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A Gap in(to) the Dictionary: The In-between Lyric of Tawada Yōko

The work of Japanese-German writer Yoko Tawada (Tawada Yōko) stands out as an example of 'in-between' writing. Instead of simply 'translating' Japanese into German and vice versa, Tawada blends both languages and cultures, often self-reflexively. As a result, poetic in-between spaces emerge, in which creative work, cultural translation, and social criticism can take place. The texts also construct in-between spaces on a formal level. For instance, the verse novels "Kasa no shitai to watashi no tsuma" (『傘の死体とわたしの妻』, 2006) and "Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende" (2016) feature both narrative progression and poetic devices (vivid imagery, association, and wordplay), defying categorization either as volumes of poetry or as novels. In addition, the in-between space of genres becomes visible in Tawada's self-translations, which often amount to rewritings and lead to a change in genre – travel essay to novella, novel to drama, or poem to prose text. An example of this genre-transcending bilingualism as entryway to an in-between space are the texts „Die Orangerie" (1997) and "Orenji-en nite" (「オレンジ園にて」, 1997/1998), which initially appear as a poem and its (apparently) prose translation. However, a number of textual peculiarities of both pieces point to the mutual influences between versions. Thus, I read all four examples as hybrid forms of poetry, which perform the mixing of genres, languages, and cultures that occurs in today's world. In their cultural hybridity especially, the poems point to underlying social issues of homo- and xenophobia.

Keywords: in-between space, cultural translation, hybridity, genre transition, bilingualism, exophony

Introduction

The peculiar style of the multi-genre author Yoko Tawada (多和田葉子, Tawada Yōko), who was born in Japan but now lives in Germany, self-reflexively blends the phonetic, metaphoric, and grammatical particularities of German and Japanese. This paper discusses elements of genre-transition in two verse novels, "Kasa no shitai to watashi no tsuma" (『傘の死体と私の妻』["The Corpse of the Umbrella and my Wife"] (2006) and „Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende" ["A Balcony Space for Fleeting Evenings"] (2016). I also examine elements of language-transition in a poem with a version in each language, „Die Orangerie" ["The Orangery"] and "Orenji-en nite" (「オレンジ園にて」["In the Orange Garden"]), both first published in 1997. All these texts are hybrids, and their transitions of genre and language boundaries open up new avenues of thought, create spaces of cultural exchange, and perhaps even spur social change. After an outline of my chief findings regarding Tawada's poetics of the in-between, I justify my classification of the first two texts as verse novels and analyse one excerpt of each before examining the language-transgressing texts. In each instance, I point out the hybridizations used and discuss their effects.

Tawada takes an iconoclastic stance towards binary categorization and instead develops a poetics of the in-between. She expresses this impulse in the German prose poem „Ich wollte keine Brücke schlagen" ["I did not want to built a bridge"][1] from which I take the title of this paper. Instead of merely 'bridging' languages and thus cultures, the poem's speaker is interested in the in-between space, here represented by a river. This space is where the transformation of language begins: „Wollen wir uns ans Ufer setzen und eine Lücke ins Wörterbuch schlagen? Wollen wir eine Lücke aufschlagen wie ein Buch?" ["Shall we sit down at the riverbank and strike a gap into the dictionary? Shall we open up the gap like a book?"].[2]

The transformation of language opens up a gap in entrenched thought patterns and may lead to a transformation of thought and thus of culture. The next step in this process is the creation of hybrid forms, and Tawada performs this creation constantly. As verse novels, the first two texts discussed here are genre hybrids. Regarding the second pair of texts, the Japanese version of the "Orangery"-poem is also a prose/poetry hybrid. In addition, both versions of "Orangery" show the influence of the other language, which makes them linguistic hybrids as well. Through their hybridity, the four texts I discuss establish a 'Third

[1] From the volume "But the Mandarins Must Be Robbed Tonight" („Aber die Mandarinen müssen heute abend noch geraubt werden", Tawada 1997: 65-66). Whenever I quote a language other than English, I provide my own translation. To my knowledge, none of the poems I discuss has previously been translated into English.

[2] Ibid., 65.

Space' of social criticism and cultural encounter, which entails a potential for social change appropriate for the 21st century.

Poems as Third Spaces

In cases of transcultural writers such as Tawada, Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'Third Space' proves a useful tool for analysis. Understood as the process of utterance and understanding, the 'Third Space' links the culture(s) of origin and the culture(s) of the language(s) used (e.g. in a translation), as well as the culture of the content depicted in the work and the situation of reception. Because these conditions vary with each work and individual reception context, "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; […] even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew".[3] Thus, the 'Third Space' emerges as a room for the renegotiation of cultural meaning and thus culture and society itself. The various in-between spaces of Tawada's writing perform exactly this function.

Tawada is, of cause, not the first to portray literature of and as a 'Third space'. In cultural studies, Doris Bachmann already suggested a concept of literature functioning as a 'Third Space' ("dritte Welt", lit., third world), where the familiar is alienated through distancing and estrangement techniques, in 1979.[4] Similarly, professor of German Studies Norbert Mecklenburg establishes poetry specifically as an "exterritorial" space, which can establish communication beyond intercultural contact in the binary sense.[5] However, Bhabha associates another term with 'Third space', hybridity, which is also applicable to Tawada's work.

