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Anzen ka, kiken ka: radiation anxiety in the multilingual *Hamlet No See* by Tawada Yōko

1. Introduction: Psychological Trauma and Multilingualism

This study aims to investigate the relationship between psychological trauma and multilingualism through an analysis of the poem *Hamlet No See* (2011?) by Tawada Yōko, a Japanese, naturalized German author, who, since 2011, has frequently portrayed psychological trauma related to radiation anxiety (radiophobia)[1] in her literary production, which has always been characterized by innovative linguistic experimentations. In my analysis, I apply the approach developed in trauma studies, the academic field that since the 1990s has been investigating the relationship between psychological trauma and its transposition into transmedial art products. After a brief introduction to how psychological trauma affects the property of language and the potential of multilingualism in portraying the traumatic experience, the investigation moves to the case study of Tawada's *Hamlet No See* to explore how radiophobia is conveyed in Tawada's multilingual word plays.

One of the main symptoms related to psychological trauma is the difficulty in verbalizing the traumatic experience. The expressive deficit goes beyond the incapacity to verbalize in speech the emotional discomfort of coping with stressful environmental stimuli which have, in turn, challenged the individual's resilience to stress and loss, provoking an overwhelming sense of vulnerability.[2] Testimonial narrative proves to be a valuable field of inquiry for exploring the

[1] The term 'radiophobia' denotes an exaggerated fear toward ionizing radiation. Despite initially being implemented with the almost exclusive reference to Černobyl', the term became mainstream after the Fukushima accident.
Pearce, Fred: Fallout. Disasters, Lies, and the Legacy of the Nuclear Age. Boston: Beacon Press 2018, 152–159.

[2] In fact, among the most common sequelae of psychological trauma, there are aphasic states in which the traumatic experience has altered the understanding or expression of words; similarly, alexithymic (the inexpressibility of trauma) subjects manifest difficulty recognizing, expressing, and discerning different emotions and bodily sensations as the psychological trauma alters the neuroanatomical conditions of the amygdala and the hippocampus. While the amygdala is the centre for the integration of higher neurological processes such as emotions, also involved in emotional memory systems, the hippocampus plays a crucial role in forming explicit memories (both declarative and semantic), the transformation of short-term memory into long-term memory, as

limits and potential of written and oral language because it promotes the reorganization of the individual's emotional sphere through a reevaluation of the traumatic event.[3] The testimonial product thus becomes the heterotopic space in which the ego, fragmented by trauma, enters into a dialogue of confrontation with the pre-trauma integral whole, negotiating a new life and identity: "The testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal 'thou'". [4] The relationship between psychological trauma and its verbal expression is therefore of therapeutic importance and becomes even more complex in cases of bilingualism or plurilingual speakers.

While psychological trauma presents an overwhelming experience for the individual, the possibility of referring to a non-unique but broad and multifaceted linguistic heritage seems to help fill the void generated by the inexpressible.[5] Thus, neuroimaging studies have proven how the use of the mother tongue would be traceable to more intimate spheres of the self while the acquired second and third languages would prove to be ideal tools for taming the psychopathological sequelae resulting from the traumatizing encounter.[6] This domestication process allows traumatic memories to be recalibrated on new interpretive codes derived from the attribution of a new (and affirmative) semantic value. For example, in a qualitative study aimed at establishing the differences in speech production among native and non-native narratives of trauma, Bailey and colleagues demonstrated how the use of non-native languages would return a less detailed and more neutral, possibly an even positive description of the experience:

> L2 narratives had significantly more positive emotionality than L1 narratives […] which suggests individuals may artificially portray themselves as more idealizing (i.e. using positive descriptors with little or no substantiation) or dismissive (i.e. trivializing their experience) when communicating in their L2.[7]

well as in spatial navigation. A change in the volume of these two brain areas due to a chemical imbalance attributable to excess cortisol – the ultimate stress hormone – causes egodystonic stress for the organism. This is why psychological trauma in the developmental age is considered a rupture in the biographical continuity of the individual who encounters difficulty in verbalizing the traumatic experience. Liotti, Giovanni, and Benedetto Farina: Sviluppi traumatici. Disturbi conseguenti allo sviluppo traumatogenico: il problema nosografico. In: Eziopatogenesi, clinica e terapia della dimensione dissociativa. Varese: Raffaello Cortina Editore 2011, 19–30.

[3] Ferrari, Stefano: Scrittura come riparazione. Saggio sulla letteratura e psicoanalisi. Bari: Laterza 1994, 3–22.

[4] Dori, Laub: Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle. In: Cathy Caruth (ed.): Trauma Exploration in Memory. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1995, 61–75, 70.

[5] Bailey, Cassandra, Emily McIntyre, Aleyda Arreola, Amanda Venta: What Are We Missing? How Language Impacts Trauma Narratives. In: Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, vol. 13 (2020), 153–161.

[6] Schwanberg, Jennifer Suzanne: Does language of retrieval affect the remembering of trauma? In: Journal of Trauma & Dissociation, vol. 11 (2010), no. 1, 44–56.

[7] Bailey, Cassandra, Emily McIntyre, Aleyda Arreola, Amanda Venta (note 5), 157.

