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CHAN BUDDHISM AS A CHANNEL IN YOKO TAWADA'S POETICS

By

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THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Yoko Tawada's poetic world offers a moderate attitude for contemporary migrants identity. Japanese-German writer Yoko Tawada centers on the migrant subjectivity, transcultural identity and linguistic identity. Her genius in writing both in Japanese and German facilitates her Asian female characters on the stage of world literature. How East Asians view Tawada's poetics? How East Asians face the discourse of being Europe? How, in short, East Asians as the global citizen interprets the concept of body and time? With Tawada's novel *The Naked Eye* and her essay *Where Europe Begins*, my thesis takes the channel of Chan Buddhism philosophy to reinterpret Yoko Tawada's poetics in fluidity and equanimity.

Key words: Yoko Tawada; Buddhism; transformation; identity.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I endeavor to read the Japanese-German writer Yoko Tawada's novel *The Naked Eye* and her essay *Where Europe Begins* from the perspective of Buddhism, which has not been sufficiently discussed in Tawada criticism in the West. Tawada's work echoes the Buddhist concern with self-identity in literary form and brings a moderate attitude to the issue of migrant subjectivity, gender relations and linguistic identity in contemporary Europe. A Buddhist perspective in turn sheds light on important motifs in Tawada's work, such as water, an empty frying pan and the body.

Chapter 1, "Buddhism and Yoko Tawada's poetic porosity", explores the Buddhist notion of the body in identity discourses. Although many scholars have paid attention to concepts of the body in Yoko Tawada's works, they have relied on Western psychoanalytic theory in claiming a fluid nature of identity. The subjectivity of the protagonist in *The Naked Eye*, a Vietnamese girl, is described as "exile, ethnic, migrant, diasporic," which emphasizes her displacement. For instance, the lack of the protagonist's name creates the notion that her identity is subject to transformation during her journey in western Europe. I will show, however, that the Buddhist sense of the body plays a vital role in Tawada's writing, both in the sense of the body as a objective vessel for the self and as an organic entity of the subjective self. With the example of Senju Kannon, I introduce the notion of body in Buddhism philosophy where body as a organic entity facilitates the identity transformation. In this term, the protagonist in *The Naked Eye* transforms into a new self in sensual experience of

illegal blood drawing and skin experimentation. Along with the interpretation of Buddhist classic conversations, the theme of body as object vessel is compared with Theseus's dilemma in order to gain a better understanding in subjective fluidity based on *Where Europe Begins*. Additionally the concept of time will be discussed as a crucial part in transformation. I argue that these dual expressions of the body symbolize not only a transcultural identity but also a private and direct life experience.

Chapter 2, "Hopeless refugee or sovereign self," examines how Tawada uses the concept of equanimity in "everyday mind" (平常心) from Chan Buddhism to model the protagonist as a nomad in migrant discourse. This term, which decomposes the traditional hierarchy that divides elite Buddhist monks who have long been considered "great men" (大丈夫) and rustic commoners in the Song dynasty, allows contemporary migrants to mentally protect themselves against discrimination and justify their cultural background vis-à-vis mainstream culture in their host countries. In *The Naked Eye*, Tawada uses the Buddhist concept of "everyday mind" (平常心) to create and illustrate a third, liberating space represented by the cinema for the nameless Vietnamese girl. In this third space, imaginative interaction with roles played by Catherine Deneuve function as a force to negotiate the conflicts between home and foreign country, between legality and illegality, between capitalism and socialism, between East and West.

Chapter 1 Buddhism and Yoko Tawada's poetic porosity

In *The Naked Eye*, Tawada reveals the cruel reality of illegally living West of the Berlin Wall from the perspective of an innocent nameless Vietnamese girl. Her experience in capitalist Europe is narrated in parallel to the plot descriptions of thirteen films starring the French actress Catherine Deneuve. As an organ to see the outer world, the eyes of this nameless girl function as a camera: on the one hand, they enrich her spiritual world as she watches films; on the other hand, the eyes record the remaining discrimination of local Europeans in specific scenes. In this dual expression, readers see the suffering of the Vietnamese girl but, at the same time, they are encouraged by Tawada's optimistic attitude toward immigration. For instance, Marie, the prostitute, offers the nameless girl a warm shelter and unconditional acceptance of her existence.

Tawada's novel *The Naked Eye* is a poetic investigation into the complex issues of immigration, citizenship, identity, border, and the political antagonism of the global Cold War. In the beginning of this novel, the protagonist leaves her hometown to give a speech in East Berlin on the topic of "Vietnam as a Victim of American Imperialism" at an International Youth Conference. But she is abducted and brought to the West by a stranger named Jörg. She plans to escape to Moscow so that she can return home to Saigon from the Soviet Union. The night train connecting Moscow and Paris picks her up in Jörg's hometown, Bochum, but carries her on to Paris, where she begins her travels in the West. Without resident permit or passport, the protagonist

wanders through Paris and resides in shared rooms. In Chapter Two, she meets the prostitute Marie and lodges with her in a basement. Marie's gift of the magazine *Erkan* with an interview with Catherine Deneuve becomes her first resource for learning French. In Chapters Three to Five, she is invited to live with a Vietnamese woman named Ai Van and her French husband Jean. By this point, the nameless girl's legal status has started to bother her. Without a passport, her work in a factory might lead to problems for Ai Van for keeping an illegal immigrant. To avoid this, she begins to visit an illegal private clinic for skin experiments and sells blood to earn money. Her search for a language school revives the issue of legal residency. According to Ai Van and her husband Jean, faking amnesia in a planned car accident might allow her to earn legal residency in France or to have a legal reason to board an air plane to go home. Not interested in pursuing a plan that could endanger her life, the Vietnamese girl flees into the romantic world of cinema. She goes to the cinema every day. In the dark refuge of cinema, she watches films played by Catherine Deneuve and communicates with her roles in her imagination.

In Chapters Six to Eight, she meets a Vietnamese doctor, Tuong Linh, and goes to live with him. Tuong Linh plans to give her a legal passport through a marriage in Thailand. He purchases a fake passport from a Japanese painter called Heron and plans for the girl to fly to Thailand to meet him there. However, she is caught at the airport due to her fake passport. She sneaks out through an unlocked door in an airport office and runs back to the streets of Paris to find Marie. In Chapters Nine and Ten, the protagonist wanders through the city and participates in a

play with a student group, thus finally securing a job as an actress. Although her role is a small one, it brings her great joy. However, her illegal status interrupts her happiness once again. She is removed from the theatre group because the students worry about their potential problem caused by her illegal status.

In Chapters Eleven and Twelve, Jörg comes to take the protagonist back to Bochum. However, a dull married life and films on TV press in on her so much that she runs away from Jörg in a great rush. In Chapter Thirteen, the story is told from the third-person view of the stranger Selma who lives in Berlin and later emigrates to the US. The protagonist is now configured as a blind woman in Berlin. Selma learns that the Vietnamese girl has an imaginative friend named Kathy, who never appears in her daily life. Yet Kathy serves as her interpreter who sits near her in the cinema and communicates with her by tapping a finger language on her palm. Selma never meets this friend, which creates ambiguity about her story and about the identity of the first-person narrator who is now portrayed as a blind woman.

In this novel, the identity of the illegal immigrant from Vietnam in Western Europe could be understood from a Buddhist perspective. To be specific, the body as an organic entity allows her to construct a new identity during a visit to an illegal clinic. The illegal exchange of blood and the skin tests are the protagonist's only path toward survival in Paris. This painful illegal job transforms her thought in labor from Socialist education in Vietnam and connects her with Paris society. The illegal immigrant from Vietnam exists within a complicated web of nationalism, legitimacy and language barrier. In *Where Europe Begins* the narrative strategy and fluid self of

the Japanese female traveler alleviates the struggle with a foreign culture. Unlike the Vietnamese protagonist in *The Naked Eye* who is given a Socialist education and illegally lives in Western Europe, the independent young Japanese woman in *Where Europe Begins* has a legal passport and pays attention to new experiences as she travels through Siberia. The body is conceived as a vessel that harbors a fluid self and allows for experiences of the present moment. It helps the impure self grow into a mature individual, which is a central concept in Buddhism.