For Bhabha, 'Third Spaces' ultimately enable the establishment of a new type of culture, "based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*".[6] Instead of forcing equivalence through the erasure of untranslatable differences, the alien is acknowledged as such.[7] The result is a hybrid: an overt construct, which does not resolve the underlying differences and is therefore non-homogenous. In Bhabha's view, this heterogenous construct emancipates the hybrid from dichotomous hierarchies of self/other, and thus unleashes the potential for political commentary and resistance. This effect is especially potent if the hybrid person is conscious of their own hybridity, and consciously employs it to resist.[8]

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[3] Bhabha (2012: 55).

[4] Bachmann (1979: 31).

[5] Mecklenburg (1990: 9).

[6] Bhabha (2012: 56).

[7] Ibid., 321.

[8] Bhabha (1985: 154-5; 2012: 159-160).

Tawada's texts are such deliberate hybrids with political potential, as I will demonstrate below. She expressly designs her texts as hybrids and claims:

> Die meisten Formen sind Mischwesen. Darin findet man verschiedene Sprachen und Gattungen: Ich schreibe auf Japanisch und auf Deutsch, Prosa und Theaterstücke, Literarisches und Theoretisches gleichzeitig.[9]
>
> Most forms are composite creatures. You find different languages and genres in them: I write in Japanese and in German, prose and drama, literature and theory, at the same time.

Tawada's decision to mix genres means her works are hybrid due to conscious choice, in accordance with Bhabha's criteria for political potential.

However, Bhabha focuses on cultures (and takes his literary examples from prose), whereas I consider poems. I contend that Bhabha's concept of hybridity and its implications are applicable to these texts because poetry is equally as capable as prose narrative to portray hybridity. Norbert Mecklenburg even claims that the complexity of the world can be better expressed through the layers of polysemy prevalent in poetic writing. Concurrently, he criticizes the tendency of plot-based narratives to develop (and be understood) in a rather linear fashion.[10] Tawada's choice of verse forms avoids this problem. In addition, the potential ambiguity of poetry makes poetic forms suited to hybrid content, and the poem itself can be a hybrid of different poetic forms or even literary genres.

Verse Novels

One version of this latter type of genre-hybridity is the verse novel.[11] The 1998 "Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory" defines verse novels as extended poems with a novel-like plot. Therefore, on the prose-side of its hybridity, a verse novel "deals with the substance of everyday modern life in much the same way as a work of prose fiction".[12] This substance includes discussion of present issues,[13] and the examples below demonstrate how Tawada draws on and responds to controversies of contemporary culture. Author and educator Gabriela Pereira adds the aspect of character development to the novel-like features of verse novels.[14] In "Kasa", the speaker partially regresses to a child-like character, whereas in „Balkonplatz", the speaker's commitment to a

[9] She states this in her essay "The Body of Writing and Writing on the Body" („Der Schriftkörper und der beschriftete Körper", in: "At first, I am always a reader" („Zuerst bin ich immer Leser", edited by Krupp / Janssen)), Tawada (2000: 71).

[10] Mecklenburg (2008: 117).

[11] As an alternative to both typical novels and poetry, women writers seem to have a significant interest in the verse novel form (cf. Kroll 2017).

[12] Penguin Dictionary (1998: 965-966).

[13] Ibid., 966.

[14] Pereira (2012).

queer family structure, which a heterosexual affair had disrupted, is re-established in the final poem.

Consequently, if the novel-like aspects of the two texts are ascertained, their poeticity is in question. I argue that "Kasa" and "Balkonplatz", despite their novel-like scope and their representation of current society and its problems, qualify as poetry, so that the term 'verse novel' remains appropriate. Regarding the lyrical qualities of verse novels, Pereira stresses the slightly outdated[15] criterion of self-expression, but also mentions poetic imagery and the musicality of language as factors.[16] Both "Kasa" and „Balkonplatz" fit this description. Furthermore, they have the "single speaker express[ing] thought and emotion" characteristic of lyrical poetry.[17]

Hempfer elaborates on this speaking position to define lyrical speech as a "performativity fiction", which results from the simultaneity of speaking and situation: „Ein lyrisches Sprechen erzählt also nicht, was geschehen ist, sondern konstituiert im Sprechen, worüber gerade gesprochen wird" ["Lyrical speech does not narrate what has happened, but it constitutes through speaking that which is spoken about"].[18] This definition applies to both works in their entirety, even to otherwise prose-like passages of „Balkonplatz", as the singular speaking voice evokes the situation it describes, usually in present tense.