The significant cognitive effort which is required to express oneself in the second or third language diverts attention toward the content of the speech, producing a desensitizing effect toward the traumatic experience and resulting in a diminished perception of the severity of the trauma. Moreover, "those who are asked about the event in both their first and second language use different classifications of vocabulary in each language". [8] Despite its maladaptive connotation, this mechanism has the merit of fostering a reevaluation of the traumatic memories and, thus, the healing of the subject. It is, therefore, no accident that the phenomenon of code-switching is highly documented in the clinical psychology literature. In this process, the extra textual unspoken, the omission and the gap,[9] also contribute to the definition of the traumatic experience and thus become an integral part of the testimonial act:

> Not only can language be part or cause of traumatic events but trauma can also, as a consequence, severely impact on a person's linguistic repertoire: on his or her inclination to learn languages, to use, retain, or abandon a particular language, or to take refuge in silence.[10]

It is not by mere chance that the approach to trauma studies has long questioned the value attributed to testimonial works. Cathy Caruth has consistently argued for the inexpressibility of traumatic experiences as beyond the reach of language,[11] interpreting psychological trauma as "a repeated suffering of the event".[12] In this sense, Kalì Tal denotes new attributions of meaning to specific words describing the traumatic experience:

> Traumatic experience catalyzes a transformation of meaning in the signs individuals use to represent their experiences. Words such as blood, terror, agony and madness gain new meaning, within the context of the trauma, and survivors emerge from the traumatic environment with a new set of definitions.[13]

Eventually, the testimony finds concreteness in the oral or written activities once the barrier of expressive inability has been overcome. Verbosity is particularly inclusive towards different linguistic registers and idioms, especially in the face of psychological trauma experienced by

[8] Straus, Lori: Language and Transgenerational Trauma. In: Text & Form 2020, https://www.textform.com/en/blog-en/language-and-transgenerational-trauma/, 13 June 2023.
[9] LaCapra, Dominick: Writing History, Writing Trauma. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001, 185.
[10] Busch, Brigitta, and Tim McNamara: Language and Trauma: An Introduction. In: Applied Linguistics, vol. 41 (2020), no. 3, 323–333, 327.
[11] Caruth, Cathy: Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1996.
[12] Caruth, Cathy: Trauma Exploration in Memory. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1995, 10.
[13] Tal, Kalì: Worlds of Hurt. Reading the Literatures of Trauma. New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, 16.

social minorities or in the case of liminal situations where the subject lives a border life: stateless, displaced, and refugees. Hence, when the traumatic experience takes shape in the testimonial accounts, such heterogeneity of language becomes a crucial element of analysis which sheds light on trauma and its modes of representation.[14]

The author under study in this paper is a prime example. Tawada Yōko has made her bilingualism one of the main features of her poetics alongside her ironic view of stereotypes and culturemes typical of her geographical areas of affiliation, i.e. Japan and Germany.[15] Her production interacts simultaneously with Japanese and German, not only in self-translation exercises, but especially in linguistic experiments. This added value to Tawada's literary production makes the classification of *ekkyō bungaku* 越境文学 (migration literature) reductive.[16] The author herself likes to define her production in terms of *ekusofonī* エクソフォニー, a definition by which she denotes "the generic condition of transcending the native language".[17] By ignoring her Germanophone or Japanophone affiliation and, conversely, emphasizing the global connotation of her literary production, Tawada questions the definition of "world literature", and, in doing so, she has become "one of the most important contemporary writers".[18] Thus, the first novel written simultaneously in the two languages, *Das Nackte Auge/Tabi wo suru hadaka no me*『旅をする裸の眼』(The Travelling Naked Eye, 2004) is a multilingual writing practice – 'translingual writing' according to Pajević[19] – exophonic in its form, not content, as the author herself states: "I do not aspire to cross the border; I want to reside within it".[20] In this ability to write simultaneously in languages other than her mother

[14] See Kurtz, Roger J.: Introduction. In: Kurtz, Roger (ed.): Trauma and Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, 1–18.

[15] These culture-specific elements in Tawada's production emerge above all in the experimentation with multilingualism: tongue twisters and proverbs invented from scratch that play on alliteration can only be understood by Japanese or German speakers.

[16] *ekkyō bungaku* 越境文学 was also translated as 'transborder literature' by Young (see Young, Victoria: Beyond "Transborder": Tawada Yōko's Vision of Another World Literature. In: Japanese Language and Literature, vol. 5 (2021), no. 1, 1–33, 1; other terms in German and Japanese, respectively, are: *Gastarbaiterliterature* and *kureōru bungaku* クレオール文学 or *imin bungaku* 移民文学 (see Barbieri, Francesco Eugenio: Digesting the foreign. Food and Eating in the works of Tawada Yōko. In: Food issues 食事 Interdisciplinary Studies on Food in Modern and Contemporary East Asia. Florence: Firenze University Press 2021, 77–92, 78.

[17] Tawada, Yōko: Ekusofonī. Bogo no soto he deru tabi. Tōkyō: Watanabe shoten 2012, 3.

[18] Slaymaker, Douglas: Tawada Yoko: On Writing and Rewriting. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books 2020, 1.

[19] Pajević, Marko: Adventures in Language: Yoko Tawada's Exophonic Explorations of German. In: Oxford German Studies, vol. 48 (2019), no. 4, 494–504.

