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## Beyond “Transborder”: Tawada Yōko’s Vision of Another World Literature<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction: The Trouble with “Transborder”

On September 4, 2019, three Vietnamese workers filed a lawsuit against the Hiwada construction firm for forcing them to carry out decontamination work in the vicinity of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. The plant had fallen into meltdown following the earthquake and tsunami that struck the northeastern coastline of Japan on March 11, 2011. These three men had arrived in Japan in July 2015 through foreign internship programs that promised training and employment in construction and engineering. Instead, they found themselves cleaning up areas such as sewers contaminated by hazardous radioactive substances, guided by limited or misleading information, and often after their wages had been withheld. On October 23, 2020, Nikkei.com, the online site of the *Nihon keizai shinbun*, reported that the case was settled at the Fukushima District Court with Hiwada agreeing to pay its former trainees 1.71 million yen in compensation.<sup>2</sup> However, the Hiwada case marks the third occasion since March 2018 in which Vietnamese trainees have testified publicly about their conditions, suggesting a system of exploitation whose full extent is yet to be seen. At first glance the Hiwada lawsuit therefore suggests the perils of migration across national borders. It also casts light on the economic and social differences experienced by Vietnamese citizens who today comprise Japan’s third largest migrant community yet live and work while remaining largely out of sight.

The themes of migration, difference, and (in)visibility set the scene for this article’s critical examination of “transborder” literary approaches that seek to renegotiate the position of Japanese fiction within the world. In *Ekkyō suru bungaku* 越境する文学 (Literature that crosses borders, 2009), Tsuchiya Masahiko situates the rise of “transborder literature” (*ekkyō*



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*bungaku* 越境文学) against increased international travel and domestic multiculturalism that have enabled texts and writers to traverse uncharted linguistic spheres and share in collective, globalized experiences. For Tsuchiya, “border-crossing is deeply rooted in the essence of literature” per se, but by transborder literature he emphasizes texts that encompass spatial movements of travel, exile, and migration, as well as “the mixed, confused, and hybrid experiences formed under postmodern and postcolonial conditions.”<sup>3</sup> Such literature “depicts these circumstances as an interactive process between cultures and individual consciousnesses as it strives to construct a theory of the cosmopolitan experience.” At the same time, it carries messages of social critique by overcoming borders of nationality, race, and gender. By “transcending the territories of national literatures” and “demolishing the national view of language through their acquired foreignness (*ikyōsei* 異境性),” Tsuchiya situates transborder writing against the trends of globalization and the contemporary emergence of “world literature” wherein the national borders that delimit texts and cultures are being lost. While respecting contributions to “world literature” by writers deemed “mainstream with a capital ‘M’” (*ōmoji no shuryū bungaku* 大文字の主流文学), Tsuchiya hails the “different gaze” (*ishitsu na shisen* 異質な視線) made possible by transborder writing that bears witness to “a new current through which to enter world literature” based upon the “polyphonic, poetic pathos emitted by intermingling collective cultures.”<sup>4</sup>

Tsuchiya’s allusion to new ways of seeing underpins the issue of textual inclusion—as a means towards visibility—that connects transborder literature to discussions of world literature. For David Damrosch, “[a] work enters into world literature by a double process: first, by being read *as* literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin.”<sup>5</sup> Formulated thus, world literature no longer denotes a category of fiction but a “mode of reading” by which texts acquire value in translation.<sup>6</sup> It is this promise that fuels the enthusiasm surrounding Japanese transborder studies, and which leads scholars and publishers to ask what is translatable, and thus commodifiable within the global literary marketplace. However, as the Russian and comparative literary scholar Numano Mitsuyoshi 沼野光義 points out, “world literature” in Japan has traditionally meant “‘foreign literature’ usually excluding Japanese literature.”<sup>7</sup> The writer Tawada Yōko 多和田葉子 (b. 1960) has similarly observed that anthologies of Japanese literature (*Nihon bungaku*) and world literature (*sekai bungaku*) are

published separately, leading to the sense that “Japan is not a part of the world but rather the world exists outside of Japan.”<sup>8</sup> Tsuchiya’s new vision of textual border-crossings thus signals a *re*visioning of world literature as a designation to which Japanese texts aspire even while they regard it as external or other.

Moreover, unlike the figure of translation invoked by Damrosch that presumes a lateral movement *across* spaces and borders through the etymology of the prefix *trans-*, Tawada has highlighted how the corresponding Japanese term *hon’yaku* 翻訳 derives its meaning from the ideogram 翻る (*hirugaeru*) that instead “suggests a slightly dramatic and romantic gesture, which means ‘to turn over’ or ‘to flip over.’”<sup>9</sup> In order to visualise translation in this way, Tawada has been known during public readings of her work to turn a glove inside out as part of that onstage performance. As she explained in an interview with the German literary scholar Bettina Brandt, this gesture “makes it possible to show the flipside of something in an unexpected way.”<sup>10</sup> In tracing the lines by which works of Japanese literature might circulate beyond their linguistic and cultural origin according to an Anglophone model of translation such as Damrosch’s, transborder approaches abandon these alternative conceptual possibilities that the Japanese language affords. In other words, they run the risk of disregarding the global significance of texts that remain in situ: among them, texts grounded in linguistic difference and resistance which conceal more surprising “flipsides” of Japanese literature yet to emerge.

The desire to forge new literary connections towards a transborder future also means turning a blind eye to history. Tsuchiya’s interest in postcolonial writing frames the focus of his volume in which most chapters look to the world beyond Japan—to the Martinique-born writer of French, Edouard Glissant, and writers of Chicana/o fiction. However, multilingual narratives by ethnic Korean, Taiwanese and Okinawan writers produced against conditions of Japanese imperialism are absent. Instead, the only writers of Japanese prose covered in detail are Mizumura Minae 水村美苗, whose works traverse Japanese and English, the Swiss-born novelist David Zopetti, and Tawada, who began writing in German after moving to Hamburg in 1982.<sup>11</sup> A similar pattern emerges in Numano’s inquiry, which identifies three primary groups: Murakami Haruki and the Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō, whose fictions moved “from inside to outside” in translation to initiate Japanese literature’s “internationalization”; the “new phenomena” of bilingual writers consisting of Tawada, Mizumura, and the American-born Levy Hideo; and the “younger generation” including the

Iranian-born Shirin Nezamafi and Yang Yi 楊逸, a writer born in Harbin who in 2008 became the first non-native winner of the Akutagawa Literary Prize for her novella, *Toki ga nijimu asa* 時が滲む朝 (A morning when time blurs).<sup>12</sup> Between these two scholarly approaches one finds the names that have come to dominate contemporary transborder and multilingual literary critiques.<sup>13</sup> These writers are all active in the present, yet history's absence is no accidental omission when Numano writes of Yang and Nezamafi that Japanese “was not imposed... by irresistible force” but a language chosen of “their own free will.”<sup>14</sup> While claiming to preserve linguistic hybridity within “a new post-colonial age” dominated by English, the shifting borders around Japanese fiction run the risk of effacing multiple lines of identity, difference, language, and movement that already crisscross through modern Japanese fiction.<sup>15</sup> Accompanied by more recent calls since 2011 for a “post-disaster world literature” that marks March 11, 2011 (“3/11”) as a temporal border dividing Japanese literature into a “before” and “after,” the transborder trend betrays a new revisionism that writes *out* stories rooted in Japan’s colonial past.<sup>16</sup>

Numano’s reference to “internationalization” recalls the rhetoric of *kokusaika* (国際化), popularized in the early 1990s, by which Japan moved to reshape its politics, industry and education in ways that might curry the favor of Europe and the United States. In Marilyn Ivy’s critique, internationalization programs appeared to promote “openness” and “cosmopolitan expansiveness (even while retaining the national frame)” but in reality sought “the thorough domestication of the foreign and the dissemination of Japanese culture throughout the world.”<sup>17</sup> Numano’s distinction between Murakami’s successful move “from the inside to outside” and the effort to welcome other writers of Japanese who move “from outside to inside” maps onto these two moves. Moreover, this maneuver recalls the value given to cultural hybridization within processes of internationalization and globalization, of which Kien Nghi Ha has written critically:

in the context of the political economy of culturalization the once highly politically charged catchword of “crossing the border” turns into a depoliticized attitude of the mainstream society, referring to a phenomenon only attached to the colorful and entertaining surface of the economy of popular culture and not necessarily including any basic political questions such as institutional access, group interests, profits for whom, decision-making process, political rights etc. More than that, the principle of hybridity seems to change into a catch-all-

word and an all-in-one-solution of neo-liberal ideas of permanent flexibility, innovation and transformation.<sup>18</sup>

Such resonances suggest that similar political motives lie beneath the will to expand Japan's literary borders today and promote Japanese texts in the world as a matter of national, cultural interest.