In addition, poems work with wordplay and misunderstandings to foreground the materiality and mediality of language. This aspect – the reference to the mediality of language – may be the two texts' best claim to poeticity. According to professor of Literary Studies Rüdiger Zymner, poetry is constituted through its illumination of the meaning-constituting role of language and its function as a catalyst of aesthetic experience. "[W]e now can define lyric as *a (graphic or vocal) manifestation of the cognitive tool 'language' – a manifestation, which is essentially a display of lingual mediality by constituting aesthetic evidence*."[19]

The use of free verse does not necessarily forbid a classification as verse novel, but Williams and Zymner both name metered verse as a feature of verse novels.[20] Yet, as Zymner himself points out, the repetition of form, such as stanzas with fixed meter and rhyme scheme, over the course of a long narrative poem may diminish the poeticity of these formal features, to the point of irrelevance.[21] Thus, to remain high on the lyrical scale, a long narrative poem (such as a verse novel) needs to "direct […] attention to language as medium of procedural gener-

[15] Williams (2019: 22).

[16] Pereira (2012), cf. Penguin Dictionary (1998: 966).

[17] Williams (2019: 19).

[18] Hempfer (2014: 34, 32).

[19] Zymner (2017: 152, original emphasis), see also idem (2009a: 139-140, 151).

[20] Williams (2019: 145), cf. Zymner (2009a: 157-158).

[21] Ibid., 164.

ation of meaning" („die Sprache als Medium prozessuraler Sinngenese", my translation).[22] Passages of sound-focused playing with language in both of Tawada's verse novels demonstrate exactly this awareness for language, especially the introductory passages of poems 6 and 7 in „Balkonplatz"[23] as well as the first line of the "Kasa" excerpt discussed below. In this context, the versification of novels, even if it is "only" free verse, may function as a signpost for such phonetic qualities of the text,[24] and therefore strengthen their poeticity, more than regular, metered verse would. In "Kasa", this lyrical speaking mode of subjective emotional expression and language play is more relevant than the narration of the plot. Nevertheless, a close reading of the text can bring the story to light.

"Kasa no shitai to watashi no tsuma": A Lesbian Verse Novel

"Kasa no shitai to watashi no tsuma" [『傘の死体とわたしの妻』, "The Umbrella's Corpse and My Wife"] (2006) was the Tawada's first publication of Japanese poems in Japan. As a hybrid text, the verse novel performs the tasks of prose (plot narration and character development) by means of poetry. In addition, it uses its hybridity to deliver social criticism. This hybridity emerges from a contrast of prose-like or narrative and poetic (even lyrical) elements.

The text's hybridity immediately confronts the reader. On the one hand, there are strong narrative elements. Judging by its table of contents, "Kasa" appears as a romance novel, as its chapters list relationship stages, from meeting and honeymoon to child rearing. A voice in the first person speaks (narrates) the entire work (except for the prologue), but it also quotes other voices, directly or indirectly (a dramatic element, but also common in prose). The main characters appear in each chapter-poem and their story moves chronologically forward (as in a novel), displaying the speaker's evolving relationship with the wife-character. While the poems were published individually in the magazine "Gendaishi techō" (現代詩手帳), they were contexualized as chapters of a serialized novel.[25]

On the other hand, "Kasa" is an intensely lyrical text. The speaking voice expresses its emotional state, experiences, and worldview, and evokes the situation and itself as this situation unfolds, correlating with Hempfer's definition of lyrical poetry. The text is set with the unjustified margin typical of lyrical layout; some phrases are even arranged on the page, approaching visual poetry. Moreover, the poems feature metaphoric language, wordplay, and meaning-altering line

[22] Ibid., 168.

[23] Tawada (2016: 51, 65).

[24] As suggested by Zymner (2009a: 170).

[25] Because of these two points, the overarching plot and the manner of publication, I consider the text a verse novel, rather than a novel-in-poems (where the individual texts are independent enough to be published as a stand-alone poem). For a definition of the genre of verse novel featuring this distinction, especially in an anglophone context, see Stahl (2021).

breaks as well as pauses. Since the images flow in an associative rather than narrative manner, and each poem has its own theme(s), the individual 'chapters' are to some degree self-contained as poems, despite their function in the overarching narrative.

The verse novel is a rather new genre in Japanese literature and has strong transcultural ties. While classical and modern texts often embed poems in prose narratives, the term "verse novel" (韻文小説*, inbun shōsetsu*) is closely tied to translations of Pushkin's "Onegin", the prime example of the metric verse novel.[26] Moreover, the free verse form Tawada uses in "Kasa" owes more to the Anglophone verse novel boom than to Japanese literary history. Tellingly, before "Kasa" was serialized in "Gendaishi techō", the journal published another verse novel, "Kawara arekusa" (『河原荒草』). The author of that work, Itō Hiromi, has for many years resided alternately in America and Japan before permanently moving to California. Thus, she inhabits a transcultural position similar to Tawada.