[20] Tawada, Yōko: Kotoba to aruku nikki. Tōkyō: watanabe shoten, 2013, 35.

tongue and mix different languages to achieve new results and original effects, Tawada falls into the category of 'ambilinguals', as identified by Steven Kellman.[21]

In particular, Tawada's multilingualism and authorial interest in linguistic experimentation become crucial tools for conveying Japanese collective trauma resulting from the triple Tōhoku catastrophe of March 11, 2011. The date became a watershed in Japanese recent history, as the double natural disaster of earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant shook Japanese domestic politics and resulted in massive responses from a literary perspective. Tawada's recent novels, which maintain the characteristic of being a breeding ground for linguistic ambivalence in different forms, are dystopian in nature, thus stressing the experimental connotation of her writing. Indeed, the triple catastrophe of March 11th represented a decisive turning point in Japanese literary production as it forced citizens and authors to deal with the danger of large-scale nuclear contamination. This has resulted in the revival in the public debate of the traumatic past of the double atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, related to Fukushima as atomized cities.

This investigation proposes a particular case study on the poem *Hamlet No See* by Tawada, written in Japanese/English and translated by the author herself into German. The heterogeneity of Tawada's production cannot be fully addressed in this analysis and will be limited to underlining how the multilingualism performed by Tawada in her poem can assist in verbalizing psychological trauma related to radiophobia by adopting a trauma study perspective on psychological trauma and its transposition into testimonial accounts. The poem also constitutes a base for intertextual experimentation through the revival of cross-cultural elements such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene I [To be, or not to be]. The final aim of this study is to frame *Hamlet No See* within the author's literary production and to investigate its multilingualism as a strategy for overcoming the inexplicable.

2. Tawada Yōkoʼs exophonic response to 3.11 trauma

Tawada Yōko 多和田葉子 is a contemporary Japanese and German writer and winner of the prestigious Akutagawa and Tanizaki Literary Awards for *Inu muko iri* 『犬婿入り』 (The

[21] Kellmann, Steven G.: The Translingual Imagination. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2000. Kimura, Saeko: Sono ato no shinsaigo bungakuron. Tōkyō: Seidosha 2018.

Bridegroom was a Dog, 1993) and *Yogisha no yako ressha* (Suspects on the Night Train, 2003), respectively. Her popularity transcends national borders. She lived for years in Hamburg and later moved to Berlin, where she has resided since 1982. She was also awarded the Goethe Medal (2005), prising her contribution to German culture, and in 2016 the author became the recipient of the famous German literary prize, the Kleist Prize.[22] In her numerous publications of a bilingual Japanese-German nature she explores language boundaries, borrowings and loan translation. The poem analyzed here – *Hamlet no See* – is no exception.

Tawada firmly believes in the power of words and language. What makes her production peculiar is precisely her ability to play with language (*kotoba asobi* 言葉遊び), using its nuances and multiple interpretations to cross national boundaries in order to construct a universal language that then becomes the literary one.[23] Prominent in her writings – novels, verse and theatrical screenplays – are homophones, assonances and the revisitation of Chinese characters, tongue twisters and neologisms that are the echoes of the author's interest not only in the complexity of the plot but also in the musicality of the text. Tawada's eclectic cross-culturalism stands out, particularly in the intertextual references, from which influences of Paul Celan and Franz Kafka can be seen,[24] thus proving the passion of the author for non-Japanese literature, as confirmed by her degree in Russian literature from the Waseda University in Tōkyō and her subsequent long academic career studying German literature.[25] My investigation focuses on the relation between multilingual, transcultural, and linguistic experiments in the poem *Hamlet no See* to radiophobia, the psychological trauma of living in the constant worry of radioactive contamination in the post-Fukushima environment.

The poem can be placed in the broader context of Tawada's writing that has been dramatically affected by the Tōhoku triple disaster and which gravitates around the trauma of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. Like many other Japanese authors, Tawada felt

[22] Dickinson College: Author Yoko Tawada to Deliver Multilingual Performance at Dickinson. In Dickinson College Official Site, 2018, https://www.dickinson.edu/news/article/3052/author_yoko_tawada_to_deliver_multilingual_performance_at_dickinson, 18 January 2024.

[23] Tawada's consideration on language interplays is the main team of her *Kotoba to aruku nikki* 『言葉と歩く日記』. Tawada, Yōko (note 20).

[24] Klook, Carsten: Die Wortreisende. In: Zeit Online, 2008, https://www.zeit.de/online/2008/38/yoko-tawada/seite-3, 13 June 2023; Tawada, Yōko: CELAN READS JAPANESE. In: The White Review (Trans. Susan Bernofsky), 2013, https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/celan-reads-japanese/, 13 June 2023.

[25] After a Master degree obtained at the University of Hamburg in German literature, Tawada received a Ph.D. in German literature at the University of Zurich. Moreover, in 2022 the author was awarded an honorary doctorate at SOAS University of London. Soas University of London Official Site, 2022, https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/news/soas-awards-academic-luminaries-honorary-doctorates-summer-2022-ceremonies, 13 June 2023.

the urge to denounce the abuse of nuclear energy in her literary production. To do so, she has often decided to adopt the stylistic stratagem of the dystopian novel to convey a socio-political accusation that she had already manifested openly through her active participation in the German project "~100 gute Gründe gegen Atomkraft~".[26] Her concerns were first expressed in the short story *Fushi no shima*『不死の島』(The Island of Immortality, 2012), published a year after March 11th in the charitable anthology *Sore demo sangatsu wa, mata* 『それでも三月は、また』 (March was made of Yarn, 2012) and later in the long novel *Kentōshi* 『献灯使』 (The Emissary/The Last Children of Tokyo, 2014).

