a “general grammar”, finds itself *also* brought to its most extreme not as a representative form but as being in itself. As Foucault goes on to say, of the thought of modernity, it begins to order itself by a “strange verticality”. This is the same dimension (vertical rather than horizontal) that Foucault uses when describing the Chinese encyclopaedia: against a classic horizontal schema of thought, modernity, paradoxically, seems to be the *ideogrammisation* of knowledge. Except Foucault does not know how to read the ideogram, or what uses it might be put to. When he says, of Sade, that unlimited desire nevertheless “tends to light and representation”, we can say, contra Foucault and pace Tawada, that the lost “materiality” of writing — the orthographic object — moves literature neither forwards nor backwards, up, nor down. It expands outward, and recedes inward, under the influence of the ‘encoding’ eye of the eye-translator, which breaks down and pieces together things precisely in excess of the ‘ordering principle’ of the human sciences and modernity. It is not a Chinese encyclopaedia that develops this, for Tawada, but her own engagement with Celan and a “gaze from outside”.

At the risk of repetition, this cannot be thought simply as the domain of the ideogram, as a Chinese letter coming from outside Europe to expand the possibilities of the European episteme.

²³⁸ Foucault, *The Order of Things*. 327. The French edition consulted is Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1966) and the German, Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge: eine Archäologie der Humanwissenschaften*, 12. Aufl. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993).

Borges' encyclopaedia is not an actual ideogrammatic vessel but a fantasy of the ideogram as the trope of the Other of writing and "China" as the site of the Occidental fantasy of "Orient".

Tawada's writing does not, in fact, provide us with an *authentic* Asian document with which to reinforce these tropes. Such a manoeuvre — well practiced in criticism around Tawada — necessarily entails a productive amnesia concerning the status of alphabetic writing as much as a willed ignorance of the procedures by which ideographic writing operates. Between the close of Foucault's argument, and the closure of phonocentrism, Tawada's writing puts back *in play* the orthographic object, whose loss is the necessary pre-condition for *writing* as such (whose restoration as a science, Derrida suggested in 1967, would amount to the "impossible" science of "grammatology"). The clearest place where Tawada deals with this, and the essay which gives Perloff recourse to speak of "ideogrammizing", is in "An der Spree" in *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte* where Tawada takes up Vilém Flusser's work on the origins of alphabetic writing as originally pictographic as an opportunity to play with the ideographic (semantic-level) dimension of phonetic script: i.e. the capital letter A, originally a pictograph depicting horns, *cannot* be divorced from this dimension save by the repression of writing in its visual dimension as an orthographic object. The tendency toward semantic totality through the loss of the orthographic object is precisely the necessary operation by which the modern regime of language begins to be instantiated.

Tawada references Foucault, specifically in "The Crown of Grass", not in reference to *Les mots et les choses*' chapters on representation nor to language but to the chapters on natural history. These chapters concern the development of the technical terms — *Termini* — of the human sciences. In Tawada's view, Celan exceeds these categories by using poetry as a miraculous operation that transforms them. Tawada writes: "The clarity of a scientific *terminus* is secured as long as its territory is marked with a boundary stone. For *The No-One's Rose*, Celan chose as the titles of some poems, *termini* which have different meanings in different fields. The word "colon", for example, belongs to

metrics as much as medicine, and beyond that is also a term for a punctuation mark. The title “Radix, Matrix” is comprised of two words that have different meanings in biology and mathematics.” This admixture of terms (*Termini*) from different fields results not in “alchemy” — which “attempts to produce a miracle through the mixing of minerals” — but through a different yet no less miraculous process: “a different form of miracle takes place in *No-One’s-Rose* through the crossing of a boundary: a stone which remains in the realm of mineralogy cannot bloom. But when it enters botany, it opens itself like a rose.” Tawada plays with reference here, the subheading of the opening chapter of “The Crown of Grass”: “Terminus ohne Grenzstein” or “Terminus without Borderstone”.

