ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 27

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA

Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 27

ASKON Publishers
Warsaw 2014

Printed in Poland

This edition prepared, set and published by

Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON Sp. z o.o.
Stawki 3/1, 00–193 Warszawa
tel./fax: (+48) 22 635 99 37
www.askon.waw.pl
askon@askon.waw.pl

PL ISSN 0860–6102
ISBN 978–83–7452–080–5

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus

To the memory of Professor Karin Tomala
Whom we lost for ever

Contents

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA
No. 27, 2014
PL ISSN 0860–6102

BEATA KOWALCZYK

Literary Response to Crisis
Elements of Analytic Autoethnography in Tawada Yōko's *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days*

Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to propose a response to the following questions: can a sociologist make use of literature? And if so, under what conditions may a literary work be of use to sociologists? The answer to the question will be formulated through an analysis of *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days*, a literary work by Tawada Yōko, an exophonic Japanese writer living in Germany. The analysis will be conducted in the framework of the paradigm of analytic autoethnography, which formulates three conditions for field notes to be considered as autoethnographic: (1) the author-researcher must be a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published text, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. The following hermeneutic approach to the selected literary work will cover all three issues.

Introduction

As children, we learnt to stay calm in case of natural catastrophe. The moment I hear the word 'catastrophe' I feel very calm.[1]

The tragedy of the Great East Japan Earthquake (*Higashi Nihon Daishinsai*) and tsunami which rocked the main Island of Japan on March 3, 2011, claiming about 16,000 fatalities, over 6000 injured and over 2600 missing, undoubtedly marked a new era in Japanese history. The breadth and power of this disaster is the greater if we realize how vulnerable and helpless our civilization remains nowadays in the face of natural cataclysms of this kind, regardless of all the advances in technology we are making to communicate with each other, travel and conquer the universe. Such tragic events are not easily forgotten or washed away (*mizu ni nagasu*[2]), as wrote Japanese intellectual Kato Shuichi describing the attitude of the Japanese towards past events. Evoked in the form of an artistic creation, such as literature, these painful experiences constitute a part of the national history, the history of private tragedies.

---

[1] Yōko Tawada, *Journal des jours tremblants. Après Fukushima* [After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days], Paris: Verdier, 2012, p. 91. All translations from French and Japanese by the author.

[2] Katō Shūichi, *Nihon bunka ni okeru kūkan to jikan* [Time and Space in Japanese Culture], Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2007, p. 1.

The purpose of this essay is to analyze one example of a literary response to a crisis situation, namely a collection of essays by the Japanese writer Tawada Yōko, which were first published in German in the German-speaking Swiss press, and then published in French translation under the title "Journal des jours tremblants. Après Fukushima" (After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days).[3] This analysis will be focused primarily on the following issues: Firstly, the possibility of reading a given literary work as a document in a sociological context from the perspective of the paradigm of analytic autoethnography, providing a sociologist with material for research about a certain reality and/or its conditions, which in the case of the abovementioned earthquake can be used as social analysis of a crisis and an individual response to it. Secondly, by performing a 'close reading', a sort of hermeneutic approach, while going through the pages of Tawada's essays, I will discuss their meaning as a literary as well as a sociological document, trying to understand how the tragic is reworked, and what kind of knowledge it may convey to us about the author as well as the community she belongs to. In other words, the goal of this essay is to read and interpret a literary text not as a fictitious story, but as a material reflecting reality, a material with its inner credibility of statement.

However, before I analyse the text itself, I need to briefly lay out the guidelines of analytical autoethnography and explain for what reasons, in the light of the premises of this method, Tawada Yōko's literature invites interpretations which far exceed the potentiality of analytical tools used in the discipline of traditionally construed literary studies, which enables the researcher to consider at least certain literary works as a valuable and reliable source of information. So, in reference to the five elements constitutive for this approach, I will discuss the manner these conditions are fulfilled within the framework of *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days*.