Both novels stress Japan as the *hibaku koku* 被爆国 par excellence, that is, the only nation in the world to have experienced both the atomic bombings and the nuclear accident and therefore a country forced into a lockdown of precautionary isolation. In Tawada's eyes, Japan sees a tightening of international relations that have atrophied due to the country's insecurity; the citizens residing, like the author, abroad, share a feeling of nostalgia: "What would you feel knowing you can never return to Japan again?".[27] This doubt reveals the apprehension of considering Japan marginalized, excluded, discriminated against, and accused of being an "international pariah" due to the nuclear fallout.[28] The author's dystopian production on the theme of March 11th reveals an attempt to exorcise her anxiety at the idea that she may never again set foot on her native soil, now incontrovertibly compromised by radioactive contamination.[29] On the other hand, the island metaphor (*shima*) has been repeatedly related by critics to the "historical and geopolitical interconnections" of "Tawada's disaster islands",[30] which can be found in Hiro-shima, then in Fuku-shima and finally, more broadly, in the Japanese archipelago, a concrete expression of discomfort. Not surprisingly, Tawada herself argued that "Fukushima, having transcended the boundaries of the oceans, has taken to indicate

[26] 100 gute Gründe gegen Atomkraft Official Site, 2011, https://www.100-gute-gruende.de, 18 January 2024.
[27] Tawada, Yōko: Kentōshi. Tōkyō: Kōdansha 2014, 70.
[28] DiNitto, Rachel: Fukushima Fiction. The Literary Landscape of Japan's Triple Disaster. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2019, 142.
[29] Kimura, Saeko (note 21), 85.
[30] Referring to the work *Fremde Wasser*, Mauer noticed that "The metaphor of the island is associated with the atomic bombs of World War II as well as the 2011 nuclear meltdown in the reactor at Fukushima. Tawada's texts frame disasters as islands, as closed areas, which obstruct communication. However, as a result of translation and the island's historical and geopolitical interconnections, Tawada's "disaster islands" remain only partly isolated. They are constantly disturbed by outsiders' attempts to observe, to understand; by appeals for aid; and by the surrounding waters that link the island with the world."
Maurer, Kathrin: Translating Catastrophes: Yoko Tawada's Poetic Responses to the 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake, the Tsunami and Fukushima. In: New German Critique 127, vol. 43 (2016), no. 1, 171–194, 172.

not a local problem but a concern of all humanity, just as Hiroshima has".[31] The dystopian choice reflects the author's intimate need not to deal with the catastrophe-related trauma in real-time. Tawada has repeatedly confessed the "overwhelming anxiety"[32] aroused in her by the images of the Tōhoku areas aired by media reports during March and April 2011. Thus, the cacotopia is a more comfortable choice for her writing, suitable for representing the catastrophe without being overwhelmed by it.[33]

Tawada's production on the March 11th catastrophe is also fertile ground for language experimentation, where a multimodal expression of trauma then emerges. In adopting multilingualism as a literary tool, Tawada's literary works spontaneously seek a hybrid style of linguistic polyphony. The latter reveals more of the acquisition of a foreign point of view (*ikyōsei* 異境性) capable of transcending linguistic and literary boundaries.[34]

As previously suggested, the complexity of Tawada's writing is not limited to linguistic code-switching, but it is also characterized by an antimimetic literary approach addressed by critics as 'unnatural narratology',[35] which constitutes another of her trademarks. Hence, the complexity of analyzing the multi-layer narratives portrayed in her production. These features eventually emphasize the representation of psychological trauma in that "Schwarzer Humor, Ironie oder Satire spielen in diesem Sinne auch mit belastenden Thematiken und helfen unter Umständen, diese greifbarer zu gestalten".[36] A reading of *Hamlet No See* shall provide an example of this.

[31] Tawada, Yōko: Kerunshumerutse (Kernschmelze). In: Bungei shunjū, vol. 3 (2012), 162.
[32] Tawada, Yōkō: Journal des jours tremblants: Après Fukushima précédé de Trois leçons de poétique. Paris: Verdier 2013, 93.
[33] For an analysis of both novels, please refer to De Pieri, Veronica: Dystopia as a narrative keyword: Tawada Yōko's responses to Japanese 3/11. In: Loxias, vol. 54 (2016), 1–15.
[34] Young, Victoria (note 16), 2.
[35] Alber, Jan, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson: Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models. In: Narrative, vol. 18 (2010), no. 2: 113–136.
[36] Wutti, Daniel: Trauma und Mehrsprachigkeit in Gesellschaft und Literatur. In: Colloquium: New Philologies, vol. 5 (2020), no. 2, 182–197, 190.

3. *Anzen ka kiken ka*: Hamlet No See

The following analysis focuses on the poem *Hamuretto no sē* 『ハムレットのセー』published on the website lyrikline.org after March 11th, and then performed live several times, including the original Lyrikvideo on YouTube.[37] The poem reads as follows:[38]

Hamlet No See

v 1 飛べ、飛べ、とんび、飛べ、とんび、飛び、

飛ぶべきか、飛ばないべきか、

To be, それとも or

not to be:

v 5 それは問題か、

喰え、と言われても、喰えない、

それが問題、que・stion,

フクシマのマッシュルーム、と書いてある

喰え・たら喰ってあげたい、

v 10 召し上がってくれよ、

たべる な、ない、ないん､ないんだ

喰え、喰え、クエスチョン、

食べられるのか、

フクシマのトマト、フクシマのキャベツ、フクシマの大根、

v 15 です、と書いてある やおやのマジックペンで

喰え、喰えず、クエスチョン、

that is the question: Whether 安全か危険か

危険だけど健康 いいえ 安全だけと病気にはなる

[37] I attended the performance twice: the first time at Waseda University in November 2016 and a second time in December 2019 at the University of Bologna.

