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Author

LaFountain, Pascale

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Of Women and Polyglots: Yoko Tawada's "Where Europe Begins" and Rosi Braidotti's Transnational Feminist Nomadology

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Pascale LaFountain

The title of Yoko Tawada's short narrative "Wo Europa anfängt" (1991), translated into English as "Where Europe Begins" (2002),¹ seems to imply that an answer to the age-old geopolitical question of Europe's boundaries will follow. Instead, the narrative, which consists of twenty numbered segments, provides diverse ruminations on transnational movement, cultural experience, feminine identity, and language. While the question of how to define Europe has long occupied thinkers in many disciplines, recent texts such as Tawada's have suggested links between feminine identity and contemporary European cultural belonging. Tawada's narrative was published just as Europe was redefining itself following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, a political context never mentioned in the text. Rosi Braidotti's work brings feminist theory together with a theory of the European Union. Both authors explore what it means to be a transnational woman in a changing Europe. Braidotti's work on the feminist nomad, most of which has appeared since Tawada's "Wo Europa anfängt," offers theoretical and political responses to the issues addressed in Tawada's fictional narrative. The present article examines how Tawada's "Wo Europa anfängt" seems to presage several elements of Rosi Braidotti's work on the figure of the feminine "nomad" in the European context. Indeed, some of Germany's most compelling contemporary literature remain in dialogue with the three issues at the core of Braidotti's work: nomadism in its largest sense, the condition of the feminine in European society, and the navigation of multiple languages. Tawada's style is undoubtedly a paradigmatic model for what Braidotti has dubbed a "nomadic aesthetic." In contrast to the cosmopolitan aesthetic which also emphasizes the ability to transcend the boundaries of nation, race, and ethnicity, the nomadic aesthetic often emphasizes transit not only as a necessity, but as a desired state. The nomadic aesthetic also often focuses on a desire for dislocation and on play with a multiplicity of languages.

Tawada's "Wo Europa anfängt" presages several of Braidotti's concerns in fictional form. Braidotti's writings in turn suggest a larger theoretical framework for understanding some of the motifs in Tawada's narrative. For instance, Braidotti's notion of the nomad offers a broader context within which to understand Tawada's travelers, and Braidotti's focus on the particular complexity of localizing feminist and feminine identity proffers an explanation for why Tawada's works tend to feature female protagonists. Furthermore, Braidotti's reflections on the role of the polyglot cast light on Tawada's incorporation of multiple languages into her text. This study of the implicit conversation between Braidotti's

¹ For ease of readability, all citations are quoted from the English translation of the text.

work and “Wo Europa anfängt” reveals the way in which Tawada’s fiction also suggests a move beyond Braidotti’s theory, with the implicit suggestion that the creative space developed in reading and writing can embody and even rupture physical space. Indeed, for Tawada, Europe begins in the reading and writing minds of those who imagine it. This is indicative of the way Tawada’s creative space—a paradoxical locus that offers both the possibility of stabilizing identity and continued openness to transformation with relation to nationality, gender, and language—reflects the tension in which contemporary subject development takes place. On one hand, Tawada’s text explores the concrete political question of what it means to be European; on the other hand, Europe’s diffuse eastern border and Europe’s resulting shape-shifting become a metaphor for shifting individual identities.

Migrant subjectivity, gender relations, and linguistic identity in contemporary Europe are central issues for a number of German authors, including Terézia Mora, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, and, perhaps most prominently, Yoko Tawada. These issues derive in part from the authors’ biographies. Terézia Mora, a Hungarian-German author who moved to Germany at age 19, for instance, populates the short stories in her collection *Seltsame Materie* (1999) with protagonists who live in the Hungarian-Austrian border region and are often preoccupied with a sense of homelessness or loss as they attempt to navigate societal and gender roles. The protagonist of Mora’s novel *Alle Tage* (2004), similarly, occupies an imprecise and sometimes dream-like location “in einer kleinen Stadt in der Nähe dreier Grenzen” (3) and is frequently forced to adapt to changing surroundings. Emine Sevgi Özdamar, born in Turkey, also immigrated to Germany at the age of 19 and publishes largely in German, though she has recently begun publishing work in Turkish, as well. Her short story collection *Mutterzunge* (1990) explores similar themes in an aesthetic that also focuses on travel, femininity, and negotiations with linguistic identity. Özdamar’s first novel, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* (1991), is a fragmented portrait of an unnamed female protagonist’s departure from Turkey to Germany. Yoko Tawada was born in Tokyo in 1960, and moved to Germany at age 22, where she writes in both German and Japanese. Her fictional protagonists, many of whom are women exploring their own identities in relation to other women in their lives, often seem to flow freely among countries, exploring the world of the in-between. Their attempts to figure out their place in relation to other women is echoed in their wanderings among physical spaces.² Mora, Özdamar, and Tawada all frequently write in a style that highlights locations of transit, explores the role of women, and practices a self-critical use of language, as well as an episodic format that resists omniscient narrative. Tawada’s work in particular depicts a striking desire for transit, for feminine redefinition, and for linguistic play.