In her Tübingen poetry lectures on metamorphosis, Yoko Tawada references the Buddhist saint Senju Kannon to illustrate the relationship between body and identity. According to Tawada, a representation of Senju Kannon with thousands of arms and faces demonstrates a great ability to transform from one *gestalt* to another. At the same time, Senju Kannon with too much deviation from the proper appearance is conceived of as a loss of identity (Tawada, 2018, 52-60; see also in Maehl 2015, 60). Tawada's interpretation of Senju Kannon (千手千眼觀世音菩薩) offers an alternative perspective on modern discourses on the body.

As a figure who saves commoners who suffer hardship into great joy in pure land, Senju Kannon (千手千眼觀世音菩薩) is constructed as a representation of the Buddha as he displays great sympathy for common people.¹ By changing into the

¹ Senju Kannon, Thousand-Armed Goddess of Mercy, 千手千眼觀世音菩薩 (guanyin) in Chinese, is a venerable entity of Bosatsu, Bodhisattva, established in India under the influence of Hinduism. Worship of the bodhisattva as guanyin was introduced into China as early as the 1st Century CE and had entered all Buddhist temples by the 6th Century. Representations of the Bodhisattva in China prior to the early Song dynasty (960–1279) are masculine in appearance. But later in 11th Century Guanyin is depicted as a young female and this is how guanyin is primarily worshiped in Korea, Japan and South Asia. Both-gender image of Senju Kannon represents the

most suitable forms for preaching the Dharma, Senju Kannon saves all commoners who are suffering. The thousands of hands and faces not only stand for a great ability to transform but also a great ability to help people in distress. Thousands of eyes refer to infinite wisdom; thousands of hands signify infinite power (*mana* in Sanskrit). With thousands of eyes, Senju Kannon sees all kinds of hardships; with thousands of hands, Senju Kannon saves those who suffer. Instead of representing the fragility of the human frame, the unusual image of Senju Kannon, an omnipotent figure, mirrors the ultimate being of Buddha. Senju Kannon's body deviates greatly from the proper *gestalt*. Beyond a fixed identity, a fluid form of body promotes supreme oneness of Buddha in Buddhist philosophy.

In Buddhism, the body is not an independent, fixed entity. As an individual and organic field for self, the body constantly forms a person's identity in his or her life journey. Human subjectivity and objects are both in a complex manifestations of causes. The unknown circumstances to encounter are the aggregation of the present self and the past causes. The self, in turn, is formed continuously amidst interactions with other causes and fugacious circumstances. A fixed identity is problematic,

indiscriminate attitude in Buddhism for the people who are suffering in different classes and gender. “普為未來惡世一切眾生作大利樂。我於是時始住初地。一聞此呪故超第八地。我時心歡喜故即發誓言。若我當來堪能利益安樂一切眾生者。令我即時身生千手千眼具足。發是願已。應時身上千手千眼悉皆具足。十方大地六種震動。十方千佛悉放光明照觸我身。及照十方無邊世界。從是已後。復於無量佛所無量會中。重更得聞。親承受持是陀羅尼。復生歡喜踊躍無量。便得超越無數億劫微細生死。” See in <千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經>; see also in Hurvitz, Leon, trans. Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sutra). 1976 New York: Columbia University Press. 318.

because the causality requires the fluid nature in the self transformation encountering the unknown. To be more specific, in the premise of self transformation will one gain personal development. In addition, in Buddhism wisdom and peace are expected to be gained during unconscious meditation using the senses. The concept of sense experience implies a denial of the independent, substantial existence of the self or soul. This dynamic, interdependent relation between self and body in the doctrine of causality stands on five classic skhandhas (五蘊), usually translated as ‘material form’ (meaning the body, rūpa 色), ‘feeling’ or the hedonic tone of any experience (vedanā 受), ‘cognition’ which relates to the mind (saññā 想), ‘constructing activities’ (saṅkhāras 行), and ‘consciousness’ (viññāṇa 识).² These five skhandhas link physical body organs with the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Hence, the body is conceived as an open and organic field for the self, coherent with objective external circumstances. The body itself exists as an independent composite and constructed entity for the self. At the same time, the self forms as the body interacts with the outer world. Self-inquiry is highly praised in preaching Buddhist goal of Enlightenment, thus rejecting outer voice, the Buddhist masters rely on the organic body to get the personal development.

As an objective vessel, the body carries a self following Buddha’s will. In her interpretation of the religious body in Buddhism, Charlotte Eubanks notes that,

² Malcolm Joyce. *Buddhism and the Formation of the Religious Body: A Foucauldian Approach*. 2011:438. Malcolm Joyce is a professor focusing on Law and Religion in Macquarie University. In this book, he views the Sutra passages as a record of Buddhism hierarchy system driven by power in Foucauldian perspective. Power functions in constructing the subject in Buddhist discourse.

during Buddhism practice, the impure body changes into a vessel of Dharma.³

Following the aggregated survey of Sutra passages in Buddhist scholar Sue Hamilton's first book *Identity and Experience: The Constitution of the Human Being according to Early Buddhism*, Malcolm Voyle claims that this active body forms during sense experience as a channel to outer circumstances. The body of a Chan Buddhist master becomes a vessel of preaching the Dharma through the ritual gesture and conversations in daily life. The body's function as a vessel of Dharma can be seen in a classical story about Chan masters' lineage transmission, as shown in Kevin Buckelew's interpretation of the Chan master transition.⁴ The Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai (百丈怀海, 720-841), who enjoyed great prestige in the Tang dynasty and was often viewed as a classical image of a "Great Man" (大丈夫相), reformed the Chan elite monastic residency into a daily participation in farming practice, thus transforming Chan from a secret reserved for an elite circle into publicly available philosophical wisdom. According to the story of Huangbo's first encounter with Baizhang Huaihai in the 11th century, Baizhang Huaihai's "towering and majestic"⁵

³ Charlotte Eubanks. *Miracles of Book and Body : Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan*, 2011:102. Charlotte Eubanks is associate professor of comparative literature, Japanese and Asian Studies at the Pennsylvania State University. She studies the material culture of books and word/image relations, with a focus on Japanese literature from the medieval period to the present.

⁴ Kevin Buckelew is a professor of Religious Study in Northwestern University, specialized in the study of Chinese Buddhism.

⁵ When [Huangbo] first arrived at Baizhang's [monastery], Baizhang remarked: "Towering and majestic! Where have you come from?" Huangbo replied: "Towering and majestic! I've come from the mountains." Baizhang asked: "What have you come for?" Huangbo replied: "For no other matter [than to be a buddha]." [Thereupon] Baizhang deeply perceived his [eligibility to serve as] a vessel [for Chan transmission]. 初到百丈，丈問云：「巍巍堂堂；從什麼處來？」槃云：「巍巍堂堂；從嶺中來。」丈云：「來為何事？」槃云：「不為別事。」百丈深器之。

(巍巍堂堂 in Chinese) appearance becomes a mark of the “Great Man” during the lineage transmission.⁶ Baizhang Huaihai fulfilled the image of a “Great Man” with words and actions in his life and serves as an example to his disciples. His body functions as a vessel for the transmission of Dharma. Later Huangbo is approved as “truly a vessel for Great Vehicle.”⁷

Another Buddhist story illuminates how universal knowledge of Buddhahood is transformed into personal enlightenment. Huineng (惠能, 638-713), commonly known as the Sixth Patriarch, was a legendary figure in early Chinese Chan Buddhism. Being illiterate, he created greater tolerance toward discussing Buddhist wisdom in broader terms that go beyond merely the ascetic orthodox rules, traditionally obeyed by monks in elite class. During his first conversation with his master Hongren (弘忍, 601-675, the Fifth Patriarch), Huineng (惠能) says that he seeks to be a Buddha (zufo 作佛 in Chinese) instead of the traditional expression of becoming the Buddha (chengfo 成佛 in Chinese; see in 见性成佛). By challenging the supreme scripture of the Buddha, Huineng (惠能) introduces his life as a living Buddha of rustic aesthetic in “farming Chan” (农禅 in Chinese) and the notion of tolerance into

Foguo Yuanwu Chanshi Biyan lu, T. no. 2003, 48: 151b24–27. see also in Buckelew, “Inventing Chinese Buddhas” 2018,120

⁶ After this meeting as the story is recorded, Huangbo (黄檗希运 in Chinese) became a disciple of Baizhang Huaihai and later was an influential master of Zen Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty. Huangbo’s teaching focused on the concept of “one mind”(即心即佛) which is the central concept in previous two centuries.