The writing of Tawada Yōko, whose prolific output of prose, poetry, and essays in Japanese and German epitomize the image of a literary border-crosser weaving across geographical, literary, and linguistic contexts, brings these problems squarely into view. Tawada's richly imaginative oeuvre has spawned a seemingly insatiable academic interest within Japanese, German, and comparative literary fields. While few contemporary writers of Japanese prose have commanded a full volume of scholarship (Murakami Haruki being an obvious exception), since 2007 Tawada's work has generated at least seven dedicated publications in four languages, with a further English book anticipated.<sup>19</sup> Douglas Slaymaker writes that today Tawada is "one of the most important contemporary writers (not simply one of the most important *Japanese* or *German* writers)."<sup>20</sup> At the same time, her "global writing" has itself become fundamental to tracing the lines by which Japanese literature enters the world.<sup>21</sup>

And yet, Tawada's characters dispel the utopian associations of transborder movement by appearing motionless, stammering, even wounded. As Brett de Bary highlights in a nuanced reconsideration of Tawada in relation to an emerging world literature, a productive engagement requires greater effort to historicize the broader projects of translation within her writing, to read her stories less as "individual parables of 'crossing'" than as "thematizing the violent process of boundary *production* itself."<sup>22</sup> While de Bary's argument emphasizes literary themes, the same thinking may be extended to the celebration of Tawada's bilingual writing practice, which raises the expectation of an inherent translatability that contributes to her global visibility even while it ensures that, as Bettina Brandt asserts, "few can read her oeuvre in its entirety."<sup>23</sup> This might be said of many writers, but since the stories by Tawada that have garnered most attention in recent years are those published since 2011, most notably the dystopian, post-apocalyptic novel *Kentōshi* 献灯使 (*The Emissary*, 2014), this recent interest also has the power to develop and redefine views of her work.<sup>24</sup> For Slaymaker, while Tawada's earlier fictional narratives rendered borders as "annoying, but just a minor annoyance," her post-disaster writing carries a "darker feel"

and presents a “nuclear Japan cut off from other nations, largely isolated in the world... or worse, [a world in which] ‘Japan’ no longer even exists...”<sup>25</sup> What does it mean, therefore, for a writer to be upheld as “transborder” when the borders drawn within her texts are increasingly difficult to overcome, particularly in the wake of disaster and (to make a prediction) pandemic? What does it say of contemporary Japanese literature’s relationship to “world literature” if the Japan inscribed in such texts is increasingly “cut off”? And what else does this “post-disaster world literature” exclude?

Shu-mei Shih writes in “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition” that

[a] global literature should be not the old world literature spiced with exotic or exceptional representatives from the “rest of the West” but a literature that critically examines its own construction by suspiciously interrogating all claims to universalisms, while acknowledging that any criteria emerging from these interrogations will be open to new questioning.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than seek the expansion of “world literature” by tracing how Tawada’s fictions inhabit and inscribe a new literary terrain, this article reads in her work salient challenges to the transborder/ world literature paradigm. Indeed, Tawada’s status as what Shih terms an “exceptional particular” by which her work summons universal acclaim at the same time as it occupies a unique position within transborder literary studies, means that she is well-placed to expose those tensions between “Japanese” (national) and “world” literatures delineated above. At first glance, the two works discussed here appear to endorse Tawada’s reputation for transgressing national and linguistic boundaries: the book-length essay *Ekusofonī: Bogo no soto e deru tabi* エクソフォニー—母語の外へ出る旅 (Exophony: A trip outside the mother tongue, 2003) has come to define her multilingual writing practice while the novel *Tabi o suru hadaka no me* 旅をする裸の眼 (The travelling naked eye, 2004), centered on a Vietnamese student displaced in Paris, was the first that she wrote simultaneously in Japanese and German (*Das Nackte Auge*, 2004) without a separate translator.<sup>27</sup> However, since all international translations of this novel are based on the German text, while *Ekusofonī* remained untranslated until its publication in Korean in 2019, these two texts also interrogate what is presumed by celebrations of Tawada’s global success amid discussions of transborder and multilingual fiction in Japan today.

By focusing on moments of rupture, asymmetry, and untranslatability within these texts, this article suggests how Tawada's writing might be used to destabilize the fetishization of literary "crossings" and incite hitherto unseen intertextualities through which to connect contemporary Japanese fiction and the world.

### **Beyond transborder: Rereading *Ekusofonī***

*Ekusofonī* was Tawada's first, straight collection of essays written in Japanese.<sup>28</sup> Unlike *Katakoto no uwagoto* カタコトのうわごと (Stumbling ramblings, 1999 [2007]), which meanders through theoretical discussions, literary critiques, and comically surreal short stories, *Ekusofonī* presents a singular, book-length engagement on the topics of linguistic exile, movement, and literary production. The book is ordered in two sections: the first comprising critical vignettes headed with the name of an international city that assumes the role of a virtual background; the second a shorter series titled "Adventures in the German language" that deftly deconstructs German expressions through comparisons with the corresponding Japanese.<sup>29</sup> In the eyes of comparative literature scholar Nishi Masahiko, the rich connotations of cosmopolitan playfulness in *Ekusofonī* make for a "highly pleasurable book" whose "carefree prose epitomizes its author's distinctive characteristics and takes the reader along on her travels."<sup>30</sup> The book has also come to define Tawada's multilingual writing practice, with Marjorie Perloff describing Tawada as a "leading practitioner of ... *exophonic* writing."<sup>31</sup> However, despite enhancing Tawada's international reputation *Ekusofonī* has not been widely translated like her works of fiction. In other words, while "exophony" has become hugely important to the transnational critical field concerned with Tawada's work, the associations of this term and frequency of its citation exceed the anticipated readership of the book itself.

One might account for this gap since Tawada did not coin "exophony" but encountered the term at a literary symposium in Dakar in 2002 through the work of Robert Stockhammer.<sup>32</sup> In their book *Exophonie: Anders-Sprachigkeit (in) der Literatur* (Exophony: Other-languagedness in/of literature, 2007), Stockhammer and co-authors Susan Arndt and Dirk Naguschewski define exophony as an act of writing in a language that is either not (or not exclusively) one's mother tongue, or that does not belong to one's environment.<sup>33</sup> In this first instance, the authors recall the roots of exophony as a term initially used to describe literature by African writers produced in the European languages imposed upon them by their

colonizers.<sup>34</sup> In the second, they describe the intimate connection between “other-languedness” and global histories of trade and colonial migration wherein people themselves move into new territories and languages. While this twofold definition runs the risk of characterizing exophonic movements in terms of moving “inside” and “outside” (like Numano), Stockhammer, Arndt, and Naguschewski also insist on exophony as a “*stepping out of one’s voice*” pertaining to all acts of writing literature (akin to the inherent transborder nature of literature to which Tsuchiya refers).<sup>35</sup>

For Tawada, the attraction of “exophony” lies in its “fresh” sound that evokes “a kind of symphony” and its promise to embrace multiple sub-categories of fiction such as “migrant” or “creole” without being limited to one. At its most universal, Tawada heralds exophony as “the norm” (*tsūjō* 通常) within all literature while as an “adventurous idea brimming with curiosity and creativity” it embraces the practice of creative writing “outside of the mother tongues by which writers are enveloped and restrained,” irrespective of whether this is a result of colonization, exile, or voluntary choice.<sup>36</sup> Given that Tawada’s texts frequently trouble the relationship between original and translation, it seems apt that her book was published four years before the collaborative volume that inspired it. However, Tawada’s work also differs by refraining from identifying or defining exophony in straightforward, academic terms. From her distinctive, reflexive position as a literary scholar (she has a Ph. D. in German Literature from the University of Zurich) *and* creative practitioner, Tawada writes more poetically as a fish who “perswimbulates” (*oyogiaruite* 泳ぎ歩いて) the seas in order to “feel the linguistic situation of various lands with my scales.”<sup>37</sup> As this metaphor rejects claims to a stable identity based on geographic or linguistic terrain, it prefigures Tawada’s specific attitude towards exophony as the state of being a foreigner in one’s own tongue. In Japanese, her ambiguous subtitle *bogo no soto e deru tabi* barely conceals this additional sense, underwriting its common translation as “(the exophonic subject’s) trip outside the mother tongue” as “the mother tongue’s trip outside (of itself).”

This latent double meaning supplements the utopian image of exophony with visceral, even painful undertones. The scales of the quirky “perswimbulating” fish that opens the book’s “Foreword” are haunted by more painful images that recur in Tawada’s earlier novels, including the flaking, bloodied skin of the protagonist in *Das Bad* (*The Bath*, 1989) who is herself shadowed by a spectral doppelgänger in the form of a woman



who burned to death, and blistering sores on the arms of the struggling translator who narrates *Moji ishoku* 文字移植 (*Saint George and the Translator*, 1999).<sup>38</sup> These wounds suggest the physical pain and damage that exophonic displacement inscribes upon the borders of the body, as Dennitza Gabrakova's work discusses.<sup>39</sup> They also foreshadow a more violent intention within Tawada's writing. In an interview published in 1997, Tawada recalled the "incredibly unpleasant and exhausting sensation" of her early encounter with the German language as it "invaded my being with increasing vigor," and expressed her desire to "ruffle the scales of the dragon who resides within language" as a counterattack against the hold that her mother tongue had assumed over her.<sup>40</sup> In *Ekusofonī*, Tawada betrays that retaliatory desire by peeling back the layers of language and reminding her readers that the kanji introduced to Japan around the fifth century are no less "foreign" than contemporary "words of foreign origin" (*gairaigo* 外来語), even though only the latter mark their difference materially by appearing in katakana. By describing kanji as "a singular kind of migrant into Japan," Tawada pulls the scales from her readers' eyes so that they might recognize that the mother tongue is neither axiomatic nor pure.<sup>41</sup>

In *Ekusofonī*, this deconstructive approach to language that has consolidated Tawada's appeal also suggests prescient critiques of contemporary debates over transborder literature. This is particularly so in the first—and longest—two essays of the book: "Dakar: Exophony is the norm" and "Berlin: Colonial spellbinding." In "Dakar," Tawada begins by considering Francophone literature by Senegalese writers (a nod to the entrance of "exophony" into critical lexicon) and German "migrant literature" (*imin bungaku* 移民文学). In the absence of a corresponding genre in Japan, Tawada highlights the "Japanophone literature" (*Nihongo bungaku* 日本語文学) produced by writers of Chinese and Korean ancestry, "whose central position therein complicates their labelling as 'minorities'," and writers such as Levy who defy the assumption that only those born with Japanese as their mother tongue can produce novels in Japanese. As Tawada continues, the challenge for these writers is not the task of writing but the prejudices that they face when their fiction is judged only in terms of how their Japanese prose measures up against native fluency: "good" (*jōzu*) versus "bad" (*heta*).