² This liminality, a central theme in much of Tawada’s work, is often linked to a particular feminist awareness, as is the case in her rewriting of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which took form in her novel *Opium für Ovid. Ein Kopfkissenbuch von 22 Frauen* (2000). *Opium für Ovid* explores this theme of liminality, as well as the link between physical and linguistic metamorphoses. In a discussion of *Opium für Ovid*, Tawada has explained her disinterest in the “unrelenting search for a single identity” which she perceives as a central tendency in European culture. As a result, she says in an interview, she “started searching, unconsciously, for realms in which different types of identity are represented” (Tawada, “Ein Wort” 11). Her reassessment of Ovid is a result of this search, though one might argue that many of her other works focus equally on feminine becoming. It is precisely this European search for a single identity that Braidotti seeks to describe and, like Tawada, challenge in her reassessment of feminist and post-structuralist theory.

As the first-person subject of Tawada's semi-autobiographical fairy tale travelogue travels by boat and train from Japan through Russia toward Europe, the desire to arrive at a terminus is replaced by a resignation, even an enjoyment of the feeling of endless transit among locations that are themselves also moving. Even her home country loses its stable nature, as she comes to remember it as a piece of earth floating on a moving globe of water (126) and as a moving island that was once a contiguous part of Siberia. Russia, which lacks coastal boundaries, has even less geographical form in the protagonist's perception. Japan moves, but Siberia's very size grows and shrinks depending on subjective imagination. While the narrator first perceives Siberia as an immensely large stretch of land, measurable only in the number of hours it might take to cross it by train (124), the Russian traveler Masha sees Siberia as only a border as she laments: "Ever since I got married and moved to Nachodka, my mother has been *behind* Siberia" (129). The narrator extrapolates: "Siberia, then, is the border between here and there, I thought, such a wide border!" (129). In these descriptions, it remains unclear where or even what "here" and "there" are. There is no agreement among the passengers in the Trans-Siberian Railroad train as to where Europe begins, and thus any attempts to decide on a border are portrayed as absurd pretenses. While a sign standing "in the middle of a field like a solitary customs agent" (141) has arrows pointing to Europe and Asia in opposite directions, Masha sees the Ural Mountains as the border, and a traveling Frenchman rejects the notion of Moscow being in Europe. Indeed, rather than serving as an inanimate obstacle that divides lives, the border takes on life, becoming able to move and to point toward different national identities.

Though Tawada's narrative does not mention the European Union, it points to some of the issues surrounding negotiations of ethnicity and identity in the new Europe. Because of the "post-nationalistic sense of European identity" (*Thinking* 12) and Europe's constant transformation, Rosi Braidotti suggests that Europe is the ideal setting in which to talk about a nomadic transnational identity similar to the one depicted in Tawada's narrative. Europe in Braidotti's assessment is becoming a semi-state, a quasi-nation, a "radical organization" that is as yet the "least studied and least understood governmental space today" (Braidotti and LaFountain 3). The introduction to Braidotti's *Thinking Differently* lists features of Europe as a political construct that shape the identities of those who live there in the new millennium:

[Europe's] shifting boundaries; its geopolitical permeability; the fact, ultimately, that it is not a self-contained continent but a geopolitical formation that is in concrete and immediate proximity to spaces that are not designated 'European' and indeed, at different historical moments, has included or excluded spaces and peoples on its borders in a continually shifting structure of alliances and disaffiliations. (9)

All of these elements are at play in Tawada's fictional narrative. Braidotti's analysis of contemporary feminism and feminist consciousness in Europe is developed from the idea of what she calls the "paradox of European identity" ("Uneasy" 357), which is evoked by Tawada's narrative. To be European is both to belong and not to belong at the same time. To be European is to feel the centripetal force of this shared identity and the centrifugal forces of cultural difference. Braidotti offers hope for both "trajectories of becoming" and the utopian "possible futures" of the European Union (*Transpositions* 277; Braidotti and LaFountain 4). A similar post-nation-state model of identity is already at play in Tawada's Europe narrative, which juxtaposes characters from multiple times and places into the

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moving train where the main narrative takes place, and into the many freely-associated excursions that complement this narrative. A Japanese grandmother in a mountain dreamscape, the crews of three Russian ships, the Tungus tribes of Siberia, Macha from Moscow, a Frenchman, and many others each seem to have equal say in what might define Europe.