[38] Bold in the original. The verses have been translated into English by myself to facilitate analysis. The poem concludes with a long verse in discursive form.

調べたから安全です、数字でかく安全、目の中の血管の赤信号、ぴかっぴかっ、意識の中に in the mind 含まれた苦悩、suffer シェイクスピアが途切れ途切れに聞こえてくる、海の向こうから、汚れた海の向こうから。なぜ海を敵にまわすのか、死を海に垂れ流す、死ぬのは、死なないのは、死、against a sea of troubles, フクシマの To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end 海の言語が分からない、もう息ができないと言っているのか、それともまだ還元できると言っているのか、海と話をすることができたなら、and the thousand 千代に八千代にこれから苦しむ natural shocks 自然には還元されないショック　耳をすまして、聞き取れる言語だけでも、波の間から集めて、書き留めて、To die, to sleep　眠らないで、喰え、喰え、クエスチョン・オブ、死、死、シェイクスピア。[39]

The title is ambiguous: the first name ‘Hamlet’ can be read invariably in German and English; the ‘*no*’ refers to the Japanese genitive particle placed between two nouns. 'See' alludes to the German 'sea': the title would thus be translatable as “Hamlet's Sea”, implying three different idioms (or at least two, given the ambivalence of ‘Hamlet'). On a semantic level, the poem echoes Hamlet’s original soliloquy referring to the “sea of troubles”, in other words, trauma. Eventually, from the post-Fukushima perspective, that sea refers to the Pacific Ocean polluted by the radioactive contamination; its waters were also responsible for the deaths of thousands of people swept away by the force of the tsunami. The fact that the Pacific Ocean is attributed to Hamlet leads back to the famous Shakespearean soliloquy, the existential doubt about ‘being or not being’ that in the post-Fukushima time is equivalent to the fragile and thin line between life and death. Hence, the title invites a multi-layer reading open to polysemic connotations. The text shows a similar characteristic, again through the simultaneous implementation of

[39] English translation: Hamlet No See/Can fly, can fly, black kite, can fly, black kite, fly/Must fly or not/To be, either　or/not to be:/This is the question/I am told it’s edible, even though it’s not/This is the question, que・stion,/It says: “Fukushima’s mushrooms”/If you can eat it, I’ll give you/Try it/Eat it, don’t eat, don’t, no no/It’s edible, it’s edible, question/Is it edible?/Fukushima’s tomatoes, Fukushima’s cabbage, Fukushima’s roots/So, it says　with the greengrocer’s magic marker/It’s edible, without eating it, question/that is the question: Whether safe or not/It’s dangerous but healthy　No　It’s safe but I’ll get sick/I looked for information, it’s safe, SAFE in large letters, the veins in the eyes pulse red lights, they sparkle in the conscience in the mind permeate with anguish, suffer I can hear Shakespeare intermittently, from the sea, from the dirt sea./Why the sea turned our enemy? Discharge the death in the sea, to die, not to die, death, against a sea of troubles, Fukushima’s To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end I don’t understand sea’s language, is it saying it can’t breath anymore? Or that it can still reduce it? If I were able to have a conversation with the sea and the thousand would suffer forever and ever natural shocks a shock that won’t be reduced naturally　listen, even if its ’only the language I am able to catch gather it among the waves, write it down, To die, to sleep　don’t sleep, eat it, eat it, question of death, death, Shakespeare.

different languages, each carrying its own cultural background that enriches and, at the same time, multiplies the interpretive possibilities of the poem.

The first two verses are heavily calibrated on the play of alliteration that is expressed in Japanese through the verb to fly (*tobu*) declined in the potential suspensive (飛べ), simple suspensive (飛び) and obligation forms (basic form of the verb *tobu* reinforced by the '*be*' sound of the particle expressing obligation, *beki*: 飛ぶべきか). The choice of the brown kite (とんびび) as the subject of the flight emphasizes alliteration, anticipating the poem's true leitmotif, in which the sound '*be*' returns insistently: "to be or not to be" (vv. 4-5). From the first two verses, readers can perceive the authorial interest in homophones and the phonetic rhythmicity of language; the following two verses stress the author's reflection regarding the life/death dichotomy.

Another interesting pun follows with the homophony of the 'que' which determines its sounds in the Japanese verb 'to eat' (*kuu* declined in the potential suspensive form '*que*' 喰え) and its doubt, the question that moves its poetic quest: que・stion. This play of assonances, repeated several times throughout the poem (vv. 5–7; v. 12; v. 16), allows the author to remark on the sense of insecurity that permeates the poem. Normally, the act of eating should be a guarantor of life. However, the danger from the radioactive contamination of food turns such an act into an advocate of death: hence Hamlet's doubt, that is, to be or not to be (radioactive). This concept is made explicit by verse 17 and the following paraphrases in the poem.