⁷ [Thereupon] Baizhang deeply perceived his [eligibility to serve as] a vessel [for Chan transmission]. As translated above.

Chan Buddhism.⁸ Subsequently, Chan Buddhism broadened into a source of enlightenment for commoners. In the search for the sovereign self in Chan practice, the Chan master Huineng's body becomes an open discourse for the imaginative description. For instance, Huineng (惠能) himself is a Buddha in *Platform Sutra* (*tanjing* 坛经). Huineng's words and practice were recorded as a mirror of Buddha's will, thus linking an idealized image of Buddha to a real living person. The ultimate goal of Chan is now defined as a state of balance pursued by Chan masters, between the sovereign self in impurity nature and the liberated self in strict monastic rules. Chan Buddhism grows from a monologue in soteriology to a space of negotiation in harmony. A Chan master embraces the fragility and impurity of his body as fact and as a gift from Buddha. By practicing within the form of the body, disciples gain their own identities utilizing Buddhism wisdom. Buddhism thus provides a path for the self-cultivation of body and mind, mapping out an open discourse on identity for the contemporary Vietnamese illegal immigrant in Tawada's novel.

Body as Self: Blood and Skin

“Blood is sucked, a mark remains behind, and a new vampire is born.”⁹ This sentence

⁸ “Good Knowing Advisors, common people are Buddhas and affliction is Bodhi. Past thoughts deluded are the thoughts of a common person. Future thoughts enlightened are the thoughts of a Buddha. Past thoughts attached to states of being are afflictions, and future thoughts separate from states of being are Bodhi.” *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra: With the Commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua*, Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2001, 126. “善知识！凡夫即佛，烦恼即菩提。前念迷即凡夫，后念悟即佛。前念着境即烦恼，后念离境即菩提。”《六祖大师法宝坛经》卷1，大正藏卷48，351.

⁹ Tawada, *The Naked Eye* (New York: New Directions, 2009), 94

captures the protagonist's understanding of vampires in the film *The Hunger*. The vampire Miriam played by Catherine Deneuve and the biologist Sarah have a sexual encounter during which Miriam bites Sarah's arm and initiates Sarah's transformation into a vampire. Life as a vampire resembles the Vietnamese girl's experience of labor in capitalism: her body becomes an object for experiments so she can make money in Paris. Her body becomes a method of survival in Paris. While visiting an illegal private clinic in Paris, the young Vietnamese woman allows Dr. Lee to use her skin and blood for experiments. Her notion of work transforms from an idealized image of an honorable worker in a factory to an experimental rat.¹⁰ Due to her illegal status, she must avoid visa checks by the police and she cannot enroll in a language school to learn French. The only way for her to earn money is to participate in illegal experiments. The skin is scraped off; the blood is taken. Accordingly, her skin is wounded and infected. The destruction of her skin and the loss of her blood trigger a transformation of her identity. During each visit, she must accept her transformed skin, flesh, lip, and hair. "Even during the infinitesimal span of time, the body can be transformed, slipped through a hole in time, and re-emerged a century later."¹¹ In this sentence, Tawada's understanding of the body is integrated with the concept of time. As time passes, the body's metabolism changes the original appearance of the body and healed wounds. The fluid nature of the body has transformed into a state that allows survival. The skin experiment and the drawing of blood represent a form of abuse that puts the girl in the position of an experimental rat in capitalism. As an open

¹⁰Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 98.

¹¹Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 92.

field, skin and blood as important body parts play an important role in constructing the girl's identity. Through the sensual experience, her identity has been changed as a result of invasive illegal experiments.

The protagonist clearly knows that her original blood supply will run out. When discussing her job with her friend Ai Van, she voices her concern.

“What will happen to me if I keep losing blood?”

“New blood is constantly being produced.”

“But my blood, the blood that was inside me, is no longer there.”¹²

When she views the film about vampire, she asks, “What ‘she’ is it that has vanished?”¹³ Likewise, one might ask, “What ‘she’ is it that has vanished in the illegal body experiment in Paris?” This identity dilemma brings Theseus' s paradox.

Recorded by the ancient Greek historian Plutarch in *Life of Theseus* from the late first century, Theseus returns to his city Athens in his ship after killing a monster. To honor their leader, this ship is preserved for 1000 years. However in this 1000 years, wooden parts like boards are replaced as they are rotted. According to Plutarch, some philosophers assert that it remains the same while others declare that it is not the same vessel. This thought experiment raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. Tomas Hobbes elaborates this question further in modern age with the relation between matter and form. Defined by the form, the first ship which is made from the new

¹² Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 95

¹³ Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 98.

board carries the identity of Theseus's original ship. Reversely, the second ship made from the old board in matter is physical objects like ships.¹⁴

The water in flux will come and go, but the boundaries of its path will remain as time passes. Thus, the sensual experience of illegal scraping of skin and drawing of blood is left in the past but the new wounded body is formed during sensual experience and will carry the transformed identity into the future.

Compared to the fake amnesia in a planned accident suggested by Ai Van and Jean, this abuse of the body seems less dangerous for the protagonist. In such torturous choices when encountering the new culture and economy in Paris, being an experimental rat offers a way for the nameless Vietnamese protagonist to reconnect with life in Paris. On the one hand, the pain caused by her brutal experience connects her body to external reality in Paris. On the other, her identity is transformed with the acceptance to the capitalistic labor. As her skin is wounded, new tissue grows and new blood is produced to form a "new body." Much like the vampire, who is reborn as her blood is sucked, as Tawada suggests in the chapter entitled "The Hunger," the blood of the Vietnamese protagonist is sucked dry, but her new life in Paris begins. As she was compensated with a hefty salary, she buys a ticket with her own money for the first time¹⁵.

For Tawada, the skin connects the self to the external world. In this metabolic process, the protagonist generates a dual-layered self consisting of both an intellectual

¹⁴ Christopher Hughes. "Same-Kind Coincidence and the Ship of Theseus." *Mind*, New Series, 106, no. 421 (1997): 53-67.

¹⁵ Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 92.

and somatic nature. From then on, her anxiety about the loss of original identity and rejection in capitalist labor is gone. She shares part of her body with Dr. Lee in exchange of her survival. “They no longer took my blood; my skin was peeled off bit by bit. In my last visit to the clinic, my back was divided into forty-nine little squares and a different salve was tested on each.”¹⁶ Effectively, the protagonist’s skin becomes a substrate for experimentation and a litmus test for transcultural experience.

Body as Vessel: The Motif of Foreign Water

Where Europe Begins also illuminates the concept of the body in Tawada’s works. Tawada’s collection *Where Europe Begins* was translated in 2002 from her German *Wo Europa anfängt* (1991). While the German version is tightly focused on Tawada’s travel experience in the Trans-Siberian Railway and contains poems and two essays, the English publication with the same title contains 20 short segments from different books by Tawada. The protagonist of *Where Europe Begins* is a Japanese young woman who is traveling on the Trans-Siberian Railroad with a legal passport. Loosely connected with each other, the 20 short chapters in this collection display Tawada’s illuminating attitude towards transnational experiences, fluid identity and language.