“Wo Europa anfängt” uses Buddhist reincarnation, fairy tale motifs, and images of physical transformation as metaphors to depict the constant changes that take place in this semipermeable quasi-state. The first section consists of a fantastic tale, told to the protagonist by her grandmother, in which the grandmother’s friend and the friend’s mother were sent to see the Fire Bird who would cure the mother’s illness. A serpent they meet tells the girls that they need not fear monsters when they visit another country, because as long as they remember they too were monsters in a previous life, the monsters will disappear immediately (122). The serpent reassures her: “Neither hate them nor do battle with them, just continue on your way” (122). The monster, as foreigner, becomes a fellow member of humanity deserving of respect and acknowledgment. Moreover, the monster is a reminder of the shape-shifting at the core of migrant—and indeed all—identity. There are three lessons here: to acknowledge collective humanity, to embrace change, and to continue moving. All of the lessons are part of the same process of transformation. Reincarnation is the spiritual version of the constant becoming that Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray, and Rosi Braidotti all describe in different ways. Braidotti’s work sheds additional light on these sub-stories, as well as the narrator’s dreams in which inanimate objects are free to defy the barriers of physics and even become animate, moving and fluctuating freely into different forms. Indeed, “transitional identity,” a notion that embraces character shifts as an element of European identity on the individual and collective levels, offers a political context for understanding Tawada’s story: the paradox of European identity, Braidotti suggests, is that individuals share not so much their commonality, but their difference and their potential for change, and in this sharing the disparate figures create a community founded on flux.

In the narrator’s account of her voyage from Japan through Siberia to Europe, the narrator spends almost all of her time in boats, train compartments, and stations. These motifs of transit serve as privileged locations for the nomadic aesthetic and transitional identity development. Braidotti describes locations of transit as “in between zones where all ties are suspended and time is stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oases of nonbelonging, spaces of detachment. No-(wo)man’s lands” (*Nomadic* 18f). In many locations of transit, Tawada’s narrator encounters people of diverse backgrounds, few of whom have names, and her gaze remains naïve and exploratory. The lack of names in the narrative reinforces the notion that not only the secondary characters, but also the protagonists have transitory identities that are subject to change. The nameless characters resist being fixed except by their temporary affiliation with the country they are traveling to or from. While wandering and maps are also privileged tropes of the nomadic aesthetic, Braidotti, always grounded in the contemporary mobile world, describes real spaces of transit as the locations where intercultural communication takes place and where the subject is no longer grounded by association with one national culture. Braidotti’s description of the nomadic aesthetic casts light on Tawada’s nameless characters, for the nomadic aesthetic features individuals who are between identities, who exist in the spaces between barriers.

For Tawada and for Braidotti, the desire to negotiate boundaries is associated with femininity in particular. A transgenerational bond of femininity links Tawada's protagonist to her mother, grandmother, and other women she encounters. Tawada's narrative presents the desire to continue moving through barriers as the essence of particularly feminine nomadic subjectivity, expressed through the protagonist's fond memory of her mother as a woman who always yearned for another home. From the mother's time as a small child, she read books, and in her reading practice made choices that turned literature into a space of adventure. She most often read novels "as cryptic and cunning as the forests of Siberia, so that people got lost in [the novels] and never found their way out again once they'd entered" (137). The mother's reading is characterized genealogically as a feminine mode of being. In this reading style, becoming and discovery continue and the desire for constant travel through literature governs exploration. The narrator continues, "She never rushed through books. The more exciting the story became, the more slowly she read. She never actually wanted to arrive at any destination at all, not even 'Moscow'" (138). The mother thus discovers reading as an activity that creates potential feminine locations, a solution to the feminist problem Luce Irigaray describes of the woman not having her own place. The mother here delves ever deeper into literary space, charting new territory as she reads, so that the consumption of literature allows entry into an alternative realm. This is contrasted with the father's teleological mode of being, as he longs for arrival at a certain point, which he finally achieves. Since the day when both parents saw a performance of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, both were obsessed with the wish that Irina, one of the sisters, longingly repeats: "To Moscow, to Moscow, to Moscow . . ." (132). Each parent, answers this wish, long a literary trope for unfulfilled desire, in a different, and particularly gendered, way. In a twist in the family history, the father inherits money and founds a publishing house he calls "Moscow," linking his arrival to the act of literary publication. The mother, meanwhile, prefers to continue reading about Moscow, and the daughter's choice to travel and write can be seen as a way of living out her mother's desires and a way of responding to her mother's desire for armchair travel.