Insight into the materiality of language. Tawada's autoethnographic/exophonic literature

The most distinctive feature of Tawada Yōko's writing – and she makes use of a wide variety of literary genres from poetry, novel, essay to drama – is its exophonic aspect, thoroughly discussed especially in her *Exophony. A Journey outside of the Mother Tongue*.[4] Having lived in Germany since her first trip to this country in the early 1980s, she writes in both Japanese and German; the fact that she uses a second language to express herself in a poetic manner classifies her as an exophonic writer. The term exophony, in other words a voice from outside, refers to authors who create literature in language other than their mother tongue, most of whom originate from multicultural social environments.[5] The history of literature has many examples of exophonic writing: Joseph Conrad, Samuel Becket,

[3] Tawada, *Journal des jours*…

[4] Yōko Tawada, *Ekusofonî. Bogo no soto he deru tabi* [Exophony. A Journey outside of the Mother Tongue], Tokyo: Iwanami gendai bunko, 2012.

[5] For example see Susan Arndt, Dirk Naguschewski, Robert Stockhammer, *Exophonie: Anderssprachigkeit (in) der Literatur*, Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos 2007; Chantal Wright, 'Exophony and Literary Translation. What it Means for the Translator When a Writer Adopts a New Language', *Target – International Journal of Translation Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2010, pp. 22–39; Chantal Wright, 'Writing in the 'Grey Zone': Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany', *German as a Foreign Language*, http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2008/wright.pdf (accessed 21.02.2014).

Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky and Eva Hoffman, to name only a few of them. What distinguishes Tawada in comparison to the aforementioned writers is the fact that she does not focus on an attempt to master of the German language, which would wipe away her otherness, or 'foreign accent' visible in a certain artificiality – *strange kind of German*[6] – in her German art. Her goal is to dig into the language – be it German, Japanese or any other language she is familiar with – to extract the actual meaning of words, where the word 'actual' stands for the initial dictionary-based sense of a given word as well as its practical usage, altered by the speaker or the user in a daily conversations.

What is more, while working and living in a German-speaking environment, she discovered that the naturalness of her Japanese which she had hitherto taken for granted is but a mere translation of the inner self. This translation must necessarily be imperfect because we are born and thrown into a language created by others, as Jacques Lacan has already claimed.[7] In other words, we cannot sound natural in any language, for there is no original meaning that may be replicated in the process of translation. "Her translation of the surfaces of language – that is her focus on letters, sounds, discrepancies between words and images and on other aspects of linguistic form – ultimately makes both German and Japanese enigmatic, animated and multivalent," states Susan Anderson.[8]

The topic Tawada constantly challenges is language, its materiality (*signifiant*) manifesting itself in the power of bringing certain phenomena to life only by the act of speaking. Yet, on the other hand we tend to rely too much on the symbolic dimension of words, which limits the world we live in to an arbitrary defined *signifié*, where we – the language users – are no longer living organisms, but are reduced to our names.[9] This discussion about language and its awkwardness is intrinsic to Tawada's personal experience of migration to a foreign country, an everyday experience of asking herself about her own individual identity, created and expressed also through language. The trip to Germany, or a journey outside her mother tongue, was a formative experience for Tawada, which she has been discussing and analyzing ever since she wrote or spoke up her first German word, no matter the actual content of the story. Therefore, I shall argue that any reader of Tawada's literature is allowed to perceive all of her artworks as an insight into a specific biography of the author. It is in this sense that this literature provides a sociologist with material for qualitative research. This data may be approached via the application of the paradigm of analytic autoethnography.

Autoethnography is defined as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal (auto) experience (ethno) in order

---

[6] Susan Anderson, 'Surface Translations: Meaning and Difference in Yoko Tawada's German Prose', *Journal of Germanic Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, February 2010, p. 50.

[7] Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: The Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 43.

[8] Anderson, 'Surface Translations…', p. 50.