The poem also points to some of these possible radioactive foods: Fukushima mushrooms (v. 8), Fukushima tomatoes, cabbage, and tubers (v. 14), the name of which, the author specifies, is written with a marker on the grocer's food package (v. 15). Tawada's linguistic experimentation extends to the different linguistic registers of Japanese regarding the expression of the verb 'to eat': *kuu* (in a colloquial form), *taberu* (in the style typical to the courtly register; v. 13) and *meshiagaru* (in the honorific register; v. 10). Although the use of '*kuu'* can be traced to the need to create a phonetic interplay between verses, the explicit choice of the other verb forms can be interpreted as an inclusive intent and therefore imply the universality of the poetic message:

> Tawada uses the language of eating, tasting, ingesting, digesting, excreting to reconceive different ways in which human bodies engage with their environment, and each other. [40]

The last part of the poem consists of verses paraphrased in a long stream of consciousness. Introduced by the core of the reflection – "that is the question: Wether 安全か危険か" (v. 17) the red thread connecting Fukushima, sea and death returns clear in all its disruptive force. The climate of insecurity generated by the nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi has been extended to its agricultural and dairy products. Any attempt to discern the safety of food is in vain: the author points out how, despite official discourse promoting the safety of products (SAFE in large print; "数字でかく安全"), their ingestion can make people sick (v. 18). Individuals are thus distressed: they experience an inner conflict dominated by anguish and suffering ("意識の中に in the mind 含まれた苦悩、 suffer"). The use of English 'suffer' allows the author to play with the sound of Shakespeare's name and, consequently, refers again to Hamlet's soliloquy. Eventually, the circularity of the poem is realized through the Japanese pronunciation of Shakespeare (*shiekusupia* シェイクスピア), amazingly assonant to 'death '(*shi* 死), hence the poem's peremptory ending, which sounds like a condemnation for humankind: "喰え、喰え、クエスチョン・オブ、死、死、シェイクスピア" (*kue, kue, kuesuchon obu shi shiekusupia*; "eat, eat, question of Sh, Sh, Shakespeare," meaning if you eat it, you will die because it is radioactively contaminated). This reference to the author of Hamlet is also present in the redundant "クシマの To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end", again taken from the famous Shakespearean monologue but with the attributive variant of Fukushima (フクシマの To die) to whom Tawada imputes the ability to sentence life or death. Similarly, the other verses in English are also taken from Hamlet's soliloquy, beginning with "in the mind" ("Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer" in the original); "against a sea of troubles," in v. 4 of the original ("Or to take arms against a sea of troubles"); "The heartache and the thousand natural shocks" which Tawada reworks into "the thousand 千代に八千代にこれから苦しむ natural shocks", to which a detailed analysis will be devoted later; as well as the concluding "To die, to sleep" taken up in v. 9 in the original ("Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep"). The aim is clearly to interpret the timeless Hamletian reflection in a new light in the wake of the nuclear catastrophe.

[40] Yuki, Masami: Eating Contamination in Japan's Anthropocene Fiction. In: Literature and Environment: The Journal of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment in Japan, vol. 25, 5–15, 13.

Not surprisingly, the voice of Shakespeare heard coming from the sea (“シェイクスピアが途切れ途切れに聞こえてくる、海の向こうから”) – a sea, the author specifies, that is dirty because it is contaminated (汚れた海) – is that of the victims swallowed by the tsunami (“死を海に垂れ流す”): it is therefore a voice of death. The sea is a dual enemy (*teki*; “海を敵にまわす”) in the form of the tsunami and radioactive water; and it is personified by the victims (the thousand) who speak an unintelligible language (“海の言語が分からない”), but it is the same language of Shakespeare that is heard intermittently (“シェイクスピアが途切れ途切れに聞こえてくる”). This should be heard (“耳をすまして”) and transcribed (“書き留めて”): that is, it should bear witness. In this consideration of the incommunicability of trauma, the reader can find an echo of the significant theories of trauma studies that hypothesize how psychological shock is difficult to decode into words.

Furthermore, trauma appears in the poem in both implicit and explicit modalities. Its mention is implicit in the references to distress (“苦悩”), suffering (“suffer”) and death (“死”), usually associated with painful memories and a probable state of psychological perturbation. At the same time, it is explicit in its reference to psychological shock (“ショック”). Important to note is that this is reflected by the earthquake, present but camouflaged in the verses “And the thousand 千代に八千代にこれから苦しむ natural shocks 自然には還元されないショック”. An anomalous chiasmus is created, whereby the reference to the earthquake (natural shocks) finds an echo in “naturally irreducible shock”. The adverb 自然に can also mean “spontaneously” or “automatically”. Hence, the specific choice of ‘*shizen*’ emphasizes the adjective “natural”, thus translating the English “natural shocks” into the Japanese “自然(な)ショック”, where the former retains a geological meaning (the earthquake). At the same time, the latter acquires a psychological connotation (trauma).

As the analysis shows, this poem by Tawada reads Hamlet’s monologue differently from the traditional interpretation. The new vision is highly influenced by the nuclear catastrophe at Fukushima Daiichi, for which the famous “to be or not to be” is revised into the motto “a*nzen ka liken ka*” 「安全か危険か」) so as to say “safe or dangerous” concerning radioactive contamination. Notwithstanding, the result is always the same: a liminal boundary between health and sickness, life and death. English and Japanese languages contribute to the definition of psychological trauma, intrinsically connected and intertwined, to the point that a separate

reading of the two would undermine the very meaning of the poem and its principal concern: radiophobia.