Throughout its many parts, the narrative retains a focus that is distinctly feminine, as is indicated by the first-person female narrator, the emphasis on her interactions with her mother and grandmother, and the telling of her story to a woman three years after her immigration. In each of these instances, Tawada's text, though given to us in printed form, is framed as oral narrative. The feminine-coding of spoken narrative is emphasized over masculine-coded writing. Even when the narrator writes, it is to allow female protagonists to tell stories and not to create an additional authoritarian narrative. When the narrator reads aloud a novel she has written for her mother in which Siberia is represented by an old woman who appears and disappears mysteriously, the mother, baffled by this characterization, asks: "Why is Siberia a *she*? You're just like your father, the two of you only have one thing in your heads: going to Moscow" (138). These two comments, one pertaining to Siberia's gender, and the other pertaining to Moscow as an object of desire by the father and daughter, seem to have little to do with each other. The juxtaposition of these sentences suggests a sort of Freudian triangle of desire. Moscow becomes the mother figure, the object desired by both father and child. As such, however, Moscow in a way replaces the mother, resulting in her jealous accusation. The mother, by contrast, is not nearly as interested in the teleological arrival in Moscow as she is in the process of traveling there, or imagining a voyage there. The mother, interested in imagination and travel, is a

nomad in Braidotti's sense. Moreover, while not understanding the personification of a space as having a gender, the mother also mistakes Siberia as destination for Siberia as a literary construct. Indeed, "Wo Europa anfängt" does not depict visits to particular Siberian towns, narrations of Siberian history, or other concrete encounters with a real Siberia. Rather, "Siberia" is always mediated subjectively by those who tell of it, desire to visit it, or pass through it. This constructed image of Siberia is different for each person who tries to describe Siberia.

While the men in the story are often referred to with terms of stable identity, such as "the Frenchman," the female protagonist's challenge of finding a place within this movement, as well as her mother's constant searching for new homes through travel and reading, suggest a model of feminine homelessness sometimes evoked in feminist theory. Luce Irigaray has suggested that "femininity is experienced as a space," but that this space is often an unidentified one, defined and limited in its alterity to the dominant masculine space of the fixed world: "[W]oman always tends towards something else without ever turning to herself as the site of a positive element" (120f.). Irigaray suggests two utopian solutions: either the woman must envelope herself to create her own place or she must become like an "angel," able to penetrate all forms without limitation. This potential for transformation is in part what is at work for Tawada's female travelers, but Braidotti's description of the feminine nomad seems to describe Tawada's female protagonists even more closely, for it combines both the image of the post-Europe European traveling across borders and the post-Woman woman, able to invent herself and take on forms as diverse as the bird or the dragon (*Transitions* 71). Braidotti's notion of the traveling European "post-Woman woman," the feminist living in an age where identity is in a constant state of flux, suggests an explanation for the strange juxtaposition of actual travel and feminine transformation in Tawada's story. Travel, transformation, and shifting feminine and feminist identities are all part of the same process of change that define the contemporary female subject.

Braidotti's notion of the feminine nomad is in conversation with travel, femininity, and reading as they figure in Tawada's narrative. Braidotti suggests that her feminine nomad is grounded in the materiality of her political bond to other women through the common recognition of sexual difference. This differs from other arguments concerning sexual difference familiar from French feminism. From the beginning, Braidotti's concept of "nomadic aesthetics"—on account of its emphasis on place and physical dislocation—is set in opposition to *écriture féminine* as Hélène Cixous describes and practices it.³ While Tawada's style and Braidotti's concept of the nomadic aesthetic are based on the sensation of feminine difference and the experience of the body, this style does not emphasize libidinal desire as much as the desire for transition, as well as a dynamic relation to space, little of which is evident in the eco-centered feminine mind-body language philosophy behind *écriture féminine*. Though Braidotti describes a type of feminine writing, she places the emphasis not on the feminine body, but on the multiplicity of languages and the experimentation with language by the displaced woman searching for a language of her own.