In broad terms, the most striking features of "Kasa" are its use of language, its reader involvement and its transcendence of genre. Each chapter-poem features generous amounts of language play. In her discussion of "Kasa", the poet Arai Toyomi notes that prose becomes boring for poets used to experimenting with language. She suggests that this is why Tawada uses her lyric techniques of word de[con]struction and separation of sound and meaning in "Kasa" to deconstruct narrative coherence in the process of narration.[27]

Readers must deduce the plot from the text by interpretation, since direct statements regarding the development of the main characters' relationship are rare. Thus, the work uses the devices of poetry to deliver a plot with developing characters (as is typical of prose). This is what makes the text a verse novel. Although she does not use the term, Arai also describes "Kasa" as such: on the one hand, she stresses the use of experimental, poetic language; on the other, she describes the text as a "family narrative" (「家族物語」, *kazoku monogatari*) and "vulgar family drama" (「家族猥雑劇」, *kazoku waizatsugeki*) as well as a "novel" (「小説」, *shōsetsu*).[28]

These different terms show the genre transgression of the text. The relationship to the "wife" and the discussions of conception (poem 6, 8, 9) and child-rearing (poem 5, 10, 11, 12) explains the description as a "family narrative". At the same time, the depiction of female bodies, of sex, fertilization treatment, and

[26] Although verse narratives have existed since antiquity, the narrative element in verse tales has changed with times and cultures. While the antique verse epics as well as the verse romances of the Middle Ages belong in the same broad genre of 'narratives in verse' as the verse novel, this particular genre's combination of the modern narrative structure of the *novel* with (metric) verse has "Onegin" as its basis.

[27] Cf. Arai (2007: 83).

[28] Ibid., 82 ff.

miscarriage may justify the characterization as "vulgar". The use of different voices points to influences of drama (even if the setting of any scene is often vague). These voices are indicated by the script used (p. 52-54), by the use of quotation marks (p. 64), through gender- (p. 53) or region-specific dialect (p. 61), or by putting the character name at the beginning of the line (p. 52), as in a drama script. Such hybridity of themes and genres is unusual for Japanese poetry, though Itō Hiromi's 2005 novel, again, was a likely influence.

To illustrate the functioning of "Kasa" as a hybrid text, I will analyse the beginning of the third poem in the cycle, "Omiai" (「お見合い」["A Meeting to Initiate an Arranged Marriage"]).

はっけ　よった　のこった
と、かけても、声、むすばない
ころころ逃げて
妻は電気技師
切れた電球から切れた電球へと
めまぐるしくコウカンしている
ちょっととまってください、この見積書を
ははっ　妻　（の束ねられた髪の先端）笑って　逃げる
こちらはこちらで乾いた乳孔から　目球　掻き出して
こ（ろん）んなものでよかったらどうぞところで国際保証書は
ははっ　妻が　わら
ところで、趣味は？
ホ・ネです
ハ・ネですか
いいえ　髑髏ですとか
とか　とか
ほら
目と芽が合って誘われ [29]

Having　put spirit into it　you remain in the ring
this, [my] voice, calls [to you], but doesn't connect
one by one they flee
the wife is an electrical engineer
from burned-out lightbulb to burned-out lightbulb
hectically she replaces them, sympathy and good feelings
Please wait, this cost estimate
Haha, the wife (the tips of her tied-together hair) laughs and flees
Here is here, out of the dried-up milk-hole I scratch eyeballs
Would this (collapsed) one be all right with you, by the way, what about an international warranty card
Haha, the wife laughs
By the way, what is your hobby?
Bone-minton.
You mean Badminton?
No, skulls and such

[29] Tawada (2006: 27-38, 28).

and such and such
Hey!
Eye and eye (seed) meet and [you] are seduced

The poem opens with a sense of disconnection, as the speaker's voice cannot reach the addressee. The terms in the first line are written in hiragana and thus appear initially as sound, rather than meaning. This function is intensified by the rhythm that develops through the repeated use of gemination (「はっけ　よったのこった」, *hakke yotta nokotta*, l. 1). The word *hakke-yoi* (はっけよい) is even warped, against custom, to a past tense form (「はっけ　よった」, *hakke yotta*, l. 1) to strengthen this effect. The resulting disconnection of sound and meaning then transforms into personal disconnection in the second line, where the speaker's voice, fractured by commas, fails to reach the addressee (the speaker's (future) wife). *Koe o kakeru*, lit. "hang one's voice on someone", signifies calling for or addressing someone, while the verb *musubu* (結ぶ) means to tie together or connect. With the phrase "*kaketemo, koe, musubanai*" (「かけても、声、むすばない」, l. 2, "[my] voice, calls [to you], but doesn't connect") the speaker expresses that despite calling to the other character (*koe o kakete*), their voice does not reach them (*musubanai*). This line clarifies on the content level the disconnection expressed on the sound and punctuation levels in ll. 1-2.

The words used in these first two lines are from a sumo context. Thus, the speaker is comparing the one-on-one meetings intended to facilitate marriage (*omiai*) to wrestling matches. In detail, the first line's *hakke-yoi* is a sumo referee's call, used to urge wrestlers to put in more effort when they have come to a stop, while *nokotta* means a wrestler remains in the ring (i.e. he has not yet lost). *Kake-goe* (掛け声) is a term for calls (often encouraging or criticizing ones) to actors or athletes, to which Tawada alludes with the phrase "kaketemo, koe" (「かけても、声」, l. 2). Similarly, *musubi* (*no ichiban)* is the last sumo match of the day and this term echoes in the negation *musubanai* at the end of l. 2.[30] This line of sporting references resurfaces later in the excerpt with the mention of badminton, emphasizing the competitive nature of the event. Using the sumo vocabulary, the speaker positions herself as the referee. She stands apart and cannot reach her (future) wife.[31] The fact that sumo is a men's sport also points to another gap between the speaker and the wife – if the wife is (at this time) only looking for men as partners, the chances of the speaker to win her affections are slim.

