

**VON DER MUTTERSPRACHE ZUR SPRACHMUTTER:
YOKO TAWADA'S CREATIVE MULTILINGUALISM**

AN EXHIBITION ON THE OCCASION OF YOKO TAWADA'S VISIT TO OXFORD

AS DAAD WRITER IN RESIDENCE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, TAYLORIAN (VOLTAIRE ROOM)

HILARY TERM 2017

Exhibition Catalogue written by Sheela Mahadevan

Edited by Yoko Tawada, Henrike Lähnemann and Chantal Wright

Contributed to by Yoko Tawada, Henrike Lähnemann, Chantal Wright,

Emma Huber and Christoph Held

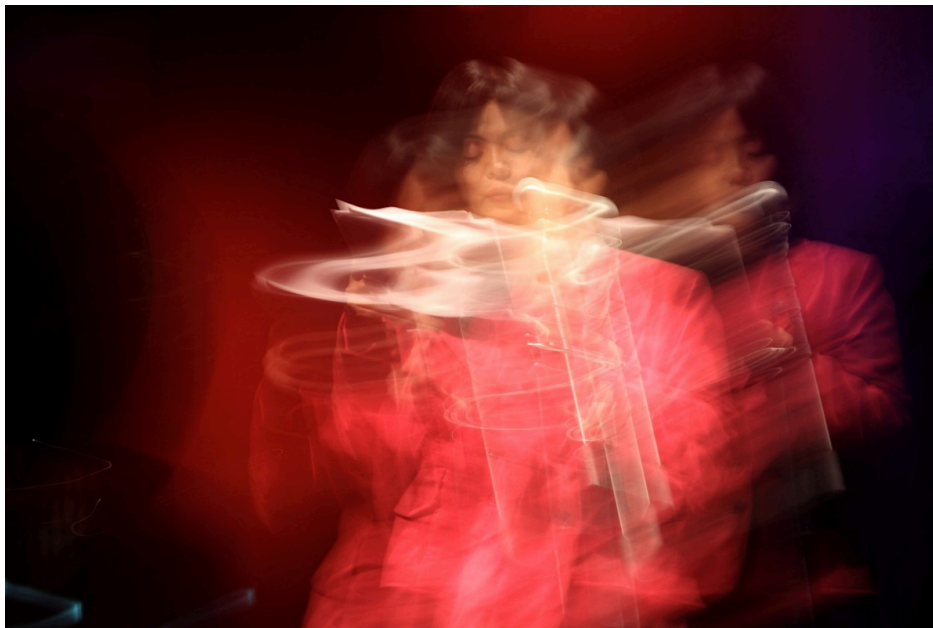


Photo of Yoko Tawada
Photographer: Takeshi Furuya
Source: Yoko Tawada

Yoko Tawada's Biography: CABINET 1

Yoko Tawada was born in 1960 in Tokyo, Japan. She began to write as a child, and at the age of twelve, she even bound her texts together in the form of a first book. She learnt German and English at secondary school, and subsequently studied Russian literature at Waseda University in 1982. After this, she intended to go to Russia or Poland to study, since she was interested in European literature, especially Russian literature. However, her university grant to study in Poland was withdrawn in 1980 because of political unrest, and instead, she had the opportunity to work in Hamburg at a book trade company. She came to Europe by ship, then by trans-Siberian rail through the Soviet Union, Poland and the DDR, arriving in Berlin. In 1982, she studied German literature at Hamburg University, and thereafter completed her doctoral work on literature at Zurich University. Among various authors, she studied the poetry of Paul Celan, which she had already read in Japanese. Indeed, she comments on his poetry in an essay entitled 'Paul Celan liest Japanisch' in her collection of essays named *Talisman* and also in her essay entitled 'Die Niemandrose' in the collection *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte*.

Tawada writes her literature sometimes by hand, and sometimes she composes her works directly on a computer. She consults the following German dictionaries when she writes: Dornseiff (*Der deutsche Wortschatz*), Kluge (*Etymologisches Wörterbuch*), Duden (*Universal, das Bilderwörterbuch*).

Tawada has won numerous prizes for her works, such as the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (1996), the Förderpreis für Literatur der Stadt Hamburg (1990), the Lessingförderpreis (1994), and numerous Japanese prizes also. She was winner of the prestigious Kleist Prize in 2016.

After living in Hamburg for 22 years, Tawada moved to Berlin in 2006. Although Germany is 'home' to her, she spends much of her time travelling around the world, attending various literary and cultural events, conferences, presenting and reading from her works and acting as writer in residence at various institutions. She is DAAD Writer in Residence for two weeks at Oxford in Hilary Term 2017.