The danger in this line of argument — that Tawada takes language to its limit — is that, as Foucault already demonstrated with Mallarmé, this is coterminous with the development of a form of knowledge which gives birth to terms (*Termini*). In this way, Foucault showed, language was pulled in two directions in modernity with “general grammar” representing codification in its extreme and experimental or avant-garde writing as its mirror image: pure expression of language, language free from representation, a place where language “shines in its being”. Tawada’s difference can be summarised in two ways, both of which rely on Celan: one, that poetry not *express itself* (as a container) but that it gains its potency from its capacity to register *across boundaries* (disciplinary, terminological, etc.); two, language can never refer to its own being because it is, between phonetic and graphic, always *open*. Tammatt’s savantism is an extreme example of how seemingly ‘closed’ objects are opened again by the eye; the eye encodes, but this time, it is not the same eye Foucault spoke of as ‘encoded’. Or rather, the codes it brings with it do not belong to the conventional positivities of modernity but to a radical form of poetry which is not content with the simple emanation of writing as ‘being’ in itself.

One clear example where Tawada takes Foucault’s argument beyond itself is on the question of

punctuation. Where Foucault frequently speaks of language reduced (like the hieroglyph, or poetic language) to shining in its being it is always within a trope of silence: writing which cannot be placed into language, as a *mise en voix*, is, strictly speaking, non-phonetic. This does not mean it does not constitute language or writing. When Tawada asks, about the *silence of punctuation*, in the poem on Rabbi Löwe, it is a question of the orthographic object unthinkable within Foucault's schema. But this does not mean, as Foucault accuses Freud, that Tawada is intent on an exegesis that would make even the silences speak — but that the silences are already taken up by a form of reference which does not, cannot, belong to the positivism of a “general grammar”.²³⁹ Tawada, even as she quotes Foucault in “The Crown of Grass”, *explicitly* states elsewhere that, for her, the Freudian processes of condensation and displacement are key activities in her literary work. Neither a condensed nor displaced piece of the dream-work can be thought within the taxonomic grid of Foucault's dispositive of knowledge. Which is precisely the surface play Foucault is searching for in the interstices of interpretation. Foucault, however, maintains the disagreement with Freud and this all rests on the *image*. In the introduction to *Dreams and Existence*, for example, Foucault writes that:

[Freud] reinstates the notion of some necessary and original link between image and meaning, and admits that the structure of the image has a syntax and a morphology irreducible to the meaning; for the meaning, precisely, manages to hide itself in the expressive forms of the image. Yet, despite the presence of these two themes, because of the purely abstract form in which Freud leaves them, one looks in vain in his work for a grammar of the imaginary modality, and for an analysis of the expressive act in its necessity.²⁴⁰

For all that Foucault will continue to disagree with Freud because of Freud's insistence on bringing these processes *into* speech, representation, and the clinic, it is undeniable that — within

²³⁹ One may note here that Foucault rarely quotes Freud, not even in “Marx and Freud” or *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, yet references and alludes to Freud constantly. In *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault names Freud at least ten times. One notable exception to this is an early essay, “Mental Illness and Individual History”, where Foucault takes the side of Anna Freud against her father. This forms the third chapter of Michel Foucault, *Madness: The Invention of an Idea*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought (New York ; Harper Perennial, 2011).

²⁴⁰ Michel Foucault and Ludwig Binswanger, *Dream and Existence*, ed. by Keith Hoeller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Pr, 1993). 36.

Foucault's own terms — Freud discovers a language that cannot be thought as “general grammar” all while, according to Foucault, failing to articulate the syntactical dimension of the “imaginary modality”. Foucault, in short, intervenes in dream analysis precisely insofar as he sees Freud failing to understand the linguistic structure of *images*. This statement seems remarkable given Freud's discovery is what led Lacan's “linguisticism” in the return to Freud, and to his invention of the term “lalangue” for the form of language that cannot be reduced to Saussure's *langue* nor of a general linguistics of the unconscious. The modality of the image, its syntax and morphology, its meaning-making and its capacity to signify *in excess* of the “speech grid” are brought to bear within Tawada's work as a creative practice that takes up, and moves beyond, the impasse drawn out between Foucault and Freud. In this ‘translational process’, the functional limitations of syntax itself, its borders or *Grenzen*, are themselves taken up into writing of a different order. In pitting Melanie Klein against Lacan in his analysis, Foucault closes with a damning judgment of psychoanalysis: “Psychoanalysis has never succeeded in making images speak.”²⁴¹ Whether or not Foucault is right in his analysis, it is possible for us to say here that it is to Tawada's credit that she has found — through the detour, the *Ummweg* Freud would say, of the eye from outside — a technique of writing that has not only made images speak but has made speech into images. Between ideograph and phonetic writing, between two extreme conceptualisations of writing that repel each other as much as they are drawn to each other, Tawada puts them in contact in such a way as to *open* their semantic totality to a game of meaning-making that takes them far from the axes in which they are located.