The excerpt shows how a narrative sequence develops beneath the stream of associations of the lyrical text. The speaker's (future) wife is introduced as an

[30] *Musubi*, however, is a very versatile term and can also mean an emotional connection, marriage, or joining in an economic sense. I have listed dictionary entries for all these terms at the end of the bibliography. Where available, I provide the links to both a Japanese dictionary entry and an English explanation from a Sumo fan website.

[31] The verse novel's main speaker is assigned female at birth (her female reproductive anatomy features prominently in poem 8) and identifies as a woman (she introduces herself and her wife as two women who are married in poem 7).

electrical engineer, which may be an actual description of her job, as the couple first meet at a construction site in the first poem of the verse novel. However, the term also offers a metaphorical interpretation: as an electrical engineer, the wife-character hurries from one man to another, but they are all "burned-out lightbulbs" (「切れた電球」, *kireta denkyū*, l. 5), meaning they are of no use to her, and she can only replace them. The metaphor transports narrative development: the wife tries out different men and finds them wanting – until she meets the (female) speaker.

In addition to the lyrically presented plot, the quoted section of "Omiai" criticizes the capitalist logic of love as a marketplace. Human beings are reduced to (mass-produced) objects (lightbulbs), to be used until they are "burned-out" (or fixed by an attractive woman?). Furthermore, the poem frames relationships in economic terms; for instance, one man offers "cost estimates" (「見積書」, *mitsumori sho*, l. 7) and "international warranty cards" (「国際保証書」, *kokusai hoshō sho*, l. 10) to convince the wife to stay. The speaker, who stands aloof in a 'Third Space', as the referee-comparison shows, uses the business-related terms to reveal the absurdity of the situation through these ironic word choices.

In the capitalist environment portrayed, feelings are seemingly absent, but bodies feature repeatedly as part of the speaker's criticism. The phrase "out of the dried-up milkhole I scratch eyeballs" (「乾いた乳孔から　目球　掻き出して」, *kawaita chikō kara　medama　kakida　shite* l. 9) could suggest that the men stare at the wife's breasts, and this makes her feel uncomfortable.[32] Finally, she retaliates by claiming her hobby is bones; a wordplay on badminton *(hane)*, which sounds similar to bone (*hone*). The man voices an enraged "Hey!" (「ほら」, *hora*, l. 17), as he is presumably unaccustomed to being reduced to body parts. Alternatively, the speaker may call "Hey" to her (future) wife to initiate the meeting of their eyes in the next line (l. 18).

Thus, the poetic representation of the plot enables Tawada to include social criticism in the images used – she takes advantage of the opportunities of hybridity in Bhabha's sense. In the next section, I want to consider how Tawada's German verse novel performs similar feats.

[32] A later poem positions the speaker and the wife in their forties and discusses problems of the climacteric; it also mentions that the wife has raised a child in her first marriage. Thus, her milk-flow has dried up both actually (she no longer breastfeeds a child) and figuratively (she has begun to transition into menopause).

„Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende“: Voice of a Queer Social Consciousness

Ten years after the publication of “Kasa”, Tawada released a similar text in German, „Ein Balkonplatz für flüchtige Abende“ [“A balcony space for fleeting evenings”] (2016). Whereas “Kasa” is a verse novel on the lyrical end of the spectrum, „Balkonplatz“ rather stresses the plot. Nevertheless, it too employs its generic hybridity: Firstly, to tell a story with poetic means (as “a poetic novel”, according to the blurb), and secondly, to convey resistance to sexist aspects of society. The use of the word “fleeting” in the title indicates the transitory and in-between nature of the spaces – and people – portrayed within, which host the novel’s critical voice.

“Balkonplatz” is much more direct than “Kasa” in describing the setting and expressing events external to the speaker, although it remains a lyrical text. After the first poem, entitled „Vorspiel“ [“performance/prelude/foreplay”], the narrative structure emerges through references in the poems to earlier events, as well as expository passages. This feature, as well as the reappearances of named characters, increases the coherence of the whole and mark the text more clearly than “Kasa” as a verse novel, rather than a novel-in-poems.[33]

While the term verse novel (‚Versroman’) appears mostly in the context of medieval chivalric romances,[34] German literature is currently witnessing an increase in verse novels, possibly in response to the boom in the English-speaking world.[35] Translations of English-language verse novels into German have won critical acclaim[36] and established German-language poets have also published works that can be considered verse novels in recent years, such as Durs Grünbein’s „Vom Schnee“ (2003) and Ann Cotton’s „Verbannt!“ (2016). Thus, Tawada takes part in a transcultural literary movement with both verse novels discussed here, although her Japanese contribution probably has more relevance due to the smaller number of verse novels available in Japanese.

However, the similarities of „Balkonplatz“ to “Kasa” do not end with the genre, as is also an overtly hybrid text. The speaker of „Balkonplatz“ also interacts with a number of characters, whose speech they[37] sometimes quote. Despite this

[33] Nevertheless, Tawada has read single poems from „Balkonplatz“ in isolation, such as the 12th poem „Wer mich gebar“ at the Institute for Japanese Culture Cologne, 30/09/2019. However, this poem is focused on Elsa and her relationship with her mother and thus to a degree separate from the verse novel’s main narrative.