“Sometimes in my sleep, I heard the murmur of water that flowed beneath the main island of Japan. The border surrounding the island was also made of water that ceaselessly beat against the shore in waves. How can one say where the place of

¹⁶ Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 117

foreign water begins when the border itself is water?”¹⁷ Here, the narrator of *Where Europe Begins* describes a childhood memory about the Sea of Japan. Living in a cramped room, she had to sleep in a Mexican hammock when she was an infant.¹⁸ Earthquakes occur frequently in Japan—a country surrounded by water. However, the protagonist slept well in the hammock because she felt safe: “as though there were an invisible thread connecting to the subterranean water.”¹⁹ The Mexican hammock was like an umbilical cord, connecting the protagonist with the Sea of Japan. The protagonist sleeps in the Mexican hammock, like an unborn child in the mother’s womb. The murmur of subterranean water is like a lullaby; it brings vitality to the protagonist. During minor earthquakes, the water induced a sense of security rather than anxiety. According to Silja Maehl’s interpretation, water functions as an important motif in Tawada’s poetic porosity.²⁰ Maehl points out that “foreign water” stands for “amorphous dynamic spatiality as well as for constant transformation.”²¹ Water construes the girl’s identity., water can be imbibed; it permeates cells, and becomes a part of the human body. Water, as a source of life, has a life-transforming

¹⁷ Yoko Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, *Conjunctions*, no. 33 (1999): 74.

¹⁸ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, 77.

¹⁹ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, 77.

²⁰ According to Silja Maehl, Tawada’s theme of fluid nature in space and identity refers to the transgression of the foreign. The poetic porosity refers to the permeability where the foreign culture transforms into a proper part of the subject.

²¹ Silja Maehl, “Foreign Water: Yoko Tawada’s Poetics of Porosity in ‘Where Europe Begins,’” in *German Women Writers and the Spatial Turn: New Perspectives*, eds Carola Daffner and Beth A. Muellner (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 60.

power.

In the story at the beginning of the collection, a grandma warns her granddaughter that foreign water is dangerous; she should not drink any water on her upcoming journey. Since the girl's mother suffers from an incurable illness, the girl, guided by a white serpent, takes her mother west to see the Fire Bird in search of a cure. They pass three mountains and meet monsters; however, in the city where the Fire Bird lives, the girl forgets the warning to avoid dangerous foreign water and drinks from a pond. All of a sudden, she changes into a ninety-nine year old woman, and her mother vanishes into flaming air. This allegory expresses the deep-seated skepticism toward foreignness, while warning the youth not to venture into an unknown foreign country.

At the end of Tawada's essay, the danger of foreign water disappears when the Japanese protagonist reaches the foreign city of Moscow and drinks from a pond in the middle of the railway station to alleviate her extreme thirst and soothe her burning throat. The protagonist does not metamorphose into an old woman; instead, she is an enlightened, global citizen and an enriched individual self. "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."²² As water infuses the body of the protagonist, an imaginative sphere opens up that contains all cities inside the flow—the protagonist's body experiences a metamorphosis and turns into a world that holds continents within itself. By drinking water during travel, the protagonist gains

²² Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 86.

global knowledge and transcends the fear of foreign danger. Against her grandma's warning, the protagonist in *Where Europe Begins* believes in the homogeneity of water everywhere. Rather than separating the continents, water connects them across the globe: "The globe as the sphere of water with all sorts of small and large islands swimming on it."²³

In Chapter Five of *Where Europe Begins*, the protagonist's reflection about the landscape of Japan and Eurasia expands on this theme. Japan, whose shape resembles a seahorse, is said to be the lost child of a dragon in Japanese myth. Japan swims alone in the Pacific, far away from its mother Siberia, while the Sea of Japan functions as an umbilical cord that connects Japan with its old mother Siberia. Therefore, as a child of Eurasia, Japan is never lost, but always connected through water.

The farewell scene in Chapter Two contains a noteworthy poetic sentence: "I stood on the upper deck, like a theatergoer who had mistakenly stepped onstage, for my eyes were still watching me from among the crowd on the dock, while I myself stood blind and helpless on the ship."²⁴ In this self-alienated observation, the body and mind of the protagonist are separated, which demonstrates a certain mental amnesia. From then on, she could not recall anything in this journey.²⁵ The protagonist's tossing of white streamers completes her farewell to a past self, while at the same time starting her journey to Europe.

²³ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 73–74.

²⁴ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 74.

²⁵ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 74.

The seemingly absurd dream of the frozen chicken in Chapter Four annotates this amnesia into a more spacious realm. In this chapter, the protagonist thinks back on the time before her departure—she worked in a food processing factory in the evening where the temperature was extremely low while learning Russian and writing an account of the journey. In one of her dreams before her departure, her mother places three frozen chickens in the frying pan. “When the pan was hot, they suddenly came to life and flew out the kitchen window.”²⁶ The three frozen chickens symbolize memories in the past. The present warms up frozen memories but can’t keep them in the present; rather, the memories fly away to imagine the future. Hence writing a travel narrative about a future journey suggests that we never live in the present: we either imagine the future or warm up the past. Between the fixed status of frozen chickens and the narrative end in flying out the kitchen window remains the empty frying pan, that is, the present.

The notion that the present is always empty is reminiscent of Buddhist concepts of time. A minimum unit called *ksana* in Sanskrit (刹那 in Chinese) separates time in Buddhism. The *ksana* in the present signifies the present, the *ksana* before as the past, the *ksana* after as the future. Each *ksana* remains separate meanwhile connects to each other by the causality which creates the continuity of time. Consequently, the concept of time implies both the isolation of each *ksana* and the duration between *ksanas*. Because of the duration of time, the absent past is involved in the present *ksana*. The ceasing past does not mean nothingness; similarly,

²⁶ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, 75.

the present does not imply an extra meaning in nothingness. According to *Zongjing Lu*, a classic concept in Chan Buddhism, an epiphany or twist of thinking in the present effects a disconnection between the ceased past and the upcoming future.²⁷ The whole fact in present ksana is an aggregation of causality. Thus, eternal emptiness dwells in the present.

Similar to the chicken dream, what remains unknown for readers is the protagonist's real life experience in the journey, since this twenty segments in *Where Europe Begins* are written in either the travel narrative beforehand or the diary afterward. The writing will never capture the whole fact in real life experience, because the narrative with barrier of language is processed with imagination. There is the same deviation between the recalled memory and the real life experience. Readers will never know the truth about the journey as stories of the journey are narrated either before or after the actual journey. The narrator in the present is unreliable. Since there is no record in the journey, the real life experience in the journey remains blank in the protagonist's memory. This blind spot in memory as well as in the travel narrative is not limited to the protagonist's journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway but describes the long journey of every individual life. The body as a vessel that holds the fluid mind resembles the frying pan with the chicken. Along with her body, a person's fluid identity transforms into one that is the most suitable for the present. However, from the perspective of the present moment, the body carries the ambiguous self into

²⁷ The English version comes from my translation. 《宗镜录》卷 47：“一念不生，前后际断。”

an unknown future. The imagination recreates and shapes memories of previous life experiences into an autobiography. Chapter Three contains a reflection on autobiography. “On board such a ship, everyone begins putting together a brief autobiography, as though he might otherwise forget who he is.”²⁸ “On board such a ship, everyone begins to lie.”²⁹ On board such a ship, the travelers bid farewell to the past while expecting to reach their destination in the future. However, the present moment aboard a ship is ignored. The vivid experiences on the ship construct the true identity, at the same time this journey on ship and the Trans-Siberian Railway will be narrated in future to form the travelers’ future identity. Thus, for both the protagonist and Tawada, identity is an imaginary concept. Only the body, as a vessel carrying the self as it experiences the present moment, conveys the truth, but the truth, a private sensual experience, remains unspoken.

The frying pan, the traveler’s body, and the ship that carries the travelers all convey the Buddha’s core wisdom of emptiness (“空” in Chinese).³⁰ In the *Heart Sutra*, translated by the contemporary Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh who works in the European Institute of Applied Buddhism in Germany, we read: “Listen Sariputra, form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not separated from form;

²⁸ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, 74.

²⁹ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, “Where Europe Begins”, 75.