[9] This process is described in Tawada's novel *Umi ni otoshita namae* [A Name Lost in the Sea], where the protagonist, having lost her memory in an airplane catastrophe, struggles to come back to normal life. What hinders this is the fact that she does not recall her name, and as a nameless person she cannot be recognized by the system of social and cultural institutions either as a patient in the hospital nor as a mother, wife or even citizen of the country of her origins. Yōko Tawada, *Umi ni otoshita namae* [A Name Lost in the Sea], Tōkyō: Shinchosha, 2006.

to understand cultural experience".[10] This method has been developed for many political and cultural reasons, but also because researchers have realized that a "neutral, impersonal and objective stance (…) is not tenable"[11] anymore. Assumptions about the world are made from many different points of view, including that of the scientist, who questions reality as such and tries to understand it. That is why Geertz's "thick descriptions" should also be created by the subject of the research, or researchers themselves, who evocatively record personal and interpersonal experience, including emotional states and feelings from the fieldwork, as equally valuable data.

The author of the concept of analytic autoethnography, Leon Anderson, claims that this method "refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member of in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published text and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena."[12] This definition develops up to five key features proposed by the author in a more detailed critical elaboration of this sociological inquiry. However, for the purpose of this essay I shall focus only on the abovementioned three essential elements, which I will trace in Tawada's journal to assess the potential value for expanding the analytic ethnographic conclusion, by including literary art into it.

The value of Tawada's observations and her membership in the research group or setting

> When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being a part of a culture and/or possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyze these experiences[13].

After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days provides materials of two types: about the human experience of the disaster itself, as well as about the artistic work which recreates that experience for public and historical discourse. The author is on the one hand a member of the community of Japanese citizens, no matter where she was at the time of the earthquake; and on the other hand, she is also an artist or public intellectual, conscious of the manifold mechanisms whereby an experience is narrated in media-driven discourse through certain rhetoric figures.

Tawada Yōko is not a sociologist *sensu stricto*, yet her work with the language is recognized by scholars, and she has often been invited to universities as a visiting professor[14]. That is also the case with this book, the object of the analysis performed hereby. This collection of essays was written on the basis of three lectures Tawada gave at

[10] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 12, No 1, Art. January 10, 2011, p. 1.

[11] Ibid., p. 2.

[12] Leon Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 35, No. 4, August 2006, p. 375.

[13] Ibid., p. 3.

[14] In 1999 she became writer-in-residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for four months.

Hamburg University in May 2011, no more than two months after the earthquake. Furthermore, despite the fact that it lacks the so-called sociological purpose inscribed in the process of thinking and describing objects, the nevertheless thoroughly analytical stance Tawada takes towards her experience renders her work autoethnographical in meaning. This is visible, for instance, in the aforementioned 'Exophony. A Journey outside of the Mother Tongue', a book entirely dedicated to deliberations about words, concepts or gestures, whose sense differs according to the country she is visiting.

She partly continues this discussion about translation in the journal. The process of translating oneself into a language requires of the speaking subject not only a good knowledge of that language, but also and possibly above all a self-consciousness, an awareness of what is to be expressed in order to select appropriate expressions – or I should rather say, the closest expressions to what is being evoked.

The second lecture in the book is based in large part on recollections of the author's trip to Africa. Needless to say, the continent is a representative and symbolic place for the colonial past and its repercussions which African countries have to deal with likewise today. The past cultural and political oppression remains like a stain on African languages. Tawada realizes that the local speech resembles European languages closely. Nevertheless, what strikes her is that most of the similarities are misguiding, since the meanings in some cases may be totally different. She admits that when visiting the Cape for the first time, she "didn't realize to what extent their language was tarnished by the history and apartheid".[15] That provokes thinking about her own mother tongue and the Japanese colonial past. She notices: the African language "is tarnished. However, is the Japanese language also strongly tarnished in the countries which were victims of Japan imperial politics? I have no more but to add here, that German likewise is a sullied language".[16]