Display objects:

1. Franz Dornseiff, *Der Deutsche Wortschatz nach Sachgruppen* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1943)
2. Photo of Yoko Tawada (Photographer: Unknown. Source: Yoko Tawada)
3. Yoko Tawada, *Wo Europa anfängt und ein Gast* (Tübingen, Konkursbuchverlag, 2014)
4. Kleist Prize article: <http://www.heinrich-von-kleist.org/kleist-gesellschaft/kleist-preis/#c7424>
5. Photo of Yoko Tawada (Photographer: Takeshi Furuya, Source: Yoko Tawada)

6. Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1894)
7. Yoko Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 1996)

Tawada's works: CABINET 2

Tawada writes in a variety of genres and media: novels, poetry, essay collections, plays, and even audio texts on CDs. Some of her works are written in Japanese, and then translated into German (by Peter Pörtner). Other works are written in German itself. She rarely translates one language into the other herself, but sometimes writes the same text in Japanese and German.

Her first work and book to be published in Germany was *Nur da wo du bist da ist nichts* (1987) (A Void Only Where You Are). It is a bilingual volume of Japanese and German prose and poetry, with translations from the Japanese by Peter Pörtner. Four years later, her first book *Sanninkankei* was published in Japan. The same year, her first text written in German: *Wo Europa anfängt* (Where Europe Begins) was published in 1991. In 2002, she published her first set of 'sound texts' on the CD *diagonal* with the Japanese jazz pianist Aki Takase. Her most recent work was published in August 2016: *Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende*. She has so far published 24 works in Germany, and 26 in Japan.

Selected works by Yoko Tawada on display:

1. *Wie der Wind im Ei* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 1999)
2. *Tintenfisch auf Reisen: Drei Geschichten* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 1996)
3. *Das nackte Auge* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 2004)
4. *Mein kleiner Zeh war ein Wort* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 2013)
5. *Überseetzungen* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 2002)
6. *Abenteuer der deutschen Grammatik* (Tübingen: Konkursbuchverlag, 2010)

The Adelbert von Chamisso Prize and Multilingual Writing: CABINET 3

Yoko Tawada won the Chamisso Prize in 1996. This prize was first awarded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung in 1985 to writers whose mother tongue or background were not German. In the early years its winners were frequently from the 'guest worker literature' generation of writers. Over the years the criteria for the prize have changed and since 2012 the kind of literature that is awarded the Chamisso is often referred to as 'Chamisso literature'.

The prize is named after Adelbert von Chamisso, who was forced out of France after the French Revolution, and who subsequently settled in Berlin in 1796 and devoted time to writing poetry in German.

Other prize winners include Italian-born Franco Biondi and Mongolian writer Galsan Tschinag.

Interestingly, and controversially, the Robert Bosch Stiftung expressed their intention (in September 2016) of discontinuing this prize from 2018 onwards, for the reason that the prize has entirely fulfilled its original aim, and that foreign writers in Germany have the possibility of competing for other literary prizes which already exist in Germany. In today's society where Germany accepts an increasing number of migrants, it is an interesting and controversial point in history to discontinue such a prize.

Tawada's opinion on this issue is as follows:

Es wäre besser, wenn man den Charakter des Preises erweitern würde. Man muss nicht weiter die deutschen Autoren ausschließen, sondern für alle den Preis öffnen, die sich mit dem Thema "Fremdheit", "Exil" oder "Mehrsprachigkeit" beschäftigen.

(It would be better if the character of the prize was extended. It's important not to exclude German authors anymore, but we should open the prize to all those writers who deal with topics such as alterity, exile or multilingualism.)

Tawada is often referred to as an 'exophonic' writer.¹ The term 'exophonic' is often used to describe writers such as Tawada who write in German despite the fact that their mother tongue is different from German; they will have typically learnt German as an adult, and language is often a key theme in their works.²

Other multilingual writers writing in German whose works contain the presence of another language and culture, or multiple languages and cultures, include Paul Celan, Franco Biondi, Franz Kafka, Elias Canetti, Galsan Tschinag, Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Tzvetta Sofronieva.

Selected works by Multilingual Writers on display:

1. Galsan Tschinag, *Die graue Erde: Roman* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999)
2. Elias Canetti, *Die Blendung* (Regensburg: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1935)
3. Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Mutterzunge* (Köln : Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1998)
4. Paul Celan, *Sprachgitter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996)
5. Franco Biondi, *Im neuen Land* (Bremen: CON Medien-und Vertriebsgesellschaft, 1980)

Tawada and the History of the Book: Layouts and Materiality: CABINET 4

Bilingual books have existed in various formats for centuries; the Taylorian has two early bilingual volumes containing the poems, essays and translations of Martin Opitz, published in 1690 (in Latin and in German). Early dictionaries,

¹ Chantal Wright, 'Writing in the 'Grey Zone': Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany' in *German as a Foreign Language* 3 (2008), 26-42 <<http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2008/wright.pdf>> [Accessed 25 November 2016].