³⁰In Chinese version I quote the translation by Xuanzang who is one of the greatest translators in the history of Chinese Buddhism. “观自在菩萨，行深般若波罗蜜多时，照见五蕴皆空，度一切苦厄，舍利子，色不异空，空不异色，色即是空，空即是色。” 《般若波罗蜜多心经》CBETA, T08, no. 253.

form is not separated from emptiness.”³¹ This sentence emphasizes the dialectic relation between emptiness and form. Through the transient form, the invisible truth of emptiness presents itself. The five skandhas (五蘊) are like five rivers who flow constantly. This flow signifies insight in the sense of getting rid of old fixed knowledge. Meanwhile, the form of five skandhas are empty of a separate self. For instance, when pouring out the water in a cup, a cup is empty of water, but at the same time the cup is full of air.³² *The Diamond Sutra* also illustrates a different attitude toward emptiness: “If you view all marks as non-marks, then will you not see the Thus-Come One.”³³ This supplementary argument warns against a possible pessimistic attitude. This flexible Chan doctrine suggests that only by seeing the transformable form will one approach the truth that lies beneath. The sensual experience guides the self contained in the form of the body into the unknown. The protagonist in *The Naked Eye* makes a similar statement. In her first night in Paris, it is raining. All the passersby are in a hurry and the protagonist does not have the courage to stop them and ask for directions. In her observation, “People flitted past, hurrying towards their unknown destinations.”³⁴

The destinations of these imaginative landscape—to be specific, the home in *The Naked Eye* and Moscow in *Where Europe Begins*—may never be reached, but the

³¹ Thich Naht Hahn, “The Other Shore: A New Translation of the Heart Sutra with Commentaries.” Parallax Press, July 18, 2017:126.

³² Thich Naht Hahn, “The Other Shore”, 31.

³³ 《金剛般若經》：「凡所有相皆是虛妄。若見諸相非相，即見如來。」法眼云：「若見諸相非相，即不見如來。」Chanzong songgu lianzhu tongji, X. no. 1295, 65: 502a18 - 20.

³⁴Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 46.

idea of a destination allows the protagonists to start a new journey. In hopes of going back home, the protagonist in *The Naked Eye* embarks on her journey west of the Berlin Wall when she takes the night train of the Trans-Siberian Railway away from Bochum, the little town where her kidnapper had taken her. In *Where Europe Begins*, Moscow, the imaginary landscape of the protagonist's parents, is associated with impossibility. Her father is a communist, considering Moscow as the pilgrimage site, her mother believed in the literature realm of Moscow that one could read the longest novel in one's lifetime in the library in Moscow. Both of them evokes the curiosity of the protagonist towards Moscow but her destination is to go through Siberia by the Trans-Siberian Railway.

A border stands between the imaginary landscape of one's destination and one's present location. In conversations between the Japanese protagonist and strangers, a highly ambivalent concept of the border emerges, which makes movement across borders difficult. In Chapter Seven, Siberia represents a border for the Russian traveler Marsha. Marsha got married and moved to Nachodka, which is "behind Siberia"³⁵. Now she plans to visit her mother in Moscow. Thus, a border can be as wide as an entire region. Additionally, for the Frenchman in Chapter Seventeen, the Berlin Wall is the European border because of the political divide that arose in the Second World War. For him, Europe is identified with the capitalistic Western world and does not include Moscow. A wall can be a border. For the protagonist who is born in Japan, a continent surrounded by water, the water that beats against the shore

³⁵ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 77.

constitutes the border. Thus, the border for her is fluid, and it is imaginary. For the old man in Chapter Fifteen, Tokyo, the capital of capitalistic Japan, is in the East. In contrast, for the protagonist, the East is identified with the capitalistic United States, and the West with communist China. On a spherical globe, the differentiation between the East and the West becomes blurred.

Unlike continents, which are divided along geological or political lines, water is homogeneous, ceaselessly embracing all. The saltwater fish omul captured in Lake Baikal in the middle of the Eurasia continent supports the idea of homogeneous water that flows beneath the continents in Chapter Twelve. As she eats omul, the protagonist senses the fish swimming inside her body, searching for the ultimate destination of its life-long journey.³⁶ Thus, the saltwater fish omul nourishes the protagonist and becomes a part of her, connecting the body of the narrator with the world of water. Like the destination of the omul fish, the ultimate goal of the protagonist in the journey of life remains unknown, but experience itself contains the truth of identity. In the gap between the past and the future lies the vivid life experience of the empty present, which symbolizes the fluidity of identity.

Chapter 2 Hopeless Refugee or Sovereign Self

In Chapter Eight, during her time in Paris, the young Vietnamese woman's problems regarding her permanent residency comes to a climax. She is interrogated by officials at Charles de Gaulle Airport because of her fake passport. After escaping from the

³⁶ Tawada and Susan Bernofsky, "Where Europe Begins", 80.

airport, she wanders through the streets of Paris, looking at countless rooftops, and realizes that she has nowhere to go. In spite of this cruel reality, however, she does not cry or languish. She views the sky of Paris as her roof, shared equally by everyone in this city. “*Countless rooftops separated people from one another, the illegal from the legal, the sick from the professionally active, the voiceless from the lawmakers, but the great roof of Parisian sky was something we all had in common*”³⁷(Tawada, 2009, 164)

From the perspective of the protagonist in *The Naked Eye*, differentiations based on legal status, wealth, health, and social hierarchy are artificial constructs that erect giant walls and destroy intimacy in human relationship. This also relates to Tawada’s idea that contemporary immigrants are afflicted with aphasia. The voiceless immigrants are separated from local mainstream culture, even as they simultaneously participate in the local society. The protagonist’s appreciation of the strange sky indicates immigrants’ attitude toward a new landscape far from home, a Utopian attitude erasing the inequality in social status on the one hand speaks to her will to establish an equal relationship with the local French. And yet, her status as a refugee opens up a new perspective on life for the Vietnamese protagonist. In Chapter Eight, after living under the roofs of various local French, she bids farewell to the passive refugee life by a liberation of mind. She bids farewell to her vagina and to her unborn

³⁷ Yoko Tawada, *The Naked Eye* (New York: New Directions, 2009), 164. This sentence is in Chapter Eight called “Si c’était à refaire” (the same name of a French film released in 1976, translated as *If I Had to Do It All Over Again* or as *Second Chance*).

child. Her spiritual restrictions, represented by the metamorphosis of her body, are lifted from these artificially created assessment concepts. She becomes a completely free individual, wandering in the landscape of Paris.

Equanimity in Metamorphosis

Embracing a broad vision with the sky as her roof, the protagonist introduces the Buddhist philosophy of the relation between self and circumstances. According to Kevin Buckelew, a professor in Religious Study who discusses the concept of the Buddha during the Song dynasty, the term *jing* (境) which denotes any object of cognition, is interpreted as “the mental realm of phenomenon perception with social space of Chan Master’s immediate environment.”³⁸ Thus, *jing* (境) encompasses the physical environment, social interactions, and textual discourse.

In the late seventh and early eighth century, the Chan master, “the great man” (大丈夫 in Chinese) who is characterized as “towering and majestic” (巍巍堂堂 in Chinese), is not only a spiritual warrior, but also a cosmic sovereign.³⁹ The Chan master is in control of his circumstances (*jing* 境), rather than controlled by them. By riding (乘) the circumstances, the Chan master maintains his Stoic stoniness and independent self in *Linjin Lu*, a Buddhist classic attributed to Tang dynasty figures but written and edited in the early decades of the Song dynasty. One was either ruler or ruled, in control or controlled by someone else. In the portrait of the Chan master as

³⁸ Kevin Buckelew, “Inventing Chinese Buddhas: Identity, Authority, and Liberation in Song-Dynasty Chan Buddhism.” 2018:204

³⁹ Buckelew, “Inventing Chinese Buddhas”, 229–241

“the Great Man” in possession of absolute power, Chan masters construct their identity through self-understanding and self-knowledge. A Chan master in *Linjing Lu* is independent from the outside influence and attains the sovereign self in total self-reliance. At the same time, Chan masters carefully practice to avoid ghosthood: Anyone who is unable to attain sovereignty of mind and remains dependent on others’ voice is a ghost who has the ability of misleading other members of the community.⁴⁰ Thus, to ride (乘 in Chinese, *Adhishāna* in Sanskrit) implies that power might be understood as an ability to manipulate and control reality.⁴¹ This expression in the process of riding delineates the ambivalence between the self and objective circumstances.