The term "Japanophone literature" was originally coined by Kim Sōkpōm 金石範 (b. 1925) in his 1972 essay *Kotoba no jubaku* ことばの呪縛 (The spellbinding of language) to decolonize writing by ethnic

Koreans in Japanese from the “imperiality of Japanese literature” (*Nihon bungaku no teikokusei*).<sup>42</sup> However, the shifting borders of Japanese literature have also impacted the usage of this label since the 1990s, first in efforts to retroactively attach the term to works written before its coinage, and more recently, to foreground “non-native” writers of Japanese prose and “writers from overseas” (*kaigai kara no kakite*).<sup>43</sup> Whereas Tsuchiya’s volume situates Tawada at “the helm of Japanophone writing” on account of her bilinguality, this latter development underscores Tawada’s precarious standing against this term.<sup>44</sup> However, the more pressing concern as outlined by Kim is that this recent turn also seems far removed from Japanophone literature’s historical and political roots.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, Tawada’s comments highlight a further shortcoming by which the emphasis on language relegates enquiries into “what” writers write about to the question of “how”—and “how well”—they write. On the Akutagawa Prize committee panel in 2008, Ishihara Shintarō argued of Yang’s winning novel that “even if her sentences are coming together, the fact that the author is Chinese is not enough to warrant literary accolades,” while Ikezawa Natsuki remarked that “in terms of skill, it was perhaps not the most perfect work.”<sup>46</sup> Numano’s article cited above betrays similar thinking when he writes:

There is no problem with Nezamafi’s Japanese, and Yang Yi’s Japanese is even better than Nezamafi’s, as she comes from a culture that uses Chinese characters, which are shared by Japan. But even so, the Japanese in which these authors write is somehow not quite natural and differs in subtle ways from the Japanese used by native speakers.<sup>47</sup>

Angela Yiu has suggested that the contemporary iteration of “Japanophone literature” may yet offer “a new, viable approach to narrating literary history in the age of global awareness.”<sup>48</sup> However, these real examples also show that so long as celebrations of linguistic hybridity stem from perceptions of “difference” between a writer and her language, they reinforce the conservative standards by which the national language and literature are upheld.

For Tawada, this impulse links back to the origins of Japan’s modern national identity and its “latent inferiority complex” in relation to “the West.” Following the collapse of Japan’s “bubble economy” in the early 1990s, the study of European languages such as French and English gained

popularity among Japan's middle classes. The goal was less to fulfil some tangible ambition than simply to become "good" (again, *jōzu*) as evidence of one's high social standing. In Tawada's critique, these desires for personal and cultural advancement recall the will of Japanese subjects in the Meiji era (1868-1912) to shake off the image by which they were regarded as "barbarians" (*yaban*) in the eyes of Europeans. Both then and now, she claims, Japan displays the symptoms of its ideological colonization by the "Westerner" (*seiyōjin*) as an abstract symbol of authority. This realization is behind the dismay she recalls having felt upon arriving in Germany in the early 1980s and seeing middle-aged Japanese tourists whose "fervent spending" on designer goods and high-end restaurants barely concealed their "aggressive" desire to belong. Just as these desires misapprehend the idea of "European civilization... merely as the civilization of the consumer," the popular phrase *Ajia ni iku* (I'm off to Asia!) uttered by Japanese tourists indicates a persistent desire to sidle up to Europe and mentally distance themselves from Asia as if they are no longer part of it. To those detractors who, she imagines, might protest that one can learn French simply because it is fun and crave French food because it is delicious, Tawada counters that the damaging consequence of these trends is that they lose sight of history. History, she writes, then becomes "no more than the flecks of a rubber eraser swept off a desk" leaving the intertwined legacies of "Eurocentrism and twisted national purism... untouched beneath a 10,000 yen note."<sup>49</sup>

In "Berlin," Tawada pushes these ideas further in relation to Europe, particularly Prussian Germany in an earlier period of modern Japanese history. Bookended by readings of Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), "Berlin" considers Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862–1922), an army medic dispatched to Germany to study hygiene in the 1880s who became a formative figure in modern Japanese literature as a writer and translator of classic works by Goethe, Kleist and Shakespeare. In Ōgai's 1909 short story, "A Great Discovery" (*Daihakken* 大発見), the narrator, a Japanese man in Germany whose circumstances replicate those of the author, uncovers differing expectations of what constitutes good manners and hygiene between himself and the people around him. Although the German minister finds incredulous the assumption that a man who wears split-toed straw sandals could learn anything about hygiene, the narrator's eponymous "great discovery" is that such value-statements are relative: after all, even Europeans pick their noses like Japanese. As Reiko Tachibana observes in her historicizing critique, Tawada is reluctant to

accept parallels between herself and this literary predecessor despite having arrived in Germany at the same age—twenty-two years old. However, by reading Ōgai’s work, Tawada claims to have learned that the challenges to “absorb, emulate and resist ‘western-ness’” reach back to the advent of Japan’s modern history.<sup>50</sup> Today, Tawada writes, Japanese people wear shoes rather than *waraji* or *zōri*, but this is not because these objects evolve naturally like a tadpole transforms into a frog. Rather, she credits Ōgai’s fiction with helping her to see better than any textbook that history is constructed so that people can cast off the vestiges of tradition and don the new accoutrements of modern civilization.<sup>51</sup> As Tachibana cogently traces, Tawada’s primary target in this section of *Ekusofonī* are the ideological foundations of the national language (*kokugo* 国語) and national polity (*kokutai* 国体) of the Meiji period that fostered ideals of national purity learned from modern Germany.<sup>52</sup> These critiques also form the backdrop to Tawada’s critical views on the effort to learn French in the present, as another European model by which Japan strives to move up, and on, in the world.

Tawada published *Ekusofonī* before transborder literary studies took hold in Japan, but her arguments appear prescient. By highlighting the “dark shadow” cast by Japanese colonization within Asia and its role in “imposing” exophony upon its neighboring countries, she demonstrates her awareness of historical and colonial dimensions that appear missing from those contemporary approaches.<sup>53</sup> She also contextualizes that amnesia within the desire for Japanese literary works to gain acceptance within some virtual construction of “the West.” Anticipating how translation, especially into a European language like English, has become the hallmark of international success, Tawada writes:

I don’t aspire to cross the border; I want to reside within it. There is something more important than language in that moment of hesitation: a sense that I can truly feel the border. It would be tedious if the world were submerged in some boring, shallow, business English that can be transmitted anywhere. I do not mean to speak ill of English or place French on a pedestal. But that moment is important in which the strange regionality unique to a place thickens, and that’s precisely what develops the urge to cross the national border.<sup>54</sup>

By drawing a distinction between the “border” (*kyōkai* 境界) and the “national border” (*kokkyō* 国境), Tawada reveals the border itself to be

multiple and varied. In so doing, she makes possible an alternative scenario in which not every act of translation—in the transborder sense—is transgressive.

The will to pause before the border invites an alternative view of world literatures. By coincidence, *Ekusofonī* was published in 2003, the same year as *What is World Literature?* The appearance of Ōgai, one of the first translators of Goethe's works into Japanese, also recalls Damrosch's point of departure in Goethe's *Weltliteratur*. But whereas Damrosch's work today is now a world text, translated, and cited in multiple languages, *Ekusofonī* speaks consciously to a readership familiar with Japanese, and continues to exist primarily within that context. The prolonged absence of any translation of *Ekusofonī* until a Korean version appeared in 2019 does not prove that its appeal is limited to Japanese literature alone. To be sure, in addressing a specifically Japanese readership and critical context, *Ekusofonī* affirms that exophonic writing is rooted in its own time and place. But as a challenge to the postwar Japanese worldview built upon English and Europe as linguistic and cultural authorities, *Ekusofonī* deconstructs the idea that only travel, translation, and circulation from East to West qualify as entry into the world. And by removing that abstract world as a destination, Tawada sets the conditions to witness other migrant presences already within Japanese literature, including those of her fictions to come.