² Ibid.

such as the Schottel dictionary on display, show that German was often set against other languages such as Latin in the past.

The materiality of the book is a vital aspect of Tawada's works, as it has been since the conception of the book. In the Middle Ages, books were often made of parchment and vellum (animal-based materials). Although paper made from plant-based products has been available since the end of the Middle Ages, Tawada interestingly chose to have the book cover of *Ein Gedicht für ein Buch* made from fish skin, since fish and water are important in her works. It is interesting to note that in the Medieval era, book material was dependent on practical needs and the availability of material (the extinction of papyrus led to the use of animal skins for book manufacture), but for Tawada, the book material is chosen with a view to affecting the reading experience and the meaning of her work.

Objects displayed:

1. Justus Georg Schottel, *Ausführliche Arbeit von der Teutschen Haupt Sprache* (Braunschweig: Christoff Friedrich Zilligern, 1663)
2. Photos of *Ein Gedicht für ein Buch* (Hamburg: CTL Presse, 1996)
(A collaborative work by the writer Yoko Tawada, the artist Stephan Köhler and the book- designer Clemens-Tobias Lange)
Source: <http://www.ctl-presse.de/buecher/11ta.htm#b1>
3. Martin Opitz, *Opera. Geist- und weltlicher Gedichte* (Breßlau: Verlegts Jesaias Fellgibel, 1690)

Translating Tawada: CABINET 5

Translating Tawada is undoubtedly an exciting challenge; it often requires a knowledge of Japanese and German. It poses many 'problems': how do we translate neologisms into any language? How do we translate so as to recreate the reading experience of a specific book? For example, in a book that is in German and Japanese where both languages are to be read in different directions, how is this effect rendered in an English translation? How do we translate into English a German and a Japanese version of the same text?

Chantal Wright has recently published an experimental translation of 'Porträt einer Zunge' (Portrait of a Tongue), in which she outlines the problems and demonstrates potential solutions when translating such a work.

On Display:

1. *Yoko Tawada's Portrait of a Tongue: An Experimental Translation*, trans. by Chantal Wright (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013)

Tawada and Language: CABINET 6

Tawada's works make us reconsider our own relation with language, our definition of the terms 'mother tongue' and 'foreign language'. German native speakers reading Tawada's works in German are almost made to feel alienated from their own mother tongue, and her works create the effect that no-one can be comfortable in any language. Her works also make us wonder if we control language or if language controls us? What is bilingualism? What are the implications or advantages of writing literature in a foreign language? Is it possible to free oneself from language?

Here are some quotations from Tawada's works, or her own speech, which may act as starting points for thinking and discussion about language:³

<<Wenn man eine weitere Sprache kennt, dann ist die Distanz zwischen sich selbst und der Muttersprache spürbar. Man ist nicht so ganz unter der Macht der Sprache. Das ist eine Befreiung, und dann kann man erst mutig werden.>>

(If you know another language, then the distance between yourself and the mother tongue can be sensed. You aren't quite so much under the spell of the language. You are released, and only then can you become bold.)

<<Wenn ich im Denken von der einen Sprache zur anderen springe, spüre ich einen Augenblick stark, dass es ganz dunkle Bereiche gibt, ohne Sprache....Wenn man in diese Kluft einmal hineingefallen ist, dann ist die Muttersprache auch ganz fremd, ich finde Japanisch dann sehr komisch und Deutsch sowieso. Dieses Gefühl ist für mich sehr wichtig: sich von der Sprache zu befreien.>>

(If I jump from one language to another while thinking, I sense for a moment that there are quite dark areas without language...if you have fallen into this abyss once, then the mother tongue is quite foreign, I then find Japanese very strange, and German too. This feeling for me is very important: to free oneself from language.)

<< Die literarische Sprache ist sowieso nie die Muttersprache. So wie ich auf Japanisch schreibe, gleicht nicht dem Japanisch, das ich spreche oder der japanischen Sprache, die ich als Kind gelernt habe. In dem Moment, wo man einmal eine Trennung von der Alltagssprache gemacht hat, kommt die literarische Sprache- und die ist sowieso eine Fremdsprache.>>

(Literary language is in any case never the mother tongue. The way I write in Japanese never equates to the Japanese which I speak, or the Japanese language which I learnt as a child. When one has separated from the language of daily use,

³ Linda Koiran, *Schreiben in Fremder Sprache- Yoko Tawada und Galsan Tschinag* (Germany: Iudicum Verlag, 2009).

this is the moment at which literary language arises, and this is in any case a foreign language.)