Even one of Foucault's greatest keywords — *pouvoir, power* — can be laid open to this translation with the eye. Hidden inside the word *pouvoir* is the verb *voir*, to see, while the prefix *pu* is a homonym with *peut*. *Le pouvoir, le peut voir*. Power dissected and revealed in its insistent visuality, as

²⁴¹ Foucault and Binswanger. 38.

in the panopticon. But a power that cannot anticipate the deformation of its domain when translation falls upon it like the processes of the dream. The word finds itself opening: petal by petal, it reveals a thought in Foucault that would otherwise have remained *sub rosa*. One could follow this trail of petals to see where it leads. For now, however, I will simply note that translation with the eye opens the *possibility* of such a reading, against where the heavy weight of the category would hold fast the gate of thought.

When Tawada reads Celan saying “seven roses later” she comes across a remarkable discovery: that poetry is capable, in its fundamental axiomatics as a translational procedure, of altering time, space, and form. It is for this reason that so much in these pages and my own readings hinges upon Tawada’s approaches — always in the plural — to metamorphosis, which must be read, in all languages, in its most linguistic depth. It is not, then, the matter of Gertrude Stein: a rose is a rose is a rose. But, perhaps, following Tawada, of introducing an undecidable transformation in phonetics and homophony, between a stone and botany: *A Rose ist eine Rose isst eine Rose isst einen Stein ist ein...* (*A rose is a rose eats a rose eats a stone is a...*)

The only thing that puts an end to this transformation is the foreign body of punctuation. But even the silence of the puncta can itself be a message, a seed, an almond, a rose, a stone. In reading Tawada, I have attempted to show simply this: what these seeds might mean, the promise of what might grow. And when it does bear fruit — as every etymological journey, every back-translation might — to take every form, and every deviation, as an opportunity, through the alchemy of the text, to *make something*.

Conclusion: 母国語から文芸語へ=YokoTawadasArbeit

(*Bokokugo kara bungeigo e*, From mother-country-tongue to literary-performance-language: The Work of Tawada Yōko)

In a throwaway comment regarding her reading of the archive in relation to Sati, which will figure more broadly in both “Can the Subaltern Speak” and *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Spivak notes that Freud, when he cannot find an active agent for an action, resorts to the word “work” (“arbeit”) — hence terms such as the dreamwork (“Traumarbeit”) and processes (“Deutungsarbeit”, “secundären Bearbeitung”).

This is also how I would like to suggest we characterise Tawada’s work and how we think it beyond the containers of the nation-state and unqualified life transmitted in writing (biographism). When Tawada says that the processes of the dreamwork are vital to her creative practice, it is not simply a matter of creating dream-like effects but of taking seriously the *process* (作業) by which unconscious agencies become active in the work of composition itself. When one has experience in a language in which it is possible to communicate without a grammatical subject, it becomes clearer, not from outside but from an arcade alongside, that there are other methods of poetic practice beyond the role of the authorial “I”.

One such strategy, as explored in our final chapter, is the erasure of regulative units: Japan, the world, the subject. There is no subject in the title of *Chikyū ni chiribaramete* nor in *Yuki no rensūsei* which in fact narrativizes the creation of a speaking subject (“I”) in its third section, written by Knut, a name which will then reappear ‘out of context’ in *Chikyū ni chiribaramete*. This work cannot be grounded back into Tawada Yōko, for, as she herself suggested, “Tawada Yōko does not exist”. Neither, however, can it be put back into a Japanese origin — the geographic ordination of the archipelago or the “Japanese language” as the guarantee of an ethnos. Physiognomy is happenstance; that Nanook ‘passes’ for Japanese, and be thought *logically* by Nora as ‘looking’ Japanese, alerts us to

this fact (though she does not use the term Japanese, merely “exotic”, and the “country”(国, kuni) she refers to is “the land of sushi, not Japan”). Even in a critique it becomes difficult to follow the thread without falling back upon these words, which render comprehensible certain objects which by rights should be subjected to the work of a critical de-sensitisation, a stripping of meaning, a placing *sous rature*, or a deconstruction.