### **The Travelling Naked Eye that Does Not Travel**

Tawada first wrote of Vietnam in her 2000 novella *In Front of Trang Tien Bridge* (*Chantien bashi no temae de* チャンティエン橋の手前で).<sup>55</sup> Written in Japanese only and translated into English by Margaret Mitsutani, the story follows a Japanese woman living in Berlin who is invited by letter to the Vietnamese city of Hue.<sup>56</sup> The protagonist's journey takes her past various sites that force confrontations with the history of war, including the network of tunnels at Cù Chi used by Viet Cong fighters. Before crossing the bridge into Hue, however, a fog descends around the bus she has boarded and the novel ends. Four years later, and one year after *Ekusofonī*, Tawada published the Japanese novel *Tabi o suru hadaka no me* (The Travelling Naked Eye) alongside its German counterpart *Das Nackte Auge* (The Naked Eye).<sup>57</sup> Told in the first-person ("I"), the narrative follows a young Vietnamese girl who travels to Berlin in 1988 in order to represent the "raw voices of victims of US imperialism" at an "All Nation Youth Conference" on behalf of her school in "Ho Chi Minh

City, formerly known as Saigon.”<sup>58</sup> On the night before the conference, however, she is kidnapped by a young man named Jörg who takes her to his home town, Bochum. In her attempt to escape, the narrator stows away on a night-train that she believes will take her to Moscow, only to discover that she is bound instead for Paris. The revelation causes “everything before my eyes to turn black,” a blindness that prefigures the narrator’s status as an illegal immigrant forced to hide from French police.<sup>59</sup> As she finds this shelter in the darkness and virtual spaces of the cinema, in particular the films of French actress Catherine Deneuve, the novel hinges on these mutually implicated aspects of visibility and invisibility that shape her ambiguous existence as an unseen “I” and unseeing eye.

One might read these two narratives together since, as Susan Anderson writes, *Trang Tien Bridge* “addresses in concentrated form the ongoing effects of colonialism and war that Tawada explores from a different perspective in her novel *Das Nackte Auge*.”<sup>60</sup> However, despite key points of connection, the later work does not merely reroute and revise the earlier story. In terms of form, the existence of the Japanese *travelling* “naked eye” already complicates this expectation. Because this third text remains untranslated it appears disruptive like the uncrossed bridge into Hue, which in Anderson’s analysis suggests linkage but in fact exposes the limits of forced connections by ceding to the river beneath. Citing an essay Tawada wrote in German, Anderson explains how Tawada plays on this theme through slippages in language, changing the “r” of *Brücke* (“bridge”, as a point of connection) to an “l”, to create *Blücke*, a nonsensical stumbling block that invokes the noun *Blicke* (“gaze”), whereby “looking for the meaning of a word is like viewing a gap under a bridge.”<sup>61</sup> Likewise, meaning in *Tabi o suru hadaka no me* emerges from the gaps that radically translate the story of a Japanese woman’s journey to the bridge at Hue into the fragmented, double vision of a Vietnamese woman stranded in Europe.

The question of what the narrator sees is raised by the juxtaposition of her narrative against Deneuve’s onscreen performances. Tawada’s novel traverses thirteen chapters, each of which marks the passing of a subsequent year from 1988 to 2000, and whose titles borrow from Deneuve’s films.<sup>62</sup> In the opening paragraph, the narrator describes in detail the closing moments of Roman Polanski’s 1965 thriller, *Repulsion*. Deneuve plays Carol, a Belgian woman who suffers a psychological, ultimately murderous breakdown while living alone in London. At the film’s close, Deneuve/Carol lies unresponsive as the camera pans from her vacant stare across the room strewn with objects, before zooming in on a

“glaring” young girl in an “old, family photograph” until the shapes of her eyes become obscured. In the narrative description of this scene, Carol’s “projected eye [that] sees nothing” combines with the blurred image of the girl in the photograph’s eye to confirm that vision here is unstable, even absent. In fact, despite only seeing this film “in a cinema in Paris one year later,” the narrator begins to suffer the same visual delusions while being held captive by Jörg as Carol witnesses in her apartment. While this opening scene positions the narrator as a spectator through her recollection that “this was the first film in which I saw you,” it also interpellates Deneuve and the roles she plays into a fraught dialogue in which the narrator internalizes those multiple, troubled modes of blindness and mis-seeing.<sup>63</sup>

Comparing the pronouns that constitute this dialogue helps to illustrate how differences manifest in Tawada’s German and Japanese versions. In Japanese, a speaker can choose from multiple personal pronouns according to their status in relation to their addressee. The narrator of Tawada’s Japanese work refers to herself as *watashi*, a term befitting of younger women, and addresses Deneuve as *anata*, a term that connotes a sense of familiarity, even endearment. By contrast, the German text writes *ich*, a pronoun empty of markers connoting age or gender, and the formal second-person pronoun rendered strikingly in full capitals as “SIE.” While the Japanese dialogue creates a degree of intimacy between the two characters, the German text moves them in the opposite direction to create a measure of distance. A further slippage occurs in Susan Bernofsky’s English translation from the German, which writes “you” in lower case against the capitalized first-person, inverting the relationship pairing of “ich/SIE” as “I/you.”

A further critical paradox produced by Tawada’s two “originals” is that each has generated its own interpretative paradigm. Japanese literary scholars, for example, have foregrounded questions of visual ambiguity and spectatorship. Nakagawa Shigemi’s work draws on studies of cinema and perception within art and media to articulate the text’s paradoxical relationship between visual and linguistic “blindness” (*mōmokusei*), while Slaymaker suggests that as the narrator’s vision merges with the camera lens it effects a cyborg-like transcendence of her material body.<sup>64</sup> While these analyses foreground technologies of looking in the present, the broad trend of German literary scholarship has leaned towards the historical and political themes presented by the novel. Julia Genz highlights the idiomatic function of the eye as a historical witness while interpreting the

encroachment of Deneuve's cinematic image into the narrator's vision as corroding her ability to see the "naked truth" of her colonial past.<sup>65</sup> Related analyses suggest the adventures and perils of migration, with Petra Fachinger highlighting the novel's "picaresque" elements that "subvert colonial ideologies," and Leslie Adelson's description of "a tale of mobility and multilingualism embedded in palimpsestic spatial and temporal metanarratives of postcolonialism and postcommunism."<sup>66</sup> It almost seems ironic that in German scholarship the narrative emerges as one of movement despite only the Japanese title referring to a "travelling" naked eye.

To trace these differences is not to pit one approach against another but to highlight the challenges of analyzing a novel against existing critiques produced within specific, area- and language-based disciplines. On one hand, the existence of plural texts opens up critical possibilities, as in Charles Exley's analysis of the work as a "film-novel" that reads the Japanese narrative, draws on Japanese and German scholarship, and cites Bernofsky's English translation from German.<sup>67</sup> However, Tawada's simultaneous production of two texts in two languages means that they neither follow a traditional schema of an original and its translation nor can be reconciled into a single version. As a result, this strategy creates the conditions by which both versions do not absolutely align. As these texts glance off one another to greater and lesser degrees, they also reveal an intrinsic, teleological property of language to actively guide the direction of a text. These differences thus produce different reading experiences, as the critical scholarship above reveals. At their extreme, they strike at the heart of the translation problem whereby one text's gain is another text's loss, and articulate the stakes of close reading in an age of translation.

The double meaning of "glance" as a momentary, interruptive collision and an obliquely directed gaze reanimates the cinematic focus of Tawada's novel that reimagines the disorientating experience of losing one's language in visual terms. As the novel progresses, the narrator's unstable vision is paralleled by her increasing inability to use language until she is rendered speechless. In retrospect, this loss of vision is already anticipated when, upon her arrival in Berlin, she can "no longer recall a single line" of her speech on U. S. imperialism as if "having brought my writing to a distant country, it no longer looked like something that I could trust."<sup>68</sup> These sentiments resound beyond the text of this unreliable narrative that unfolds in Japanese and German rather than the Vietnamese voice one might expect of its narrator. Within the context of this novel



predicated on film, they also resonate with Tijana Mamula's film-based scholarship that emphasizes the centrality of vision in the experience of linguistic displacement.<sup>69</sup> In Mamula's study, the non-verbal sounds and images of cinema can compensate for the deterritorialized subject's loss of language. This factor might explain in part the narrator's attraction to the cinema in Paris. However, as a work of narrative fiction, Tawada's novel also inverts that premise since all the reader can see are the words, sights, and objects that the narrator is able to name.

Tawada's narrative subverts this premise further by inciting myriad intertextualities from Deneuve's films even while those references frustrate readerly expectations of narrative coherence and mimetic writing. Such devices are ingrained in the natures of cinema, spectatorship, and scopophilic desire. In terms of feminist film scholarship, the positioning of the text's narrator as a female cinemagoer invokes a wealth of critical and psychoanalytical engagements with the im/possibility of the female gaze. This issue is amplified since Deneuve's most acclaimed performances stem from avant-garde and experimental films that themselves queer, subvert and deconstruct themes and structures of looking. As the narrator becomes immersed into the fictional worlds of Deneuve's films to the extent that she over-identifies with those characters portrayed, she too falls from view. As she sees Deneuve's faces in a copy of the magazine *Ecran*, she reflects:

Inside the cinema I become a blazing retina reflecting the screen  
while the rest of my body vanishes. The woman named "I" ceases to  
be. I have come to feel as though no other woman exists apart from  
you.<sup>70</sup>

For Mamula, cinema emerges in the individual frames as well as the gaps in between, a work of montage with the "capacity to deny visibility as much as to indulge it."<sup>71</sup> Tawada's novel recreates that medium in text to produce an ironic first-person narrative that disguises its narrator as much as it reveals.