Extract from *Von der Muttersprache zur Sprachmutter* from *Talisman* (pp. 11-12)

Es machte mir viel Mühe, das grammatische Geschlecht eines deutschen Wortes zu lernen. Ich vergaß es sofort, als hätte es gar keine Beziehung zu dem Wort. Einem Muttersprachlichen komme das grammatische Geschlecht wie ein natürlicher Teil eines Wortes vor, stand in einem Sprachlehrbuch. Ich versuchte immer wieder herauszufinden, wie man sie diese Empfindung erwerben könnte.

(It took a great amount of effort for me to learn the grammatical gender of a German word. I forgot it immediately, as if it had no relation to the word. According to the language textbook, the grammatical gender appears to a native speaker as a natural part of the word. I tried again and again to find out how you could acquire this sensitivity.)

On Display:

1. Yoko Tawada, *Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende* (Tübingen, Konkursbuchverlag, 2016)

Cabinet 7

Multilingual layouts

In this cabinet, you can see a variety of multilingual books with different layouts, from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first century.

1. Angelika Overath, *Poesias dals prüms plets: 33 romanische Gedichte und ihre deutschen Annäherungen* (Zürich: Verlag Klaus G. Renner, 2014)
2. Ebenzer E. Clifton, Friedrich Wilhelm Ebeling, Giovanni Vitali, *Manuel de la conversation et du style épistolaire : français-anglais-allemand-italien* (Paris: Garnier Frères, after 1866)
3. Martin Luther, *Ein Wellische Lügenschrift, von Doctoris Martini Luthers Todt, zü Rom aussgangen* (Nurnberg: Hans Guldenmund, 1545)
4. Thomas Taylor, *The Gentleman's Pocket Companion for travelling into foreign parts* (London: Taylor, 1722-3).

Bibliography

A Selection of Yoko Tawada's works published in Tübingen, Germany with Konkursbuchverlag:

1. Nur da wo du bist da ist nichts (Gedichte und Prosa) 1987
2. Das Bad (Ein Kurzroman) 1989
3. Wo Europa anfängt (Gedichte und Prosa) 1991
4. Ein Gast (Eine Erzählung) 1993
5. Die Kranichmaske die bei Nacht strahlt (Ein Theaterstück) 1993
6. Tintenfisch auf Reisen (3 Erzählungen) 1994
7. Talisman (Literarische Essays) 1996
8. Aber die Mandarinen müssen heute Abend noch geraubt werden (Traumtexte) 1997
9. Wie der Wind in Ei (Ein Theaterstück) 1997
10. Verwandlungen (Tübinger Poetikvorlesungen) 1998
11. Orpheus oder Izanagi. Till. (Ein Hörspiel und ein Theaterstück) 1998
12. Opium für Ovid. Ein Kopfkissenbuch von 22 Frauen. (Prosa) 2000
13. Überseezungen. Prosa (Prosa) 2002
14. CD "diagonal" zusammen mit Aki Takase (Lesung mit Musik) 2002
15. Das nackte Auge (Roman) 2004
16. Was ändert der Regen an unserem Leben? (Libretto) 2005
17. Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte (Prosa) 2007
18. Schwager in Bordeaux (Roman) 2008
19. Abenteuer der deutschen Grammatik (Gedichte) 2010
20. Fremde Wasser (Hamburger Poetikvorlesungen) 2012
21. Mein kleiner Zeh war ein Wort (12 Theaterstücke) 2013
22. Etüden im Schnee (Roman) 2014

23. akzentfrei (Essays) 2016

24. Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende (2016)

Selected Reading on Yoko Tawada and Multilingual Literature:

Brandt, Bettina, 'Ein Wort, ein Ort, or How Words Create Places: Interview with Yoko Tawada' in *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture*, ed. by M. Gelus and H. Kraft (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), pp. 3-15 (pp. 9-10).

Bosch Stiftung homepage [Online]. [Cited 20 November 2016]. Available from: <<http://www.boschstiftung.de/content/language2/html/14169.asp>> [Accessed 20 November 2016].

Koiran, Linda, *Schreiben in Fremder Sprache- Yoko Tawada und Galsan Tschinag* (München: Iudicum Verlag, 2009)

Trojanow, Ilija and José F. A. Oliver, 'Ade Chamisso Preis', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Feuilleton Online*, 21 September 2016
<<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/kritik-an-bosch-stiftung-ade-chamisso-preis-14443175.html>> [last accessed 20 November 2016]

Wright, Chantal, trans., *Yoko Tawada's Portrait of a Tongue: An Experimental Translation* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013)

Wright, Chantal, 'Writing in the 'Grey Zone': Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany' in *German as a Foreign Language* 3 (2008), 26-42
<<http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2008/wright.pdf>> [Accessed 25 November 2016]

Yildiz, Yasemin, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011)

Yoko Tawada's official website <yokotawada.de> [last accessed 25 November 2016]