[34] For instance, see Schmolke-Hasselmann (1980).

[35] Stahl (2021: 89-90), see also Zymner (2009b).

[36] For instance, a verse novel won the title „Jugendbuch des Jahres“ (“Adolescent Book of the Year”) at the Frankfurt book fair 2019. See MDR Kultur (undated).

[37] This character voices discomfort with being perceived as a woman several times, without affirming a masculine identity, which speaks for a non-binary identification. The speaker is

dramatic element, like in "Kasa", the poems are still ripe with wordplay and poetic misunderstandings. In addition, "Balkonplatz" makes use of transformations, as well as literary and artistic allusions, stressing the artistic, if not narrowly poetic, aspirations of the text. Moreover, the element of self-expression typical of the lyrical mode also manifests itself in the discussions of social and political issues typical of the novel (such as gender, sexuality, religion, literature, social class and disability). The following excerpt from the ninth poem, „Mit spitzen Ohren" ["With Alert (literally, pointy) Ears"] exhibits most of the typical features of „Balkonplatz".

Wäre ich ein kranker Ast der Buddenbrooks,
wäre ich hier zu Hause,
in der Künstlergarderobe.
Ein Sex ohne Organe,
Leidenschaft ohne Familiennamen.
Zwei Frauen tanzen miteinander
in der zweiten Postkarte.
Elsa im türkisen Kleid,
ich in Granatapfel gekleidet.
[...] Adoptiere mich!
Leider kann ich nicht, du kleines
Kätzchen, hör zu: Die Adoptionsrechte
sind einer Ehe vorbehalten,
bei der ein Teil als Mann
und der andere als Frau registriert sind.
Dann heirate mich!
Aus dem Kätzchen wird ein Kater,
durch seine Schnauze lächelt Chris.
Der Schreck öffnet meine Augen und
ich liege im Bett, neben mir Elsa mit einem
Kätzchen in den Armen.
Eine dunkelrote Insel auf dem Bettlaken.
Du hast einen Kater geboren,
das ist unser Kind,
sagt sie.[38]

If I were a sick branch of the Buddenbrooks
I would be at home here,
in the performers' dressing room.
An intercourse without organs,
passion without a family name.
Two women dancing together
in the second postcard.
Elsa in a turquoise dress,

---

also initially considered male by some observers, suggesting a gender-neutral performance. Therefore, I use 'singular they' to refer to them as a non-binary character.

[38] Tawada (2016: 81-92, 90-2).

me dressed in pomegranate.
[…] Adopt me!
Sadly I can't do that, you little
kitten, listen: The rights of adoption
are reserved for a marriage
in which the one part is registered as man
and the other as woman.
Then marry me!
The kitten becomes a tomcat,
through his snout, Chris smiles.
The shock opens my eyes and
I lie in bed, Elsa beside me with a
kitten in her arms.
A dark red island on the bedsheet.
You gave birth to a tomcat,
he is our child,
she says.

This excerpt demonstrates both the intermediality and genre hybridity of the text. Intermediality is already present in the first line, where the speaker alludes to Thomas Mann's 1901 novel „Buddenbrooks", which describes the decline of a 19th century German merchant family. The "sick branch" mentioned in the poem is probably the Buddenbrook's second son Christian, whose character flaws the speaker of „Balkonplatz" and other characters have discussed previously.[39] In addition, the speaker references paintings by Jeanne Mammen: the first, "Before the Performance" (1928), the speaker had described (ekphrasis) in the immediately preceding passage of the poem; the second (reproduced on a picture postcard) features in ll. 6-9 of the excerpt.[40]

The passage also exemplifies the genre hybridity of "Balkonplatz". The chain of associations in the first section of the quotation contrasts with the dialogue between speaker and cat, and the explanatory passage at the end of the excerpt. The scene of waking up still uses enjambments to enhance the strangeness of the situation and stress its lyrical quality. By contrast, the last four lines coincide with syntactic units. Thus, the end of the excerpt is stylistically similar to Tawada's prose narratives and only recognizable as poetry through the line breaks. The text is therefore a genre hybrid.

Like in "Kasa", the speaker uses the hybridity of the text for criticism. In the excerpt, the speaker identifies with the female performers in Mammen's painting and reflects on their own pathologized ("sick branch") identity. This may

[39] Ibid., 68-70.

[40] Several paintings, including Mammen's, are included in the volume. In his description of the anglophone verse novel, Zymner (2009b: 153-154) mentions both playful intertextual references and the use of illustrations. The fact that Tawada's German verse novel conforms to this supports Zymner's thesis that the verse novel genre is transnational, translingual, and cannot be adequately analyzed by treating national literatures in isolation.

refer to the speaker's rejection of the female role, and of gender identity and sexuality as categories in general. They describe themselves in an earlier poem of the verse novel as follows: „Homo / sapiens und / Hetero- / lingual und / keine Frau, kein Mann, dafür eine / Stereoanlage: von links und rechts / möchte ich hören das Geflüster / der Hormone jeder Art." ["Homo / sapiens and / hetero- / lingual and / no woman, no man, but a / stereo: from left and right / I want to hear the whispers / of hormones of any kind."][41]

Alternatively, the expression "sick" may refer to the narrator's queer[42] relationship with Elsa. The fact that the speaker sees themselves in the shorter, black-haired woman of Mammen's "Two Women Dancing" (c. 1928), supports this reading of the sequence. As a reflection on the pathologization of queer relationships, this extract of the verse novel functions as social criticism.