In a similar paradox, despite apparently seeing Deneuve everywhere, the narrator refuses to say her name. The reader's recognition of Deneuve in the narrator's fragmented glimpses therefore depends on her international celebrity.<sup>72</sup> A star in the sense that Richard Dyer describes as "extensive, multimedia, and intertextual," Deneuve's image became particularly diverse in the 1990s as it was "rendered more complex still by the ongoing dialogue between the on-screen and off-screen 'Deneuves.'"<sup>73</sup>

As the narrator encounters Deneuve precisely in this decade, her story articulates this complexity. However, this is also overshadowed by Deneuve's national, symbolic status as the "grand dame of French cinema," former face of major fashion houses including Chanel and L'Oreal, and most literally as the model for Marianne, the female embodiment of "la République," from 1985 until 1989: the year in which the narrator arrives in Paris. Deneuve's appearances within the text incite this combination of radical alterity and the colonial mother(land) personified. The impact of the latter is to further challenge the female narrator's claim to spectatorship as the returning colonial subject who gazes back with longing at the image of her former empire.

This symbolic connection between Deneuve and the colonial past assures the centrality of this history within the narrative. This evocation is particularly strong in Régis Wargnier's acclaimed historical epic *Indochine* (1992), in which Deneuve plays an "Asiate" plantation owner who adopts an orphaned Vietnamese princess, Camille. The film allegorizes the demise of French Indochina through the relationship of these women who are ultimately torn apart after they become rivals in love, leading Camille to reject her stepmother and join the revolutionary fight for regional independence. In Panivong Norindr's critical reading, *Indochine* presents a romantic fiction structured by French collective nostalgia akin to the "colonial blues," and which seeks to reorder the past into a linear historical narrative.<sup>74</sup> Yet if Norindr's critique presumes a French audience, for the narrator the film is significant as the first in which she sees someone who "seemed to look like me." Despite "never [having] seen a country by the name of Indochina anywhere other than in a Parisian cinema," *Indochine* allows the narrator to envisage herself in the role of Éliane's daughter until her limited language is reduced to a kind of "baby-talk... [that] crumbles apart and scatters all over the floor."<sup>75</sup> Again, language connects to vision as the narrator seeks to escape from the film's "primitive, clear language" in Éliane's "ambiguous" (*meihaku ni naranai*) face that "flees from the violence of images to create a new space beside the story that draws me in."<sup>76</sup>

After witnessing this colonial era ending on screen, the narrator agrees to rectify her immigration status by obtaining a fake Japanese passport, traveling to Thailand to marry a fellow Vietnamese expatriate, and legally returning as his wife. Having stowed into Paris illegally from a former colony and communist country, the narrator's sense of difference from Japanese tourists in the city is stark. Recalling Tawada's criticisms in

*Ekusofonī* of Japanese visitors in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s, the narrator also sees in the wealth and propriety of these tourists a way of being that is not permitted to her. The name of Japan alone connotes a nation beset with the “contradictions of capitalism” that have demanded it to export even its women as “geisha” to thrive, and a former colonial administration of Indochina deemed more “destructive” (*hakaiteki*) than the French.<sup>77</sup> Yet above all other identities for which her physical features might pass, “Japanese” is the one to validate her presence. With the help of a black-market dealer nicknamed Heron—a cryptic pun, perhaps, on the Japanese name for this bird, *sagi* (鷺), that is homophonic with the word meaning “fraud” (詐欺)—she obtains a fake passport.

To complete her disguise, her fiancé takes her shopping to buy “monogrammed designer fashions” that make her “look like a Japanese woman,” prompting her to ask whether the “consumerist desire of capitalism” now glows in her eyes.<sup>78</sup> However, the narrator fails to pass through Charles de Gaulle airport and is detained by border control inspectors. Thereupon, Jörg catches up with her and kidnaps her once more to Bochum. Back in captivity, the narrator’s memory begins to resurface and she remembers her history as “misery itself...” Chastised by Jörg for wearing “dirty, worn-out sandals made from tires,” a reference that appears to point to *dép lóp* associated with Viet Cong fighters, the narrator’s voice grows increasingly fragmented:

that was all it was,  
 a wretched deception, first realize that,  
 and then,  
 forget,  
 those images that have passed. Yes, I’ll forget. But in order to do so I  
 must poke out my eyes with the second hand of a clock.<sup>79</sup>

This violence implies the novel’s climax but is followed by a short closing chapter interwoven with Lars von Trier’s *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Told in a third-person register, the chapter introduces Selma (a character in the film played by Icelandic singer Björk), a Czech immigrant in Berlin, and her blind neighbor who despite her “grey hair streaked with blonde” and “European appearance,” claims to be Vietnamese.<sup>80</sup> As this blind woman explains that she lived in Paris for ten years but lost her sight trying to save a “young, foreign girl” who was stabbed to death in Alexanderplatz in 1988, she uncovers an alternative story in which the narrator was murdered

on the night she arrived in Berlin. As this narrative coda casts a ghostly shadow over the preceding chapters, the blind woman herself embodies this liminality through the superimposition of her professed Vietnamese roots and Deneuve's iconic image.

The narrator's act of self-blinding transforms herself and her text and exposes the possibility that always already existed: that the narrator never left Berlin and only her eye traveled. It also allows the reader to *see* her, first in the glimpse of her sandals and then in eye that she pierces. Rather than foreclose the narrator's ability to see once and for all, this scene forces the reader to look into her eyes and witness her presence as a Vietnamese woman within this Japanese text. Having been concealed and overlain by Deneuve's cinematic appearances, here the narrator inserts herself back into her story. As the blind woman explains: "You see, vision is like a tear. It's not that one can see through the tear but rather that vision *is* the tear. That is precisely why it cannot be seen."<sup>81</sup> The Japanese term used here meaning "tear" or "rift" (*sakeme* 裂け目) contains the character for "eye" (*me* 目) within it. Through this idiomatic use of the "eye," like the eye of a needle, the image of the narrator blinding herself does not put an end to vision but opens out towards new modes of seeing.

### Conclusion: Intertexts and Other Worlds

In the mid-section of her scholarly journal *The Wretched of the Screen*, the visual artist Hito Steyerl considers Schrödinger's cat, a thought experiment in which a cat is confined to a box and may or may not be killed by radiation poisoning. In Steyerl's artistic account of Schrödinger's theoretical problem, as long as the box remains sealed it contains two cats: one dead, one alive. It is only when one looks inside that the answer is resolved.<sup>82</sup> If the act of looking here ends the "state of indeterminacy" in which it is not known whether the cat is poisoned or survives, Tawada's novel deals the opposite blow: the narrator's self-blinding opening her narrative to multiple uncertain, even contradictory possibilities.<sup>83</sup>

The ambiguous climax to Tawada's novel recalls its presence in two "originals" and the problem of world literature. As already noted, to date only *Das Nackte Auge* has been translated: first into French as *L'oeil nu* (trans. Bernard Banoun, 2005) and subsequently other languages including English (trans. Susan Bernofsky, 2009) and Vietnamese (as *Mắt trần*, trans. Thu Hương, Thanh Tâm and Cẩm Nhung, 2011).<sup>84</sup> While these translations transport Tawada's novel into "the world," they do so bound in covers that identify the English text as "translated from the German,"

and the French edition as a work of “Litterature Allemande.”<sup>85</sup> The problem from a Japanese literary perspective is that these labels erase Tawada’s Japanese text from global sight. Even though Tawada’s marketability continues to rise there is surely little commercial justification for publishing a second translation of a contemporary text already in circulation, especially when the author herself continues to produce new works. Like its narrator who fails to travel on a Japanese passport, Tawada’s Japanese “travelling” naked eye is left before the border while its German counterpart moves in translation instead.

Tawada’s text-in-double fights against these effects of translation that contain and erase, however, by forcing open a more radical space between these texts. On her visa application to study in Paris, the narrator writes a pseudonym: “Thu Huong” (秋香<sup>トウフオン</sup>).<sup>86</sup> As “a false name that I had not yet used,” the choice seems arbitrary.<sup>87</sup> However, within a narrative structured around a generic “I” and “you” the narrator draws attention to this alias when she signs it again on a school application form and muses, “when I wrote ‘Thu Huong’ I had the feeling that I was writing about someone else” (*tanin no koto o kaiteiru*).<sup>88</sup> Almost spookily, this name echoes the translator of *Das Nackte Auge* from German into Vietnamese, but it also invokes the writer Duong Thu Huong (b. 1947) who in 1989 (the year in which Tawada’s narrator’s arrives in Paris) was expelled from the Vietnamese Communist Party after speaking out against the corruption and elitism of its leadership. In 1991, Duong was arrested and imprisoned without trial under the charge of smuggling secret documents.<sup>89</sup> Following intervention from Amnesty International, Duong was freed after seven months, and in 1994 she travelled to Paris to be awarded the Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Although offered political asylum in France, Duong refused and returned to North Vietnam. Her passport has since been withdrawn and there remains a ban on publishing her novels in Vietnam. Duong’s third novel, *The Paradise of the Blind* (*Những thiên đường mù*) was published in 1988 (the year in which Tawada’s novel begins) and tells the story of Hang, a bright young Vietnamese woman studying in Russia.<sup>90</sup> When a telegram arrives summoning her to join her sick and demanding Uncle Chinh in Moscow, Hang is obliged by her mother, Chinh’s only sibling, to make the journey. As she boards the night-train, Hang reminisces about her childhood and the Land Reforms (1953-56) that tore up her country and family. Owing to its depictions of the Reforms that enraged the Party, *The Paradise of the Blind* was withdrawn from

publication in Vietnam but in 2001 it became the first Vietnamese novel to appear in translation in the United States.<sup>91</sup>