However, as the Buddhist classics were transformed by the Sixth Patriarch of Chan known as Huineng (惠能), the binary division between Buddhas and ghosts is redefined. It now emphasizes shades of gray to allay the anxiety caused by casting the Buddha and *māra* as polar opposites in *Linjin Lu*. Huineng (惠能) highlights emptiness (无念 in Chinese); since superficial appearances can be deceiving, the polarized concept of Buddha and *māra* is deconstructed. Drawing on Huineng’s Chan Buddhism interpretation, the nothingness (无 in Chinese) of Chinese Taoism

⁴⁰ To be exact, it is said in *Linjin Lu* that buddha and *māra* are two *jing*, one pure and the other impure. “然佛与魔是染净二境”, T. no. 1985, 47: 498b4; translation adapted from Sasaki, *The Record of Linji*, 190, with alterations.

⁴¹ Based on the discussion of Buddhism in the Foucauldian disciplinary regime by Malcolm Voyce, who is a professor focusing on Law and Religion in Maquarie University, power functions in constructing the subject in Buddhist discourse. His interpretation of the religious body in the Buddhist hierarchy will not be included, but his annotation about *Adhishāna* will be emphasized here in order to bring another perspective on the self and objective circumstances.

advocated by Laozi (老子) and Zhuangzi (庄子) is integrated into the highest realm of emptiness (空 in Chinese) in Buddhism and deeply influenced Asian Buddhist philosophy in Japan and Southeast Asia. Although this philosophical position still entails achieving a pure Buddha state and does not fundamentally deny the ultimate state of purity, Huineng conceives of the inner self and the outer circumstances through the concept of emptiness. From then on, the binary of being in control and being controlled in the relation between self and circumstances is neutralized. Chan Buddhism forbids the gradual ascetic strategy as a method to reach an epiphany. Rather than following the will of Buddha Śākyamuni (释迦摩尼 in Chinese, an enlightened Buddha, also a founder of Buddhist religion who lived in India in the sixth century B.C.E.), religious authority shifts to the word and deed credited to the Chan master who is understood as indigenous living Chinese Buddhas. For instance, during the Tang Dynasty, Chan master Changsha Jingcen (长沙景岑) (788–868), who follows the teachings of Mazu Daoyi,⁴² is asked about Mazu’s idea of the “everyday mind” (平常心 in Chinese). To which he replies, “If you want to sleep, then sleep; if you want to sit, then sit.”⁴³ The Buddhist philosophy of the “everyday mind” gives away the ascetic rules and returns to the nature. The equanimity mood in the “everyday mind” liberates Chan Buddhists from the meticulous discernment of the

⁴² Mazu Daoyi, (709-788, 马祖道一 in Chinese) is an influential abbot of Chan Buddhism during the Tang dynasty who is considered the founder of the Hongzhou school of Chan. His master is Nanyue Huairang (677-741, 南岳怀让), who is a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng. Historically, the Hongzhou school led Chan Buddhism into its “golden age.”

⁴³ 問：「如何是平常心？」師云：「要眠則眠，要坐則坐。」 *Zutang ji*, j. 17, v. 2, 769

sovereign self and reconstructs the aspirants' self-identity. Instead of the power of controlling circumstances, the simple ability to accept transient circumstances and respond accordingly became the new standard for recognizing Chan masters. By accepting metamorphosis in circumstances and transforming accordingly, individuals achieve equanimity through "everyday mind" beyond the turmoil of phenomena and the social environment.

The homelessness of the protagonist in *The Naked Eye*, in the wisdom of "everyday mind," is transformed into infinite freedom. As she embraces her freedom, the protagonist forms a new identity. In the artificially erected walls of social status, the protagonist is a hopeless refugee; in her own vision of the Parisian sky, she is a sovereign self.

After leaving the prostitute Marie's basement to reduce Marie's economic burden, the protagonist resides under the roofs of others but never attains comfort. Her first residence west of the Berlin Wall is the result of a violent crime: Jörg abducts her and takes her back to his home in the small town of Bochum. Jörg assaults her sexually and is obsessed with the idea of getting her pregnant. During her time in Bochum, the protagonist lives under Jörg's roof and has sex with him. Being his girl friend softens the dominant power and violence of Jörg in their relationship. A climactic fight scene, in which the protagonist attacks Jörg with giant scissors, illustrates the violence and tension of their dull marriage-like relation. "Before a man whose name was probably Jörg climbed on top of my chest, blades closed and with the tip pointing to the sky. In the dark, the man couldn't see the scissors. He flung

himself on top of me, and scissors pierced his flesh. I could feel the blades piercing the space between his ribs”⁴⁴ “The moment he got up again, he kicked me in the chest.”⁴⁵ “Jörg grabbed me by the ankle, lifted it easily into the air and held me upside-down. Then he opened the lips of my vulva with his fingers and stuffed everything he could find inside: the toothbrush, the electric razor, the little bottle of eye drops, the comb.”⁴⁶ *The Naked Eye* contains few descriptions of violent scenes. This scene, however, eliminates any sense of ambiguity that may have arisen if readers understood the domestic life that resulted from her violent abduction as positive change. Jörg dreams of creating a family; he is seemingly protective towards the protagonist, but at the same time never introduces her as a family member to his parents. For Jörg, any intimacy with his parents is long past. Jörg’s father paid for his studies, but Jörg’s professional failure makes their relationship even worse. The dual inequality of being both a female and an illegal residence captures the protagonist’s less privileged position. Thus, Jörg does not respect the protagonist as an individual; consequently, she does not view the roof over her head that Jörg provides as a comforting place.

The protagonist comes to Paris on the night train on the Trans-Siberian Railway. In the rainy first night in Paris, she wishes she were a dog, because people would not ask where a dog came from and where it belonged. “If I were a dog, I will

⁴⁴Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 25

⁴⁵Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 25

⁴⁶Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 26

immediately feel safe in any city”⁴⁷ Her non-human aspiration expresses her sense of insecurity when she arrives in Paris, the city governed by a different political ideology. Her lack of a residency permit intensifies her anxiety.

Although both Ai Van and the Vietnamese doctor Tuong Linh speak Vietnamese, this does not mean that the protagonist can communicate frankly with them. Under Ai Van’s roof, the protagonist cannot express her opinions freely. Her pocket money was given to her by Ai Van, so Ai Van might object if the protagonist paid too much for movie tickets; Ai Van might also complain if the protagonist goes to the cinema instead of to a party held by Ai Van’s friend. The protagonist lives in Ai Van’s home, thus she must abide by his rules. In their daily chats, she cannot express her opinions freely. She does not judge the food Ai Van offers nor does she complain about the noise Ai Van makes.

Leaving Ai Van’s roof, the protagonist meets Charles in the cinema. They watch movies together and talk freely. She and Charles like each other, but Charles who quit his studies and works in a gas station plans a more secure future for the protagonist. Tuong Linh, his doctor and friend, apparently is wealthier than him. Ignoring the protagonist’s feeling, Charles leaves the protagonist. Paralleling the plot of *Les parpluies de Cherbourg*, the last film they watched together, which features a girl who chooses a wealthy suitor rather than a young boy who works in gas station, the protagonist lives with the Vietnamese doctor Tuong Linh rather than with Charles. The only difference is that the protagonist has no right to choose. The

⁴⁷Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 46

Vietnamese doctor eats the food she prepared for her dinner, and assumes that she wants to be his wife while ignoring her love for Charles. The protagonist becomes Tuong Linh's girlfriend. He does not understand why she does not attend language school and accuses the protagonist of not being responsible for herself. "He would then take my hands, which were still lying on his shoulders, and remove them."⁴⁸

Tuong Linh offers her a place to reside in, but he does not understand the protagonist's love for movies, nor her true identity. He is not even prepared to bear her burden. After escaping from Charles de Gaulle Airport, the protagonist runs back to the Vietnamese doctor's house but the lights are no longer turned on. It explains Tuong Linh's presence in their planned Thailand's trip, at the same time implies the dislocation of the protagonist. This roof is no longer available for the protagonist.