³ Cixous's manifesto compares writing to the "gestation drive": it is a "desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood" (318). Such language represents an aesthetic in which the patriarchal hegemony is to be swept away by a new feminist symbolic.

Though the travel route in "Wo Europa anfängt" is linear, the narrative's style is discursive, consisting in large part of the narrator's memories, stories, reminiscences of childhood fairy tales, entries from a "travel narrative"—a fanciful recounting that she wrote long before she departed—and excerpts from a different "travel diary" that she "made up afterward, having neglected to keep one during the journey" (126). Like the places of transit through which the narrator passes, these narrative loci are only important in their contingency, in the way that they represent the narrator at one particular moment in her nomadic becoming. Moreover, passages are peppered with terms in Russian and Japanese, such as an explanation of the etymological origins of the term Siberia from the Tartar language (131) and an explication of the Japanese term "Tatsu-no-otoshigo"—the lost child of the dragon (127). The narrative style suggests that, in light of the protagonist's nomadism, the best representation is only a snapshot of one aspect of identity, and no single language is sufficient to portray this becoming. The nature of language here is akin to what Braidotti describes as "polyglot" writing aesthetic, loosely related to Bakhtin's notion of polyglossia. While Bakhtin's polyglossia refers largely to varying styles and perspectives, Braidotti's polyglot style refers also to concrete juxtaposition of multiple languages. The fundamental aspect of the polyglot aesthetic for Braidotti is that it is "based on compassion for the incongruities, the repetitions, the arbitrariness of the languages [the author] deals with. Writing is for the polyglot a process of undoing the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes from familiarity with one linguistic site" (*Nomadic* 15). Such writing thus recognizes and deconstructs the static nature of conventional expression, establishing for each individual a new sort of language based on the individual's material embodiment. Rather than moving inward to the cycles and flows of the feminine body as *écriture féminine* does, this writing moves outward into the "no-(wo)man's land" beyond patriarchal language and coded space: "Nomadic writing longs instead for the desert: areas of silence, in between the official cacophonies, in a flirt with radical nonbelonging and outsidership" (*Nomadic* 16). The linguistic aesthetic of the nomad is thus based on the materiality of the body, but also on the escape that charts new territory moving outside of established norms and toward the liminal territory between the dichotomies enforced by national and linguistic borders.

In light of this emphasis on mobility, the water motif, also a privileged motif in French feminism, becomes the metaphorical key to understanding the role of dislocation, femininity, and language in Tawada's narrative. Fascinated by the idea that some fish in Lake Baikal used to be saltwater fish, Tawada's narrator does not think about their adaptation, but of an alternative composition of the earth:

Or is the Baikal a hole in the continent that goes all the way through? That would mean my childish notion about the globe being a sphere of water was right after all. The water of the Baikal, then, would be the surface of the water-sphere. A fish could reach the far side of the sphere by swimming through the water.

And so the *omul'* I had eaten swam around inside my body that night, as though it wanted to find a place where its journey could finally come to an end. (135)

This introduces a new model in which each species is not limited by the borders of a particular body of water, but rather belongs everywhere. Individuals manifest on the surface for a particular time, but can just as well retreat into the center and reappear in a completely different place. These fish, also traveling endlessly through the world like the

characters in Tawada's narrative, are both free in their becoming and homeless. The *omul'* fish is ingested by the female protagonist, so that her body becomes the water in which the fish swims. Indeed, rather than continuing to seek her place in the world, she becomes the world "water-sphere" for the fish.

This is the liberating but also challenging image of the nomad: she who wanders and makes her home anywhere, but also she who longs to be home, or even to be a home for someone or something else, at the same time as she desires to journey. Here, home is not so much a place of origin, but a resting place where one can stop traveling for a moment. Home is the static opposite of movement and flux and at the same time as the home is mentioned, it is denied to the fish who, like the protagonist, is left wanting a utopian space where the journey will come to an end. This notion of fluidity and identity is in conversation with feminist images of the fluid that French feminism established, and that Braidotti develops in her more recent work. Luce Irigaray's figuration to describe a potential feminine capacity to transcend limitations is that of liquid, as she describes in "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids" in *This Sex Which is Not One*. For Irigaray, when a woman speaks, she undermines patriarchal solidity, for a woman speaks in a different way: woman "speaks 'fluid,' even in the paralytic undersides of that economy" (*This Sex* 111). Braidotti builds on Irigaray's "fluid," writing of her own incarnation of the nomad: "she is Irigaray's 'mucous,' or 'divine,' but endowed with a multicultural perspective" (*Nomadic* 30). Braidotti thus sanctions the becoming-subject's movement among real worldly and cultural borders, while also insisting that it is not a "solid" subject as such and never takes recourse to sedentary or solid and rational patriarchal being. This casts light on the role of water metaphors in Tawada's narrative. Water resists masculine form, offers flexibility, and, Braidotti points out, allows for intercultural movement.