By writing “Thu Huong,” Tawada’s narrator opens a space into which the life and work of this literary namesake writes back. *The Paradise of the Blind* is one chapter shorter than Tawada’s novel with a less convoluted structure that alludes to blindness through street beggars and soothsayers with the paradoxical gift of “seeing,” and the delusion and amnesia through which political propaganda averts its eyes from history. These texts connect, however, in Hang’s observation that “Japanese: The name alone was like a certificate of respectability, a passport that opened all the doors in the world to them.”<sup>92</sup> From here, myriad textual coincidences come into view, invoking scenes and spaces left outside of Tawada’s narrative frame: of the Vietnam that her narrator left behind and the journey that might have been had she boarded the Trans-Siberian line bound for Moscow as intended and not headed to Paris. The central narrative strands and characters of Duong’s novel describe the oppressions suffered by Vietnam under its foreign colonizers and national leaders alike. Reading this work through the lens of Tawada’s, one finally hears the “raw voice of victims of US imperialism” that is lost on her narrator’s arrival in Berlin.

This intertextual discovery offers more than another thought experiment when read against history. In an essay titled *Idō No Naka Ni Sumau* 移動の中に住まう (Living amid movement, 2014), Iyotani Toshio 伊豫谷登士翁 describes the story of modernity as one of borders and movement: of land being demarcated within national borders, and of human efforts, needs, and desires to cross those lines.<sup>93</sup> As the era of globalization has blurred the boundaries between living in one place and moving around, however, it has become difficult to tell these stories of migration and migrants that contributed to and constituted the modern nation-state. Iyotani therefore claims that in the case of Japanese migrant studies, the time has come to give linguistic expression to experiences of colonialism, repatriation, and migrant workers to Japan and rewrite those narratives into a history that cannot be appropriated or erased by the nation. Such a need is all the more pressing following the increased numbers of people in Japan who remain displaced since the disasters of 2011. For Iyotani, such a migrant literature (*imin bungaku*) does not frame migration as a transgressive movement across abstract spaces, but as an interrogation rooted in place and borders by which the structures that define texts and people come into view.

Iyotani's framework presents an opportunity by which to move away from the transborder approaches outlined in the introduction to this article. In fact, while in *Ekusofonī* Tawada seemed uncertain that migrant literature could ever emerge in Japan, in a dialogue with the Taiwan-born writer Wen Yūjū 温又柔 published in 2019 Tawada asks whether it might finally be possible to observe such a literature taking shape.<sup>94</sup> Contrary to its popular "façade" (*tatema*), Tawada writes, Japan is home to many migrant communities, and with governmental policies seeking to increase the foreign workforce those numbers stand to increase. Tawada understands that a subsequent literature takes time to appear since it is usually the second and third generations who begin writing and publishing as the benefactors of university educations paid for by the hard-earned wages of their parents and grandparents. However, the prospect holds excitement for her and Wen since if and when those stories do appear, they will have the potential to change the landscape of Japanese language and its literature as a new branch of "Japanophone literature" (*Nihongo bungaku*).<sup>95</sup>

In all of this, Tawada's Vietnamese narrator is not arbitrary. Tawada reflected on Vietnam's significance to her novel in a separate interview Bettina Brandt in 2006.

A few years ago I realized that Vietnam is an equally interesting scene from which to observe the last one hundred years of history. That is, of course, a topic that is much too big to be discussed right here and now, but still. First we had Indochina and French colonialism, then Japanese colonialism, and ultimately the Vietnam War with the United States. All these powers were there to conquer and destroy, some might say to help, but, in any case, all penetrated the country. Now we like to say that the Cold War is over and that, instead, we are in the middle of a conflict with the Islamic world. It is not accurate, however, to say that a conflict is over and another has begun. No, all conflicts are related. In my eyes, the Vietnam War is not over, and colonialism in Southeast Asia is not over either... Our present becomes more visible when we look at it from the perspective of that which is only supposedly over.<sup>96</sup>

The story that connects Vietnam to the history of Japanese literature is, to borrow Tawada's words, "much too big" to follow through here. But to bear witness to the presence of this Vietnamese narrator suggests how we might read the ambiguities of her novel themselves as creating a new space

beside that history that draws us in to see the world anew through her eyes.<sup>97</sup>

It is too early to tell whether the stories of the claimants in the Hiwada trial will ever be told either by the media, in their own words, or as part of a literature yet to come. It also remains to be seen whether a new Japanese “migrant literature” holds the key for further exploration. The promise of newly invented and reinvented categories of literature is almost invariably curtailed by their need to contain—and thus exclude. However, the alleged exploitation of Vietnamese workers in Fukushima affirms the urgency of thinking through these challenges today. Such a project carries significance beyond questions of Tawada’s fiction and its position between the boundaries that define what constitutes “Japanese,” “German,” and “world” literatures. As Wen remarks in language that paraphrases the blind woman in Tawada’s novel, “if there are no gaps (*ana*) visible it can feel like there is no escape, but once one notices that gaps exist, one realizes that this is not the full picture.”<sup>98</sup> By writing gaps into their own textual visions, the works examined here invite their readers to look closer and make connections that are unimaginable within a world literature based on transborder crossings alone. In this way, the question of where Tawada’s texts find themselves in the world becomes less meaningful than the recognition of those gazes that already look back through their pages.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This article develops ideas presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), in a double seminar on Tawada Yōko’s work organised by Doug Slaymaker and Suga Keijirō. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to Dr. Charlotte Woodford for her constructive comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and to the two anonymous reviewers for their feedback.

<sup>2</sup> The agreed settlement was less than fourteen percent of the sum requested by the trainees, that exceeded twelve million yen. However, the ruling was significant due to the court’s unusual step to state publicly that decontamination work was not a primary objective of the internship program. This stance echoed a public statement by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, as reported in the English-language newspaper *The Japan Times* on September 5, 2019, that decontamination work fell beyond the trainee program’s description.



- <sup>3</sup> Tsuchiya Masahiko 土屋勝彦, *Ekkyō suru bungaku* 越境する文学 (Tokyo: Suiseisha, 2009), 8.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>5</sup> David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>7</sup> Mitsuyoshi Numano, “Shifting Borders in Contemporary Japanese Literature: Toward a Third Vision,” in *Approaches to World Literature*, ed. Joachim Küpper (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 161.
- <sup>8</sup> Tawada Yōko, *Ekusofonī: Bogo no soto e deru tabi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2003), 82. As a case in point, the *Sekai bungaku zenshū* 世界文学全集 published by Chikuma shobō in 1989 contains no fiction originally written in Japanese. A thirty-volume series with the same title published by Kawada shobō shinsho in 2011 “personally edited” by writer and critic Ikezawa Natsuki 池澤夏樹 includes just three: Kim Talsu 金達寿, *Pak Tāri no saiban* 朴達の裁判 (1959, no English translation); Ishimure Michiko 石牟礼道子, *Kukai jōdo* 苦海浄土 (1969, translated by Livia Monnet as *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow*, 1993); and, Medoruma Shun 目取真俊, *Umukaji tu chiriti* 面影と連れて (1999, untranslated). Kim and Medoruma are more often considered within sub-genres of Japanese literature, respectively as the so-called “father” of *zainichi* (resident Korean) literature and a leading writer from Okinawa. Having begun her career as a journalist and activist against the injustices of the Minamata Disease outbreak, Ishimure’s literary reputation has been bolstered by recent trends towards ecocriticism and ethnopoetics, especially since her death in 2018.
- <sup>9</sup> Bettina Brandt, “Scattered Leaves: Artist Books and Migration, A Conversation with Yoko Tawada,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 45.1 (2008): 20.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* A similar image appears in a scene in the novel *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, which I discuss in the third section of this article: “Perhaps the tango is a contract between a man and a woman. A contract exchanged between a man whose warm muscular thighs are palpable through the thin fabric of his trousers, and a woman who is *turned inside out as she dances like a white, silk glove*. A contract between a woman who casts out a forceful stare and a man whose thin lips would never crumble into a smile. There are also other kinds of tango” (Tawada Yōko, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 118, my emphasis). In this passage, the narrator is recalling a passionate dance scene from Régis Wargnier’s 1992 film *Indochine*, but as the word “tango” タンゴ appears in katakana it also incites the Japanese homophone *tango* 単語 meaning “word” or “language,” allowing a rereading of this passage that states explicitly the problems of language and translation that

underpin this analysis. This scene also appears in the German partner to this novel, *Das Nackte Auge*, but in the German language this wordplay is lost.