4. *Anzen ka kiken ka*: *Hamlet No See* as Self-Translation

At this point, I would like to turn my attention to Tawada's self-translation of the poem in German, published together with the English/Japanese version on the website lyrikline.org. The text appears thus translated without respecting the verse breaks of the bilingual Japanese/English version:

> fliege (tobe), fliege, schwarzmilan (tombi), fliege, schwarzmilan, fliegen oder nicht fliegen, to be, oder, or not to be: ist es ein problem? iss (que), wurde mir gesagt, aber ich kann nicht essen, das ist eine que-stion, pilze aus fukushima, stand auf dem schild, wenn ich essen könnte, würde ich für sie essen, bitte genießen sie ihre speisen, iss nicht, nie, niemals, es gibt nichts, nichts zu essen, iss (que), iss, que-stion, kann man essen? tomaten aus fukushima, kohl aus fukushima, rettich aus fukushima, steht geschrieben, mit dem zauberstift eines gemüsehändlers, iss, kann nicht essen, that is the question: whether sicher oder schädlich, zwar schädlich aber doch gesund, nein, sicher dennoch erregt krankheiten, sicher weil geprüft, die sicherheit in form einer zahl, in den adern der augen ist eine rote ampel, blitzt, blitzt, das bewusstsein, in the mind, enthält qual, suffer, shakespeare wird hörbar, stockend, von der anderen seite des verseuchten meeres, warum machst du dir das meer zum feind, du lässt den tod ins meer abfließen, sterben oder nicht sterben, der tod (shi), against the sea of troubles, in fukushima, to die: to sleep; no more; and by a sleep to say we end, kann nicht die sprache des meeres verstehen, sagt es, dass es nicht weiter atmen kann? oder sagt es „halbwertszeit"? wenn ich mit dem meer sprechen könnte, and the thousand, tausend und achttausend jahre weiter dieses leid natural shocks, ein schock ohne halbwertszeit, die ohren spitzen und wenigstens die sprachen, die ich heraushören kann, aufsammeln zwischen den wellen, ausschreiben, to die, to sleep, nicht einschlafen, que, que, question of shi, shi, shakespeare.

One major feature of the Japanese language is the possibility of omitting the subject to make the sentence ambiguous. This is thanks to the absence of gender and number that the Japanese verbal predicate does not make explicit. Tawada thus chooses to make some lines of the poem more personal in the German version (e.g., "wurde mir gesagt, aber ich kann nicht essen"). This self-referentiality indicates an individual anxiety, experienced in the first person by the author and therefore transposed into words through a language – such as German – capable of making it not only manifest, but also subjective. The possibility to implement multilingualism in her poetry enables Tawada to portray psychological trauma on two levels: the intimate one of the shock experienced in the first person and the universal, sociopolitical one.

Similarly, the verse "なぜ海を敵にまわすのか" ("Why the sea turned our enemy?") is rendered in German as "warum machst du dir das meer zum feind," implying the responsibility of a second subject – a second person singular – who is guilty of corrupting the ocean and making it aggressive, the enemy. More broadly, this refers to the Japanese government or TEPCO, who were equally responsible for stifling public concern by underestimating the nuclear damage at the nuclear power plant and declaring it, at least at first, safe. And generally speaking, this condemnation could also refer to humankind, the one ultimately responsible for the anthropogenic catastrophe by handling of uranium and plutonium.

Also remarkable is the German rendering of "それともまだ還元できると言っているのか" ("Or that it can still reduce it?" in English), which appears as "oder sagt es 'halbwertszeit'?". The term *kangen* 還元 in Japanese means 'restoration, return, reduction 'and is usually employed in the economic field. The translation of the term given by the author is peculiar: first, for the meaning chosen; secondly, for the fact that it was emphasised by quotation marks not found in the English/Japanese version. The word in question is 'decay time', typical of radioactive isotopes. This literary solution creates a metaphor between the radioactive materials, trauma and the verse "自然には還元されないショック" translated into English as "a shock that will not be reduced naturally", and takes on a new meaning in the German translation. A trauma whose decay time does not reduce spontaneously; in other words, psychological sequelae whose half-life is challenging to determine. Consequently, the result of Tawada's exophonic experimentation is "a 'third 'unburdened language or poetic means of expression, [that] can become vital sources for coping and resilience"[41].

4. Conclusion: A final discussion

Hamlet no See represents a gargantuan example of how Tawada's literature challenges the boundaries of language, literary comprehensibility and semantic variables. Notwithstanding, it is precisely through Tawada's literary experiments that psychological trauma finds multiple expressive possibilities. Tawada's exophonic production questions the unintelligibility of trauma, which is the main cause for the fragmentation of the survivors' identity following a stressful experience. As discussed in the first paragraph, the relation between alexithymia

[41] Busch, Brigitta, Tim McNamara (note 10), 327.

(trauma inexpressibility) and multilingualism relies on the possibility of accessing more vocabulary, registers, and hybridism, which are the key to understanding the traumatic experience. Thanks to Tawada's attention to the semantic and phonetic aspects of the different languages implemented in her production, trauma finds new nuances and modulations, overcoming the critique that unprecedented traumatic experience cannot be described through normative models. The more psychological trauma finds linguistic representability, the greater the chances that the traumatic memories associated with the event will be reworked and functionally reintegrated into the survivor's biographical continuity. In a word, cathartic capacities for healing increase. Of course, this hypothesis should be verified by psychometric testing and clinical trials to ensure the recovery of the individual's functional abilities and the decrease in the symptomatology associated with the trauma, a condition that can be worse in cases of comorbidity. In the literature, art therapy support (including scriptotherapy) is still limited and subject to the guidance of the therapist.[42]