Tawada's membership in the group or setting which is the object of her study is formed around three parts she plays in the fieldwork, and each role is intrinsic to the type of fieldwork. Going through the first pages of her work, the reader firstly hears her voice as a citizen of Hamburg. "In Hamburg, on the other hand, which is a port city and where I lived from 1982 until 2006, I used to sense the North Sea".[17] Regardless of their subject – common points and dissimilarities in the mutual imaginary process in the West and East – and despite the origins of the lecturer, the three lectures on poetry which open the journal are held from the European perspective. It is clear that the speaker is addressing a Western audience, quoting profusely during her speech from European philosophers (Barthes, Benjamin, Freud or Foucault) and writers (Kafka, Goethe) or evoking European art (Gerhard Richter). At the same time, she makes an effort to understand and retell the story of her ethnic roots and her native country within the framework of Western concepts and expressions, in a Western metaphorical language – when looking for similarities (love as Eros[18]) and Western metonymical expressions, when searching for generalizations. The following line can stand as an example of the latter: "Goethe's violet doesn't arouse any grief, because it can speak German, yet a flower which doesn't know any human language, should be neither stamped on nor cut for the

[15] Tawada, *Journal des jours*…, p. 38.
[16] Ibidem.
[17] Ibid., p. 9.
[18] Ibid., p. 26.

vase."[19] Here Tawada associates a silent flower, "which doesn't know any human language," with minorities, disregarded for they linguistic illiteracy.

Above all she is Japanese, and this feature will always constitutes the core of her identity, no matter how long she remains abroad and embodies Western manners, habits, stereotypes, attitudes or traditions. Her so-called Japaneseness reveals itself in unexpected moments or situations, such as the following:

> In Hamburg I realized that I easily become compassionate towards animals, but not towards people. When I saw a drunk woman lying on the floor at the Reeper Station, helping her didn't even come to my mind. However, there were always one or two passers-by to run and take care of her. Having a guilty conscience, I was looking for the reasons of my behavior. If I help somebody that means that I deny his capacity to help himself.[20]

This attitude stems from the Buddhism Hînayâna concept of the Small Vehicle (*shōjōbukkyō*), as Tawada explains a page earlier, where each individual should find an appropriate path towards illumination for himself only and not for others.

Ultimately, acculturated and socialized in two environments, Japanese and German, Tawada plays the part of a public intellectual through her artistic and academic activity. She is the one who shapes the public discourse and influences perceptions of some phenomena which are constantly occurring around us. By 'some', I mean those which oscillate around her areas of interest: language, translation, multicultural encounters and everything related to it. In discussing and describing these issues, Tawada mostly draws on her own experience, thus actively stressing her presence throughout the whole journal.

Tawada's visibility in her *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days*

The journal is written in the first person and collects stories from the Tawada-narrator's life: "I came to Hamburg to do an internship in the company selling equipment for bars and cafes, Grossohaus Wegner & Co., where I continued working 19 hours per week having begun my studies".[21] She speaks about her private experiences, emotions and reflections, or the encounters and conversations she had with the people she met while traveling. This is the case with Mr. Bengali in Africa, a young guide, who helped her out when she was visiting Soweto. That is how Tawada's book complies with the following premise of the autoethnographic method: "autoethnography requires that the researcher be visible, active and reflexively engaged in the text".[22]

Anderson calls not only for the linguistic visibility of the researcher in the text, but also for a sort of self-analysis of the active impact s/he may have on the field work. By virtue of the dual role, as a subject and object of the study, the narrator should be aware of the changes in the settings, attitudes, behaviors or thoughts of the others observed as well as her/his own, which are triggered by her/his presence, actions, utterances, etc. This requires developed skills of self-reflectivity, which Tawada definitely possesses.

---

[19] Ibid., p. 27.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] Ibid., p. 17.
[22] Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', p. 383.