- <sup>11</sup> Tsuchiya subsequently published *Hankyō-suru bungaku* 反響する文学 (Nagoya: Fūbaisha, 2011), which contains a revised intention to “connect postcolonial literature to world literature” and more consciously preserve tropes of otherness, difference, and the indeterminacy of identity. By highlighting the “violence” and “wars” within many acts of border-crossing, “reverberation” (*hankyō*) suggests a more meaningful framework than “transborder” (*ekkyō*) that invites multilingual texts to echo through one another. However, this updated approach differs little from its predecessor in practice, foregrounding a similar selection of literary works and angles including a second chapter dedicated to Tawada’s fiction.
- <sup>12</sup> Numano, “Shifting Borders,” 160. In fact, Numano begins his essay by claiming the impact of Dostoyevsky’s work upon Japanese letters.
- <sup>13</sup> Stephen Snyder and Ono Masatsugu 小野正嗣 have both published recent essays on translation and difference in contemporary Japanese fiction that namecheck Ōe, Murakami, Mizumura, and Tawada. This article aligns more readily with Snyder’s critical stance of what he terms a “Murakami Effect” that has narrowed definitions of what makes global fiction “translatable” and now threatens to efface the heterogeneity of Japanese fiction. See Snyder, “The Murakami Effect: On the Homogenizing Dangers of Easily Translated Literature” in *Literary Hub* (2017), <https://lithub.com/the-murakami-effect/> (accessed February 4, 2017) and Ono Masatsugu, “On Translationese,” in *The Paris Review* (2020), trans. David Karashima, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/06/23/on-translationese/> (accessed June 26, 2020).
- <sup>14</sup> Numano, “Shifting Borders,” 158.
- <sup>15</sup> Mizumura Minae expresses similar concerns over the fall of Japanese in an age of English in *Nihongo ga horobiru toki: Eigo no seiki no naka de* 日本語が亡びる時—英語の世紀の中で (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2008).
- <sup>16</sup> Numano specifically “demands a post-3/11 literature” (3/11 *igo no sekai bungaku*) at a symposium on world literature held to welcome David Damrosch to the University of Tokyo in December 2011. See Numano Mitsuyoshi, “Sore de wa, ima ‘sekai bungaku’ to wa nani ka? David Damrosch-shi, Ikezawa Natsuki-shi o mukaete,” *Renyxa* 3 (2012): 156–78, especially 159–160.
- <sup>17</sup> Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2–4.

- <sup>18</sup> Kien Nghi Ha. “Crossing the Border? Hybridity as Late-Capitalistic Logic of Cultural Translation and National Modernisation” (2006), <https://transversal.at/transversal/1206/ha/en> (accessed March 8, 2021).
- <sup>19</sup> The Japanese series *Gendai josei sakka tokuhon* 現代女性作家読本 includes a volume of essays on Tawada edited by Takanezawa Noriko 高根沢紀子 (Kanae shobō, 2006). Four German titles include *Tawada Yoko: Poetik der Transformation*, ed. Christine Ivanovic (Stauffenburg Verlag, 2010); *Text + Kritik: Tawada Yoko* ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2011); and the two-volume *Fremde Wasser* ed. Ortrud Gutjahr (Konkursbuch verlag, both 2016). In English, Douglas Slaymaker has edited three volumes with Lexington Books: *Yōko Tawada: Voices from Everywhere* (2007), *Tawada Yōko: On Writing and Rewriting* (2019), and the third, as-yet untitled, forthcoming. Tawada’s work is also the focus of special issues of the Japanese journal *Eureka* (December 2004) and French journal *Études Germaniques* (March 2010). This does not include numerous other single chapters and articles.
- <sup>20</sup> Douglas Slaymaker, “Introduction” in *Tawada Yoko: On Writing and Rewriting*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2020), 1, original emphasis.
- <sup>21</sup> This definition is taken from the abstract of a talk that Damrosch was scheduled to deliver at Tokyo University in March 2020 entitled “Japanese Literature in the World.” [https://www.tc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/ai1ec\\_event/739/](https://www.tc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/ai1ec_event/739/) Accessed July 15, 2020. The event was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- <sup>22</sup> Brett de Bary, “World Literature in the Shadow of Translation: Reconsidering Tawada Yōko,” *Poetica* 78 (2012): 12.
- <sup>23</sup> Bettina Brandt, “The Bones of Translation: Yoko Tawada’s Translational Poetics,” *Thamyris/Intersecting* 28 (2014): 181.
- <sup>24</sup> Margaret Mitsutani’s English translation of this work (titled *The Emissary* for the North American market and *Last Children of Tokyo* in the U. K.) received the first National Book Award for Translated Literature in 2018. Tawada’s work is no newcomer to literary prizes, but whereas her earlier awards, among them the Akutagawa Prize in 1993 and Adelbert von Chamisso Prize in 1996, define themselves in terms of “Japanese” and “German” literature respectively, this new award for translated literature shows how world literature is shaping the criteria for literary success and Tawada’s accomplishments therein.
- <sup>25</sup> Douglas Slaymaker, “Introduction,” 2.
- <sup>26</sup> Shu-mei Shih, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” *PMLA* 119.1 (2004):19.

- <sup>27</sup> Tawada Yōko, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004); Yoko Tawada, *Das Nackte Auge* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag, 2004). As this article will explain, the English translation of this novel is based on the German version, hence the Japanese title is not italicised as is convention for untranslated works.
- <sup>28</sup> Although it can appear jarring, I refer to Tawada’s title in romanized Japanese throughout this article as a reminder that the book has not been translated into English.
- <sup>29</sup> This second section forms the basis of ideas that Tawada developed in her German book, *Abenteuer der deutschen Grammatik* (Konkursbuch, 2010). The analysis here focuses on the first section that has no such equivalent translation in German (or English) but which is crucial for contextualising the book’s stance. For a detailed discussion of *Abenteurer*, see Marko Pajević, “Adventures in Language: Yoko Tawada’s Exophonic Explorations of German,” *Oxford German Studies* 48.4 (2020): 494–504.
- <sup>30</sup> Nishi Masahiko 西成彦, *Bairingararu na yume to yūitsu* バイリンガルな夢と憂鬱 (Tokyo: Jinbun shoin, 2014), 150.
- <sup>31</sup> Marjorie Perloff, “Foreword,” in *Yōko Tawada: Voices from Everywhere*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), vii.
- <sup>32</sup> Tawada, *Ekusofonī*, 6, original emphasis.
- <sup>33</sup> Since Stockhammer, Arndt, and Naguschewski’s book is not translated into English, my reading is aided by the work of Matthias Zach, who helpfully cites these key definitions directly in German with English translations. See Zach, “Extraterritoriality, Exophony, and the Literary Text,” in *Ex(tra)Territorial: Reassessing Territory in Literature, Culture and Languages/ Les Terroires Littéraires, Culturels Et Linguistiques En Question*, ed. Didier Lasalle and Dirk Weissman (Amsterdam; New York: University Paris-Est Créteil, 2014), 217–44.
- <sup>34</sup> The earliest use of “exophony” is regarded as Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs’s “*Sprich deine eigene Sprache, Afrika!*” *Von der Négritude zur afrikanischen Literatur der Gegenwart* (D, Reimer, 1992). See Chantal Wright, “Writing in the ‘Grey Zone’: Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany,” *GFL: German as a foreign language* 3 (2008): 26–42, especially 39. <http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2008/wright.pdf>. Accessed April 5, 2020.
- <sup>35</sup> Stockhammer et al, cited in Zach, “Extraterritoriality, Exophony, and the Literary Text,” 221, original emphasis.
- <sup>36</sup> Tawada, *Ekusofonī*, 6.

- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., i.
- <sup>38</sup> Yumi Selden’s translation of “The Bath” appears in Tawada Yōko, *Where Europe Begins* (New York: New Directions Book, 2007), 3–55. However, the Japanese “original” of this English translation only appeared in print in 2015 in a bilingual volume produced by the Tübingen-based publishing house konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, and under the somewhat different title of *Urokomochi* うろこもち (*Scaleskin*). For Margaret Mitsutani’s translation of “Saint George and the Translator,” see Tawada Yōko, *Facing the Bridge*, trans. Margaret Mitsutani (New York: New Directions Book, 2007), 107–175.
- <sup>39</sup> Dennitza Gabrakova, *The Unnamable Archipelago: Wounds of the Postcolonial in Postwar Japanese Literature and Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
- <sup>40</sup> Tawada Yōko and Yoshikawa Yasuhisa 芳川 泰久, “Intabyū: Kotoba ni sumu doragon, so no gekirin ni furetakute” インタビュー：言葉に棲むドラゴン、その逆鱗にふれたくて *Subaru: Bungei kikanishi* 3 (1997): 85.
- <sup>41</sup> Tawada, *Ekusofonī*, 107. Angela Yiu’s recent work departs from this orthographic hybridity to consider the particular strategies employed by “plurilingual” writers who deploy different forms of Chinese (spoken, written, literary, vernacular) into their Japanese literary texts. See Yiu, “Literature in Japanese (*Nihongo bungaku*): An Examination of the New Literary Topography by Plurilingual Writers from the 1990s,” *Japanese Language and Literature* 54.1 (2020): 37–66, especially 37–38.
- <sup>42</sup> Kim Sokpom, “‘Nihongo bungaku’ no rekishisei” 日本語文学の歴史性, *Essei: kokyō no kotoba* エッセイ—跨境の言葉 (<https://www.bcjl.org/upload/pdf/jjlls-2-1-4.pdf>), 4. I borrow the translation of Kim’s title from Cindi Textor in her article, “Representing Radical Difference: Kim Sōkpōm’s Korea(n) in Japan(ese)” that examines this quality of “spellbinding” in further detail.
- <sup>43</sup> Kaku Nan’en 郭南燕, *Bairingararu na Nihongo bungaku: Tagengo tabunka no aida* バイリンガルな日本語文学—多言語多文化の間 (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2013), 13.
- <sup>44</sup> Tsuchiya, *Ekkyō suru bungaku*, 223.
- <sup>45</sup> Kim, “‘Nihongo bungaku’ no rekishisei,” 6.
- <sup>46</sup> <https://prizesworld.com/akutagawa/jugun/jugun139YI.htm>. Accessed May 28, 2020. The decision to bestow this award to a non-Japanese author drew media consternation and controversy, as indicated in the journal *Bungei Shunjū*’s headline announcing that the judgments had “split in two” (*mapputatsu ni wareta*). Ishihara’s suggestion that Yang’s prose was “coming together” follows his response to her novel *Wan-chan* ワンちゃん that was nominated for

the same prize one year earlier, and about which he remarked that “the sentences are too coarse to be regarded as Japanese” (*Nihongo toshite no bunshō ga sozatsu sugiru* 日本語としての文章が粗雑すぎる). Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Numano, “Shifting Borders,” 159.