Chapter Eight describes the protagonist's transformation at Charles de Gaulle Airport. The airport is supposed to be the point of departure for her new journey to Thailand, whereas she will start her new life and have a valid passport. The protagonist compares her feeling in the airport with its in the hospital in her childhood memory. At a sudden, the protagonist's body is separated from her consciousness by the body action of nausea. At the boarding gate, travelers wait for inspection from officers, like patients waiting for doctors. Additionally, the specific steps of the examination resemble the operation process, both of which are unknown for the participants. The officers determine the nationality of passengers much like doctors diagnose diseases. However, the difference is that in the hospital a child may be

⁴⁸Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 146

delivered, a symbol of hope and life, while at the airport the protagonist is stranded in a room for the undocumented, destroying her hope for a new life.

Her vomiting before the inspection, compared with vomiting during pregnancy,⁴⁹ separates the protagonist's body from her consciousness. With the voice from her body, "you'll feel better if you vomit everything up again,"⁵⁰ her body erases all names in her memory and fights against hypnotism and drugs given by the officials. Her conscious life revolves around the relations with others who have helped her in Paris and with her family in Vietnam. The protagonist's amnesia protects these kind people from possible prosecution because they housed an illegal immigrant. After several bouts of vomiting, all these names are wiped from her consciousness. Therefore, "life before the airport no longer existed for me."⁵¹

After rejecting all conscious connections, the roles played by the film star Catherine Deneuve remain. The name of Catherine Deneuve slips out from the protagonist's mouth in her sleep. In the room at the airport, an officer in a white coat views a film with her on TV and discusses the meaning of motherhood. In the French film *Si c'était à refaire*, Catherine Berger, played by Catherine Deneuve, kills the manager who raped her and is imprisoned for many years. After her release she immediately visits her son who came to birth because of the rape. Her son, Simon, has grown into an adult and fallen in love with her best girlfriend. Despite some tension in

⁴⁹Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 151

⁵⁰Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 155

⁵¹Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 156

accepting this complex situation, Catherine Berger finally has a close relationship with her son and they become a family again, when she finds love with her son's teacher. For the officer, the son embodies the hope of a life after release. But the Vietnamese protagonist disagrees with this opinion. As stated in Chapter Five *Indochine*, "With a natural mother, you can never be sure whether or not she wanted the child. Nor can you ever know if she truly wanted to have a daughter and not a son."⁵² The only fact in the film is that Catherine Berger has a son. Thus the additional interpretation for the son as her hope to life is irrational. This echoes the protagonist's indifferent view of her pregnancy. Collapsed in the park of Paris, the nameless protagonist suffers miscarriage. She wakes up in a hospital with no regrets. "My body felt like the body of another person. It had nothing to do with me – the only thing connecting us was pain."⁵³ Pregnancy for her is accidental. Miscarriage offers relief since it prevents her from having to embrace maternity and female identity. Both these body metamorphoses are bare facts, requiring the protagonist to accept.

Not keen on returning home, she flees from the concept of home. "For a long time, returning home had been my only wish. Now it felt like a trap."⁵⁴ In line with the previous distrust of the concept of home, she frees herself from the limitation of a residency and embraces her present life in Paris away from all the conceptual scheme in identity, like legitimacy, nationality and wealth. Similarly, her plan of a journey

⁵²Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 113

⁵³Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 160

⁵⁴Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 104

back home expressed in “To Moscow, to Moscow, to Moscow”⁵⁵ is abandoned and transforms into an ideal imaginative space that offers her a long-absent sense of comfort and security. Thus, after abandoning her ideal notion of Moscow and home, she faces the present moment in Paris where she is homeless. “Barefoot, and uncombed, no roof over my head, no visa in my passport, no passport in my purse, no purse in my hand, no name in my head.”⁵⁶ Floating on uncontrolled circumstances, the protagonist enjoys being nameless and roofless.

Sitting on a park bench, the protagonist says to her vagina: “I’m going to leave you. You’re staying here.”⁵⁷ She bids farewell to her vagina that appeared in the previous chapters as an organ representing sex transaction and kept her under a roof, and to her unborn child, thus renouncing the intimate bond of motherhood. Following her heart, she returns to Marie's basement. In the turmoil of circumstances, the protagonist in *The Naked Eye* passively suffers hardship, but actively readies herself for an unknown future in the Buddhist mood of equanimity. In this wisdom of “everyday mind,” a sovereign self is transformed into mature self.

Nomad Subjectivity in Space

In the discourse of migrant subjectivity in Europe, Tawada’s nameless female protagonists are often in the vortex of nomad subjectivity. In *The Naked Eye*, the

⁵⁵Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 41

⁵⁶Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 162

⁵⁷Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 160

transformation of the protagonist's subjectivity in the airport scene offers a broader context to the notion of the nomad given by Rosi Braidotti, distinguished professor at Utrecht University whose research engages feminist philosophy and cultural studies. According to Braidotti's concept of nomad, "The nomad does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration of the kind of subject who has relinquished all ideas, desire, or nostalgia for fixity."⁵⁸ Suffering homeless hardship as an illegal migrant west of the Berlin Wall, the Vietnamese protagonist in *The Naked Eye* certainly cannot be viewed as a nomad. However, in the farewell scene to her vagina in Chapter Eight, she embraces infinite freedom under the roof of the Parisian sky. Against the fixity of artificially constructed concepts, the voiceless protagonist is a nomad. The transformed attitude in displacement enriches her migrant identity and turns her into a global citizen.

Following the tradition of the German-speaking Enlightenment in Central Europe, the Jews present a litmus test that marks the conceptual difference between cosmopolitanism and nomadism.⁵⁹ Jews, migrants and undocumented immigrants are all conceived as rootless and marginal; they are excluded but turned into global citizen in twenty-first century. The tension between cosmopolitan and nomad is ongoing in migrant literature. In Pascale LeFountain's discussion of woman and polyglots, she states that the concept of the nomad subject emphasizes a desire for

⁵⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 22

⁵⁹ Sander L. Gilman, "Aliens vs. Predators: Cosmopolitan Jews vs. Jewish Nomads." *European Review of History = Revue Européenne D'histoire* 23, no. 5-6 (2016): 784-96.

dislocation and linguistic metamorphosis in multiple languages, whereas cosmopolitanism focuses on travel across borders.⁶⁰

During the interesting annotation for the original western words, Tawada brings illuminating rumination on the protagonist's transcultural experience and enriches the original meaning of the word in European culture. In these linguistic metamorphoses, literacy functions as an imaginative private space where the protagonist survives. As another layer of circumstances (*jing*), this imaginative space frames nomad subjectivity in the discourse of migrant identity.

In *The Naked Eye*, Chapter Five "Indochina" features a bitter conversation between Ai Van and the protagonist. Indochina is neither India nor China, but a landscape that was previously owned by the French government and that experienced the communist revolution. This Peninsula is reformed into the capitalized countries of Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia. The film *Indochine* records this political transformation and the bitterness in a colonized landscape. Played by Catherine Deneuve, the mother Elaine loves her adopted daughter Camilie so much that she gives up her relationship with a French Navy Jean-Baptiste. Camilie as a communist is captured and imprisoned for many years but remains firm in her belief in socialism. After many years, the door of the camp is opened. Camilie is released and picked up by Elaine, when Elaine bursts out crying after Camilie's words.

⁶⁰ Pascale LeFountain follows Braidotti's "paradox of European identity" to elaborate Yoko Tawada's female protagonists into possible Utopian future of nomad in contemporary European Union. Pascale Lafountain. "Of Women and Polyglots: Yoko Tawada's "Where Europe Begins" and Rosi Braidotti's Transnational Feminist Nomadology." 2016.