The protagonist arrives in Moscow, but she must return for visa reasons. She screams in protest and becomes so thirsty that she drinks from a puddle near the train station. Imbibing the substance belonging both to her new location and to the space of transit, the water becomes the world: "The water I had drunk grew and grew in my belly and soon it had become a huge sphere of water with the names of thousands of cities written on it" (145). In a painful way, the woman is both limited by the real legal barriers of international travel and liberated by transcending all barriers and becoming the world. The final scene performs a surreal dreamscape in which the narrator tries to look at the disappearing names, but voices call her, and she finally jumps into the water globe. From the water, the letters M-O-S-K-V-A fly into the air. Interestingly, the letters used are neither the Cyrillic letters nor is the spelling that used in English or German for the city of Moscow. Indeed, even as the narrator seems to arrive, the letters seem to deconstruct the name of the city. As they fly away, the letters become objects marking the woman's becoming and her painful liberation: the mother, the fish, the seahorse, the knife severing the umbilical cord, and the apple. A bite from the apple and she has arrived, gaining the knowledge of the Europe myth and suddenly becoming aware that she is "standing in the middle of Europe" (145). Europe as myth or destination has disappeared, and this "middle" shows itself to be no center at all, for if the narrator has learned one thing, it is that "Europe," like "Moscow," does not exist as an essence. Like the narrator's image of her body as bird and dragon, Europe is able to change depending on its surroundings, linguistic constructions, and the perception of the viewer.

Tawada's narrative seems to presage several elements of Braidotti's nomadic aesthetic, including the polyglot style, but it also seems to go beyond Braidotti in suggesting the importance of creative literary space as a potential answer to the question as to where Europe begins. Travel in the world begins as travel into the depths of novelistic literary space for the protagonist's mother; the protagonist's desire for Moscow has its origins in the stage performance of Chekhov; and definitions of what it means to be European shift based on encounters with Russian, French, and other travelers that exist in the conversations between a fictional travel narrative created before the voyage started and a made-up diary created after the voyage was finished. Each of these sources highlights the importance of literature and creativity as a source for the continued desire to arrive in and define Europe. In the moment when the narrator of "Wo Europa anfängt" actually metamorphoses into the liquid world for a few moments at the end of Tawada's story, the diverse imaginary elements of the narrative and concrete reality are unified. While there is no question as to the character's physical survival as a woman, this moment is crucial in bringing together imagined and real locations. Here, as in Braidotti's work, we are reminded that the nomad is both a figuration for the feminist subject who subverts set barriers and a very real aspect of contemporary life for many. This linking of abstract theory and concrete political movement has always characterized engaged feminist theory and continues to represent its greatest strength, for only in their material groundedness do poststructuralist positions continue to complement the rise in materialist and historical critical approaches.

Considering this link between the abstract and the concrete, as well as the many other affinities between Braidotti's work and Tawada's fiction—and, for that matter, the fictional works of many other contemporary German authors—it is somewhat surprising that Braidotti does not address any of these fictional works in her writings. Whereas Deleuze, for instance, frequently offers analyses of works by authors as diverse as Herman Melville and Virginia Woolf, Braidotti remains largely in the realms of the philosophical and political, with rare comments on contemporary literature. While Yoko Tawada's "Wo Europa anfängt" depicts a literary embodiment of the European-polyglot-nomad-becoming-woman, Braidotti's work bridges abstract French poststructuralism with concrete migrant feminist politics. In consort, both outline a fruitful framework for thinking about both the literature and the lives of migrant women in contemporary multicultural Europe. Braidotti's theorizations of shifting feminine identity in the new Europe reveal how "Wo Europa anfängt" functions as a double invitation for women in particular to embrace the diffuse nature of national identity in a post-national space and to emulate Europe's own shape-shifting through continued individual creativity.

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