<sup>48</sup> Yiu, “Literature in Japanese,” 40.

<sup>49</sup> Tawada, *Ekusofonī*, 12–13.

<sup>50</sup> Tachibana Reiko, “Tawada Yōko's Quest for Exophony: Japan and Germany,” in *Yōko Tawada: Voices from Everywhere*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007), 134, and 153–168.

<sup>51</sup> Tawada, *Ekusofonī*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Tachibana, “Tawada Yōko's Quest for Exophony”, especially 155.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 61, 65.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>55</sup> Tawada Yōko, “Chantien bashi no temae de” チャンティエン橋の手前で in *Hikari to zerachin no raipuchihhi* 光とゼラチンのライプチッヒ (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> For Mitsutani’s translation, see Tawada, *Facing the Bridge*, 49–106.

<sup>57</sup> Tawada Yōko, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004); Yoko Tawada, *Das Nackte Auge* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 9. Unless otherwise stated, all citations from the novel are taken from this Japanese version and all translations my own. The corresponding passage in the German text highlights the narrator’s Vietnamese identity slightly differently, giving the speech’s title as “Vietnam als Opfer des amerikanischen Imperialismus,” which appears in English translation as “Vietnam As a Victim of American Imperialism.” See Tawada, *Das Nackte Auge*, 7; *The Naked Eye*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New Directions, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Tawada Yōko, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 50.

<sup>60</sup> Susan C. Anderson, “Water under the Bridge: Unsettling the Concept of Bridging Cultures in Yoko Tawada's Writing,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 50.1 (2015): 48.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 49.

- <sup>62</sup> The full contents list reads as follows: 1, 1988/*Repulsion*, 1965; 2, 1989/*Zigzag*, 1974; 3, 1990/*Tristana*, 1970; 4, 1991/*The Hunger*, 1983; 5, 1992/*Indochine*; 6, 1993/*Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre*, 1988; 7, 1994/*Belle du jour*, 1966; 8, 1995/*Si c'était à refaire*, 1976; 9, 1996/*Les Voleurs*, 1996; 10, 1997/*Le dernier Metro*, 1980; 11, 1998/*Place Vendôme*, 1998; 12, 1999/*Est-Ouest*, 1999; 13, 2000/*Dancer in the Dark*, 2000.
- <sup>63</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 50.
- <sup>64</sup> Nakagawa Shigemi, “Shikaku to iu ‘mōmoku’: Tawada Yōko ‘Tabi o suru hadaka no me’ no gengo jikken,” 視覚という「盲目」—多和田葉子『旅をする裸の眼』, in *Modaniti no sōzōryoku: Bungaku to shikakusei* モダニティの想像力—文学と視覚性 (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2009), 247–271; Douglas Slaymaker, “Travelling Optics in Yoko Tawada,” in *Études Germaniques* 653 (2010): 665–71.
- <sup>65</sup> Julia Genz, “Medien als Kulturvermittler? Mediale Gewalt und Transkulturalität in Yoko Tawadas *Das nackte Auge* und *Schwager in Bordeaux*,” in *Yoko Tawada. Fremde Wasser*, ed. Ortrud Gutjahr (Tübingen: konkursbuch Claudia Gehrke, 2012), 186–202.
- <sup>66</sup> Petra Fachinger, “Postcolonial/Postcommunist Picaresque and the Logic of ‘Trans’ in Yoko Tawada’s *Das Nackte Auge*,” in *Tawada Yoko: Poetik Der Transformation*, ed. Christine Ivanovic (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2010), 297–308; Leslie A. Adelson, “Rusty Rails and Parallel Tracks: *Trans-Latio* in Yoko Tawada’s *Das Nackte Auge*,” in *Singularity and Transnational Poetics*, ed. Birgit Mara Kaiser (New York; Oxon: Taylor and Routledge, 2015), 117.
- <sup>67</sup> Charles Exley, “Gazing at Deneuve: The Migrant Spectator and the Transnational Star in Tawada Yōko’s ‘The Naked Eye,’” *Japanese Language and Literature* 50.1 (2016): 53–74.
- <sup>68</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 13.
- <sup>69</sup> Tijana Mamula. *Cinema and Language Loss: Displacement, Visuality and the Filmic Image* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013).
- <sup>70</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 70.
- <sup>71</sup> Mamula, *Cinema and Language Loss*, 2.
- <sup>72</sup> The book’s closest reference to Deneuve by name comes in the allusive initials “C.D.” to whom Tawada dedicates both the German and Japanese editions of this work.
- <sup>73</sup> Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies Film Stars and Society* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3; Christina Johnston, “Deneuve in the 1990s,” in *From Perversion to*

*Purity: The Stardom of Catherine Deneuve*, ed. Lisa Downing and Sue Harris (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 137.

<sup>74</sup> Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham, N. C. and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 133.

<sup>75</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 116.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 127.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 258–9.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 262, 264.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 265–266.

<sup>82</sup> Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>84</sup> This Vietnamese title also omits the sense of a “travelling” naked eye and seems to be translated from the German text.

<sup>85</sup> Tawada Yoko, *L’oeil nu*, trans. Bernard Banoun (Verdier, 2005); Tawada Yoko, *The Naked Eye*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New Directions, 2009).

<sup>86</sup> The name rendered in katakana here reads “Tu Fon.” The romanization “Thu Huong” appears in Tawada’s German text and Bernofsky’s English translation.

<sup>87</sup> Tawada, *Tabi o suru hadaka no me*, 151.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 176. The same sentence appears slightly different in German (and English translation): “Ich trug den Namen ‘Thu Huong’ ein and bekam dabei das Gefühl, als würde ich das für eine andere Person tun” (Tawada, *Das Nackte Auge*, 121). Accordingly, the English translation reads, “I wrote down the name ‘Thu Huong’ and felt as if I was doing this *for* some other person” (my emphasis).

<sup>89</sup> Nina McPherson, “A Note About the Author,” in *Paradise of the Blind*, trans. Phan Huy Duong and Nina McPherson (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 268–70.

<sup>90</sup> Thu Huong Duong, *Paradise of the Blind*, trans. by Phan Huy Duong and Nina McPherson (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).



- <sup>91</sup> Harriet Blodgett, “The Feminist Artistry of Vietnam's Duong Thu Huong,” in *World Literature Today* 75.3/4 (Summer - Autumn 2001): 31–39.
- <sup>92</sup> Duong, *Paradise of the Blind*, 229.
- <sup>93</sup> Iyotani Toshio, “Idō no naka ni sumau” 移動の中に住まう in “*Kikyō no monogatari*/ “idō” no katari: Sengo Nihon ni okeru posutokoroniaru no sōzōryoku 「帰郷」の物語／「移動」の語り—戦後日本におけるポストコロニアルの想像力, ed. Toshio Iyotani and Hirata Yumi 平田由美 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2014), 5–26.
- <sup>94</sup> Tawada Yōko and Wen Yūjū, “‘Imin’ wa Nihongo bungaku o dō kaeru ka?” 「移民」は日本語文学をどう変えるか?, *Bungakkai* 73.1 (January 2019): 200–213. Wen’s name is sometimes transliterated according to Japanese readings of the characters as On Yūjū, or Wen Yōrō as an approximation of the Taiwanese, but the writer herself prefers the combination Wen Yūjū (personal conversation with Wen).
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.
- <sup>96</sup> Bettina Brandt and Yoko Tawada, “The Postcommunist Eye: An Interview with Yoko Tawada,” in *World Literature Today* 80.1 (2006): 45.
- <sup>97</sup> By denying the narrator her ability to deliver her intended speech, Tawada’s novel might even offer a “radical literature” of the kind that Vietnamese-American novelist Viet Nguyen seeks: one that might counter “ethnic” representations that relay Vietnamese voices only as victims by offering an alternative perspective. See Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- <sup>98</sup> Tawada Yōko and Wen Yūjū, “‘Imin’ wa Nihongo bungaku o dō kaeru ka,” 212.