Nevertheless, the analysis has revealed the complexity of the reading layers of *Hamlet no See* in light of the three languages employed by the author to verbalize the trauma of nuclear insecurity in the post-Fukushima scenario. Japanese/English, and German all concur in the semantic construction of radiophobia, and only a multilingual perspective can grasp the common thread that links the Hamletic dilemma to the safety (*anzen ka kiken ka*) of the situation after the nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi and the psychological trauma that resulted from it. According to Ferrari, any artistic or literary acts – primarily related to words – enable the abreaction of psychological trauma as long as "they allow to associate the relief coming out from cathartic action […] to the psychic re-elaboration process".[43] In the case of Tawada's peculiar writing style, which verges on the limits of 'xenoglossia',[44] words assume polysemous meanings, thanks to "its polyphony, exophony, omniphony, and symphony – mirror[ing] the qualities of surprise, absurdity, laughter, and profundity",[45] thus amplifying the possibility for

[42] Tal, Kalì: PTSD: The Futile Search for the "Quick Fix". In: Scientific American, 2013, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/ptsd-the-futile-search-for-the-quick-fix/, 23 September 2023. Moreover, Tawada's multilingualism and stylistic experiments are understandable to an adult target; if Tawada's literary production succeeds in enhancing the verbalization of trauma, as it seems in the case of *Hamlet no See*, this therapeutic result may only advantage individuals affected by psychological disorders in the developmental age. In its delicate stage of development, the infant is cognitively not mature enough to master multiple linguistic baggage. Hence infants may benefit less from multilingual competence in verbalising a traumatic experience.

[43] Ferrari, Stefano (note 3), 6.

[44] The term 'xenoglossia', also written as 'xenoglossy', refers to a person who is allegedly able to speak a foreign language without any previous knowledge. Suga, Keijirō: Translation, Exhophony, Omniphony. In: Douglas Slaymaker (ed.): Yōko Tawada. Voices from Everywhere. Lanham: Lexington Books 2007, 23.

[45] Slaymaker, Douglas: Yōko Tawada. Voices from Everywhere. Lanham: Lexington Books 2007, 1.

words to heal. Moreover, Tawada's interest in creating neologisms, tongue-twists, and puns reflects what Freud considered the "semiotic manifestations of the unconscious":[46] a first attempt at verbalizing trauma.

As noted, Tawada's recourse to multilingualism is a predominant feature of her work. The peripheralization of her German viewpoint, decentralized from the East-Asia area where many of her novels take place, accounts for a global perspective of literature and art.[47] Furthermore, the performativity of Tawada's artistic production – that transcends the written text to become an immersive experience through acting – answers Felman's plea for a performative and not just cognitive agency[48] as long as it transforms testimonial reception into an act, no longer merely of passive intellectual participation, but of active emotional involvement on the part of the audience:

> Mehrsprachigkeit kann dabei helfen, die emotionale Nähe zu schwierigen (auch traumatischen) Erlebnissen zu regulieren, was, wie gezeigt wurde, etwa literarische AutorInnen (mehr oder weniger) bewusst anwenden.[49]

In this case, writing in a liminal zone enables an abreactive response, in that it goes beyond 'glocalization' to reaffirm individual displacement and cultural dissonance no longer tied to a particular nation: "the boundaries between and within national cultures seem to be more fluid and porous".[50]

Hamlet no See represents a multilayered poem whose reading raises semantic, phonological, translational, performative, and multilingualism-related questions. Ultimately, the psycho(pato)logical interrogation around radiophobia forces Tawada to bear witness: "The question whether to eat or not is closely linked with the possibility of continuing one's existence instead of surrendering to the Hamletian sea of troubles."[51] In a sense, the representation of radiophobia through Tawada's linguistic experiments acquires greater cathartic force precisely

[46] Orlando, Francesco: Per una teoria freudiana della letteratura. Torino: Einaudi 1992, 211.
[47] Gabrakova, Dennitza: The Unnamable Archipelago: Wounds of the Postcolonial in Postwar Japanese Literature and Thought. Leiden: Brill 2018, 4.
[48] Felman, Shoshana: Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching. In: Cathy Caruth (ed.): Trauma Exploration in Memory. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1995, 13–60, 56.
[49] Wutti, Daniel (note 36), 195.
[50] Wright, Chantal: Writing in the 'Grey Zone': Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany. In: German as a foreign language, vol. 3 (2008), 26–42, 30. On the 'porosity 'of national language(s) in Tawada's production, see also Yildiz, Yasemin: Tawada's Multilingual Moves: Toward a Transnational Imagery. In: Douglas Slaymaker (note 45) 78.
[51] Barbieri, Francesco Eugenio (note 16) 90.

because of its multilingualism, capable of producing polysemic as well as polyphonic results. Moreover, those results challenge human understanding like psychological trauma does:

> Traumatic language is a verbal version of the visual language of dreams; words are metaphors, similes, and symbolic equations; they have the status of inner but not internal objects; they become expressions of feeling rather than meaning.[52]

It is precisely this literary complexity that reproduces physically, logically and humanly impossible images that constitute the authorial *Weltanschauung*, that is, the "worldview", the multiplex lens through which the author investigates post-Fukushima Japan, offering a severe critique of her time.

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[52] Mitchell, Juliet: Trauma, Recognition, and the Place of Language. In: Diacritics, vol. 28 (1998), no. 4, 121–133, 132.

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