The verse novel achieves this criticism through the display of one result of pathologization, which is the discrimination against non-heterosexual couples when it comes to relationship status and child rearing. In a heteronormative, phallocentric society, women's sexuality is made invisible[43] – generally assumed non-existent. For most of recorded history, moreover, two women could not marry, much less have a family together. Hence, the poem describes such love as "without organs" or "a family name". This extends into the present: until same-sex marriage became equivalent to heterosexual marriage in Germany in 2017, homosexual couples could not be married in the literal sense, and were thus unable to adopt a child together.[44] The speaker's rejection of the kitten's request to adopt him points to this fact.

Moreover, the poem also calls attention to the pressure to conform to heteronormativity, and mocks the patriarchal family model. In the beginning of the poem, the speaker's male lover Chris is about to move to another city when he (apparently) transforms into a tomcat. This cat reappears in the quoted section. When the cat demands that the speaker marry it/him, this causes sudden horror: the male lover threatens to re-absorb the queer speaker into the heteronormative family system. As a form of poetic resistance, the poem presents the fantastic idea of adopting him as a pet. This mockery, and the criticism of heteronormative society and its thought patterns, reaches its maximum with the idea of the speaker giving birth to the kitten (the male figure is thus twice demoted from its hegemonial position, as infant and as animal). In other words, the poetic image-

41 Tawada (2016: 54).

42 Since the speaker does not identify as cis-female, I decided to avoid the terms 'lesbian' or 'homosexual' to describe the speaker's relationship with Elsa, and use 'queer' instead; but to observers they would probably appear as lesbian.

43 Irigaray (1979: 22-26). Although the speaker does not seem to identify as a cis-woman, they have female body and would therefore be read as a lesbian couple when in public with Elsa.

44 Ambros (ed.).

ry serves the purpose of social criticism (which is more commonly expressed in prose) in this hybrid text.

In the "Orange Garden" between Languages

Finally, I consider the poems „Die Orangerie" ["The Orangery"] and「オレンジ園にて」["In the Orange Garden"]. The first publication of both texts falls into the same year (1997),[45] and their content is near identical. Despite their differences, I want to make a case that this is not a mere self-translation, but that the two versions constitute two poetic approaches to the same in-between space.

In formal terms, the German poem is transformed in translation to create a Japanese prose poem. Whereas the German text is printed as a long poem, with six numbered parts in verse, the Japanese version's layout is that of a prose text. In addition, the Japanese text represents wordplay that hinges on German homophones with a focus on meaning, rather than on sound, which strengthens the impression that the Japanese version is a prose translation of the German poem. However, the Japanese text retains elements of alliteration and assonance. It also focuses on the lyrical speaker's emotive chain of associations, rather than on plot. Thus, I consider it a prose poem. Yet, the relationship between the texts is more complex than the linear "original and translation" view allows.

Both texts are hybrids in several ways. In contrast to the excerpt from „Balkonplatz", which incorporated prosaic sections into a poetic form, the Japanese "Orange Garden" presents poetic, associative language in prose form. Thus, this Japanese version also is a hybrid, but of a different type, of poetry and prose. In addition, both versions of the text are language hybrids: they performatively connect the cultural spheres of Europe and Asia that they portray through mixing features of German and Japanese syntactic styles. Here is the beginning of first the German, then the Japanese version, with my translations.

> Woher kenne ich diese Farbe?
> An einem Dezembertag
> Nach einer Reise durch Südostasien
> Als ich wieder nach Hamburg kam
> Vor meinem Fenster
> Die Straße, eine durch Schnee korrigierte Linie
> Die lange Nacht kam mit pfeifenden Schiffen
> Und dann sah ich
> Den Müllwagen
> Mit drei Männern auf dem Rücken

[45] The first publication of the 1997 collection "But the Mandarins Must Be Robbed Tonight" („Aber die Mandarinen müssen heute abend noch geraubt werden") contains the German version, whereas the Japanese appeared first in the August 1997 edition of the magazine "Voyage of Discovery" (大航海) before its inclusion in the 1998 prose collection "Fox-moon-possession" (『きつね月』).