We began, in Chapter 1, with the potential opened by placing the figure of the mother and the mother tongue under this erasure. In its place in structure, the *Sprachmutter* emerged as a phantasmal figure that made possible this “journey beyond the mother tongue” (*bogo no soto e deru tabi*), which forms the subtitle to the essay collection *Exophony*. In *Chikyū no rensūsei* we find that the mother tongue (*bogo*) is invoked, but that its relationship to “nativeness” is altered by the scattering (*chiribaramete*) across the “globe”. This scattering interferes in the ordering, Ordnung and Ortung, of space, just as we saw that Tawada’s reading of Celan’s poetry, and her poetic work, also scatter the terminological “Gitter” of language. Here, the nomological framework of the “world” as Ortung, emplacement or locating, is distorted.

Without mother there is no *bogo*, only *go*; without country, *koku*, there is no *kokugo*. When both these concepts are, though irremovable in our reality, placed under erasure, they create a new space, a new “world”, in which something else may come to be as the horizon of a futurity that speaks with the dead and remembers the past. It restores the “core” of generational transmission along lines of connection that are contingent, red threads, occurring in nonplaces, utopia. The erasure of both *bo* and *koku* renders nonsensical the term *bokokugo*, which unites mother-country-language. But the preliminary gesture of this annulment, not annihilation, opens ‘go’ (language) to new forms of predication.

Pansca is an example of *jinkōgengo*, an artificial language. The German would be preferable: Kunstsprache. Against Chantal Wright, for example, we might risk supposing that *jinkōgengo* is

Tawada's translational approximation of *Kunstsprache*, which, rendered literally, with Benjaminian literarity, would be *artlanguage*. The Japanese *jinkō* retains both the human (*hito*) and industry (*kō*). Thinking these in tandem, critically, shows us that the human and industrial world cannot be limited to their own horizons but have effects in the *Umwelt*, the surrounding world, the environment, or, perhaps *environmonde*. When considering whether or not to preserve this *jinkōgengo* as a term which can be arrived at through the annulment of *bokokugo* as an ordering principle, I hesitated; a man-made language, as one translation might form it, reiterates anthropocentric, sexist, and determinist views about the role of reason and the human in relation to language. On the other hand, the term I am suggesting, *bungeigo*, a literary-performance-language, risks falling into the trap of class-based "taste" — what is literary, what is artistic. The term *bungeigo*, strictly speaking, does not exist in Japanese; *bungei* is a contraction of "literature and arts", or "literature as art", with the *go* appended. What I am suggesting Tawada's "work" (subjectless, an effect of language itself) enables is the move from the language made as a work of human production (*jinkōgengo*) to a form of language which is *art* as much as *artificial*, literary as a recognition that to write is already to forsake "natural speech" even as one tries to imitate it, as is the case with realism. Such a language proceeds from the shift from *bokokugo* as the world into which we are, at present, thrown (*geworfen*), toward *jinkōgengo* or *Kunstsprache* as the intermediary stage, in the pursuit of *bungeigo* as a language that does not transcend but finds itself in the arcade of the other two terms. In contrast to Heidegger's claim that the work of art emerges when "world is grounded on earth, and earth rises up through world" we have instead a focus on the text as a gate through which starlight shines, a mouth not filled with German soil, but one through which the interaction of multiple processes or "works" intersect on the plane of *bungeigo*.

Toward this horizon, we must travel. As Knut says in *Chikyū ni chiribaramete*, as the book comes to a close, the characters are on a journey (*tabi*). This journey does not end with the teleology of "the

world”, “the globe” or an artificial language. Rather, it is because there is something expected or connected, which nevertheless remains silent, after the “te” of chiribaramete, that the journey goes on. Such a journey, of characters – written and personified – who never arrive, only depart, setting out across the dreamwork beyond the mother tongue and national language, we might call the work of Tawada Yōko.

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