Conveyed through Ai Van's translation, Camilie's words flow into the mind of the protagonist and evoke her sorrow for her homeland Vietnam. "Go back to France! Indochina no longer exists! It is dead!" While Ai Van interprets this as a happy ending since Camilie is released, the protagonist sinks into sorrow. Like the staunch communist Camilie, the protagonist records the breakdown of the Vietnamese and Soviet regime. She has to accept political failure. Her homeland still faces the destiny of a colony in spite of the revolution and political negotiation. Between capitalist India and socialist China is Vietnam on the landscape of Indochina that was once governed by Ho Chi Minh and suffers the endless pain of colonialism. The protagonist will never go back to her original home since the political regime has been transformed into a state that is unknown to her, nor will she return to who she was in the past because her life experience in Western Europe has transformed her into a new self.

Between memories of her sweet home in Vietnam and an unknown future west of the Berlin Wall, unique annotation towards the word "cinema" creates a new imaginative space for the protagonist to dwell in for the present moment, away from the displeasure of a cruel reality of living in Paris illegally. The word "cinema" is separated into "cine" and "Ma," which represent an ideal socialist world in China and the warm protective role of a mother. "The entrance of the movie theater welcomed me like the arms of a 'Ma' ." ⁶¹ The part "Ma" gives the cinema a maternal role; she embodies care for the protagonist narrated as "I." "She never thrust me away, not even

⁶¹Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 108.

today, though I'd seen the same film three times already."⁶² Cinema, as a secure space, not only offers protection from visa checks by the police, but also embodies the identity of protagonist out of her experience of watching the films played by Catherine Deneuve.

In the imaginative world of cinema, the role played by Catherine Deneuve becomes an agent of the protagonist's identity. As she watches Catherine Deneuve in the cinema, the protagonist asserts that "My person vanished in the darkness of the movie theater, and all that remained was my burning retinas reflecting the screen. There was no longer any woman whose name was 'I'. As far as I was concerned, the only woman in the world was you, and so I did not exist."⁶³ In her desperate interactions with roles played by Catherine Deneuve, the protagonist in *The Naked Eye* voices her spiritual solitude; no one in her real life in Paris respects her thoughts and communicates with her freely; at the same time, she forges a new identity in her intimate relation with the characters played by Catherine Deneuve. To be specific, in the film *Belle de Jour* played by Catherine Deneuve, Séverine works as a prostitute in the afternoon, acting out sexual fantasies, including domination, sadomasochism, and bondage. When Séverine treats the Mongolian beekeeper as a customer and does not refuse him, the protagonist deduces that Séverine would also like her because, according to her mother, she is the descendant of a Mongolian beekeeper. "Some day I'll visit you, I'll knock at the door of your house and say that I'm the beekeeper's

⁶²Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 108.

⁶³Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 61

daughter. You'll open the door and let me in.”⁶⁴ In another scene, besides indulging in a fragile fantasy of being accepted by Séverine, the protagonist imagines herself as the role Camilie, and speaks directly from the Camilie's lips. When Eliane played by Catherine Deneuve shares a mango with her adopted daughter Camilie, a seven-year-old Vietnamese girl, the protagonist dwells in the body of this girl. “Truthfully, you are dubbing my story as you place one piece of mango after the other on my tongue. The juicy fruit fills the hollow of my mouth, and now I speak only French without understanding what I am saying.”⁶⁵

Cinema, a physical public space, allows for an open discourse of circumstances (*jing*) in which the protagonist interacts with the roles played by Catherine Deneuve. Edward W. Soja's theory of the Thirdspace facilitates a better understanding of the cinema.⁶⁶ According to Soja, Firstspace epistemologies tend to privilege objectivity and materiality and aim toward a formal science of space. The social production of Firstspace is treated as a historical unfolding, an evolving sequence of changing geographies that result from the dynamic relations between human beings and their constructed and natural environments. Secondspace epistemologies have tended to arise in reaction to the excessive closure and enforced objectivity of mainstream Firstspace analysis, pitting the artist versus the scientist or

⁶⁴ Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 143

⁶⁵ Tawada, *The Naked Eye*, 103

⁶⁶ Edward W. Soja. "Thirdspace : Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-imagined Places. " Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996.

engineer, the idealist versus the materialist, the subjective versus the objective. In its purest form, Secondspace is entirely identical, made up of the projections of conceived or imagined geographies onto the empirical world. Thirdspace epistemologies arise from the sympathetic deconstruction and heuristic reconstitution of the Firstspace-Secondspace duality. Thirdspace is the space where all places can be seen from every angle, each standing clearly while, at the same time, a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that we all share but that cannot be seen and understood completely, an “unimaginable universe” or as Lefebvre would put it, “the most general of products.” Everything comes together in Thirdspace; subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the trans-disciplinary, everyday life and unending history.

In Firstspace, the protagonist visits the geographical location of the cinema, away from the displeasure of her real life. In the darkness offered by cinema, she is invisible to others and remains secure. In her real-life transcultural experience in Western Europe, she is alienated from the mainstream social life of local French culture. Like a colonized victim, she is in a marginalized position and cannot go back to her original home in socialist Vietnam, nor can she assimilate into life in Paris. The protagonist narrated as “I” in *The Naked Eye* receives the generosity and kindness given by Ai Van, Charles and Tuong Linh, but remains voiceless in her limited living condition.

Art in the form of film represents her Secondspace. As she watches a film, her identity melds with the roles played by Catherine Deneuve. In the refuge of the cinema, she creates an ideal space in the darkness as a liberating realm. Cinema offers the protagonist an opportunity to interact with imaginative roles.

These imaginative interactions represent her Thirdspace and combine memories of her previous life and daydreaming fantasies. Thus, art as a third force counters the war zone that extends between home and foreign country, between legality and illegality, between capitalism and socialism; it saves the individual self of the protagonist. In this real-and-imagined predicament, the opposing relation between the “I” and the “you” has been dissolved; the nameless protagonist forms a new identity.

As in the imaginative space of cinema, in *Where Europe Begins* the Japanese protagonist worries about her mother when her mother is reading. Her mother, who enjoys reading, might be lost in the forest of books. With this form of literacy, an imaginative space is created. In the playfulness of literacy, the protagonists in Yoko Tawda’s work are freed of the fixity of languages barriers and create a new space for their voices.

From a Buddhist perspective, a fluid self not limited to geographical movement across borders, signifies the continuous transformation in life journey. With the equanimity of the “everyday mind,” private and direct life journeys in various circumstances (*jing*) prompt the global citizen represented as Asian migrant and undocumented immigrant to actively create their voices in the host countries as a

sovereign self.

Conclusion

Freed from the shackles of religion as soteriology, Buddhist philosophy in the novel is not a pessimistic escape from reality, but expresses an attitude of reconciliation that guides the life journey of Yoko Tawada's protagonists. In *The Naked Eye*, the body as an organic entity facilitates the protagonist's sensual experience of the outer world. With the equanimity of the "everyday mind," the protagonist sees the silver line behind the dark clouds of her life as an illegal migrant—she enjoys the Parisian sky and her love of film. She delivers herself naked to the unknown western Europe, accepting all the luck and misfortune. Under the isolated roofs, she follows her love in art with the form of film and establishes a imaginary realm to dwell in. This seemingly desperate young woman embraces this new nameless subject by interacting with characters in the imagery world of cinema. In *Where European Begins*, the body as an objective vessel carries a fluid subject. The protagonist's insistence on the homogeneity of water is also a reflective approach on the ambiguous concept of border. During travel, drinking this homogeneous water is not dangerous, but enlightening. The transcultural sensual experience, along with the rumination of emptiness in the present moment, creates a new infinite subject. This new subject as a global citizen is no longer an isolated person, but is herself a world that contains continents. Tawada's work gives new life to Buddhist philosophy in the discourse of the self; in turn, Buddhist philosophy guides contemporary commoners in fluidity by

adjusting into the most suitable way of living. How to cross the border between here and there, requires each mobile self to sense the present.

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