Ihre Uniform hatte genau die gleiche Farbe
Wie das Mönchsgewand in Thailand[46]

How do I know this colour?
One day in December
After a journey through South-East Asia
When I came back to Hamburg
In front of my window
The street, a line corrected by snow
The long night came with whistling ships
And then I saw
The garbage truck
With three men on its back
Their uniform had exactly the same colour
As the monk's robe in Thailand

この色、どこかで見たことある、と思ったのは、十二月のある日、東南アジアから、ハンブルクにもどって、机、 窓、そのすぐ前の遊歩道は、雪に軌道を修正されて、その向こうの花壇の、そのまた向こうのエルベ川の、向こう岸で、なかなか明けない冬の夜、船の汽笛に貫かれる灰色の午前に見た、廃品回収車、背中に三人の男たちを乗せている、かれらの製服は、タイの僧衣と同じ色をしていた。[47]

Kono iro, doko de mita koto aru, to omotta no wa, jūnigatsu no aru hi, tōnan Ajia kara, Hanburuku ni modotte, tsukue, mado, sono sugu mae no yūhodō wa, yuki ni kidō o shūsei sarete, sono mukō no kadan no, sono mata mukō no Erebe-gawa no, mukōgishi de, nakanaka akenai fuyu no yoru, fune no kiteki ni tsuranukareru haiiro no gozen ni mita, haihin kaishū sha, senaka ni sannin no otoko-tachi o nosete iru, kare-ra no seifuku wa, Tai no sōi to onaji iro o shite ita.

This colour, I have seen it somewhere before, I thought, on a day in December, returned to Hamburg from Southeast Asia, the desk, the window, the sidewalk directly in front of it, [its] orbit corrected by the snow, opposite the flower bed, opposite the river Elbe, on the opposite shore, [in] the winter night refusing dawn, in the ash-coloured morning pierced by the steam pipes of the ships, I saw a garbage truck that had three men riding on its back, their clothes the same colour as Thai monk's robes.

Both texts are alienating translations in the tradition of Walter Benjamin, who is an important influence on Tawada's stance on translation.[48] With their sound and rhythm rather than their words, they imitate the 'style' of the other language. An unusual sentence structure, which imitates Japanese syntax, characterizes the German version. In addition, sentences are incomplete, creating a fragmented stream of images. Whereas the Japanese text follows the German line-by-line, the sentence structure appears more natural in this version. Tawada strengthens this effect by supplying verbs and creating grammatically complete sentences.

[46] Tawada (1997: 29-39, 29).

[47] Tawada (1998: 188).

[48] Benjamin (1972: 18). For Tawada's references to Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator", cf. Pogatschnigg (2004: 47-48), Tobias (2015: 177-178).

However, while the Japanese prose layout eliminates the 'look' of poetry, grammatically unnecessary commas mark German parts-of-speech and line breaks. These interruptions of the flow of the sentence create an unusual rhythm, reminiscent of the stress-rhythm of German. To sum up, the German version exhibits Japanese-style sentence patterns, and the Japanese version a German-style rhythm. Thus, both versions are language hybrids.

Considering that these texts were published in close succession, it is highly likely that they influenced each other, perhaps even that they were written in parallel.[49] In any case, they qualify as hybrids of language, of genre, and of original and translation. Thus, the poems function as a „Bindeglied zwischen unterschiedlichen Kulturräumen" ["link between different cultural spaces"].[50] They represent a 'Third Space' of cultural translation, and a place of meeting for the marginal(ized). The orangery/ orange garden functions as such an in-between space that links Asia and Europa, where Thai monks and German garbage men come together.

Closing Remarks

In the same manner, the texts discussed here are themselves in-between spaces: As poetic orangeries, they are hybrid spaces that link languages and genres. The four poems I have discussed illustrate how Tawada's work is an impressive example of multi-facetted, multi-transitory writing. Her dissertation advisor Prof. Sigrid Weigel notes:

> […] dass in ihrem Schreiben die Übergange zwischen Poesie und Theorie fließend sind, dass beide sich gegenseitig befeuern – ähnlich jener Funken, die sie aus dem Zusammentreffen verschiedener Kulturen, verschiedener Sprachen und Schriftsysteme schlägt.[51]
>
> […] in [Tawada's] writing, the transitions between poetry and theory are fluid, [they] both inspire the other – similar to the sparks she strikes from the encounter of different cultures, different languages and systems of writing.

In this way, Tawada's texts express the mode of living of the 21st century, where global migration and global capitalism have destabilized many of the borders once used to make sense of human experiences. Her hybrid poetry performs the mixing of languages and cultures that occurs today, but it also points to issues

[49] I have asked Tawada about the order of writing, but she stated only that she had different ways of translating and adapting texts from one language to another, and did not elaborate on the chronology.

[50] Bergmann (2016: 665).

[51] See Weigel's essay "Searching for the Email for Japanese Ghosts. Yoko Tawada's Poetics at the Transition Point of Different Writing Systems" („Suche nach dem E-mail für japanische Geister. Yoko Tawadas Poetik am Übergang differenter Schriftsysteme"; in "Foreign Waters" / "Fremde Wasser", the collection of Tawada's guest lectures at Hamburg and various scholarly comments, edited by Ortrud Gutjahr), Weigel (2012: 129).

that persist and need addressing. She calls out gender discrimination, heteronormativity and homophobia in the verse novels, and addresses differences in custom and religion in the orangery poems. In doing so, Tawada disrupts the usual patterns of thought and points to the transitory, the hybrid, and the 'Third Space' as a middle ground, where discourses can merge and meaning be created anew. If her readers accept the invitation, and step through the gap in(to) the dictionary, they may find a new perspective on their culture and society in the in-between.

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