One day she provokes an argument concerning the language-based division which serves to separate humans from animals, in Tawada's opinion an artificial division. It turns out that an animal cannot have a hand, and if it does then we are automatically transferred to the universe of fairy tales, where animals are personified. That is how Tawada reports her reflection on the whole situation:

> It happened to me, when I was still living in Hamburg to hear cultivated Germans using the expression: 'we, long-nosed'. One day, I opposed this manner of speaking: 'It's not possible! Only elephant has a long nose.' I forgot that in the German language an elephant does not have a nose. Still today, I feel psychological difficulty employing words as 'trunk', 'muzzle', 'snout' or 'paw', which give me the impression of separating or to cutting myself off from the animal world. My first pet in Hamburg was a black rat. It had hands and a face. However, I need only to write 'the hand of a rat' to be relegated to a genre of children's literature. How shall I speak about a rat's hand without being banned from the adults' culture?[23]

Another thought-provoking situation takes place at Hamburg University during a seminar by Sigrid Weigel, where the students were discussing the problem of allegoric representations of the female body. "She [the professor] asked me a question which I cannot answer even today: does an analogue phenomenon exist in Japan?"[24] Since she could not think of anything similar in Japanese culture, it came to her mind that actually some Chinese characters which denotes abstract concepts such as 'freedom' (平等, *byōdō*) and their estheticized shape do make her think of a woman representing Freedom.

After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days is abundant in fragments which prove Tawada's self-reflective as well as self-analytical skills, although I can hardly find any descriptions concerning her influence on the environment she depicts. This is understandable for two reasons: Tawada is not a sociologist, but a writer with a detailed eye for the way we live, use, change and are changed by language. Secondly and consequently, she is not conducting a sociological research; she is not interviewing any respondents from any of the three environments into which I classified her. Therefore Tawada is not seeking feedback from the outside when she enters into contact with the other. Her records and reflections in such cases are one-sided, and exclusively concern either her personal feelings and observations or the reactions of others.

We find more precise studies of the mutual interactions of the two interacting parts, but these fragments of the narration discuss solely historical, objective events extracted from the past, such as the following passage about the changing image of humanity in Japan and the role of translation: "Also today, the activity of the translator is valued higher in Japan than in other countries, probably for the science itself, which emerged along with translation from Chinese and developed with translation from Dutch. A key medical publication, which introduced a new image of the human being in Japan, was translated from Dutch (…)".[25] This book gave the first medical image and insights into the depths of human body, which until that time was considered as a closed entity, described from the

[23] Tawada, *Journal des jours*…, p. 12.
[24] Ibid., p. 76.
[25] Ibid., p. 47

surface by Chinese characters. Dissection was forbidden. A doctor was only allowed to read, press, sting the surface, but never to get inside, to open.

What is Tawada's contribution to the theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena?

Considering the collection of essays by Tawada Yōko as a valuable source of information for sociological study, a written evidence from ethnographic fieldwork, we may claim after Adler and Coffey that the document itself creates the so-called "documentary reality". The aforementioned sociologists argue that one of the most significant characteristics of how ethnography is conducted nowadays is that literate, contemporary societies produce a large amount of self-reflective documents with the hands of indigenous social actors, documents which "are read, stored and circulate"[26]. These materials, if analyzed through aspects other than their actual content, such as the style, form, purpose or the socio-cultural context in which they have been created, cast light upon a specific reality that emerges accordingly to their existence. In the case of *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days* this reality concerns the author itself, since I suggest that this book should be seen as an example of autoethnographic record. What knowledge do we obtain about the author and the reality that is produced by her literary work, if we approach it from this perspective?

The first important issue that needs to be stressed is the language in which the book was originally written. It is split into two parts: *Trois leçons de poétique* (Three lessons about poetics) and the main *Journal des jours tremblants* (Journal of Trembling Days). The original language of the first part was German, and the second part was written in Japanese. The author explains that the choice of the language was motivated, at least originally, by the addressee of each section. *Trois leçons de poétique* were conceived of as an imaginary conversation with a person from Western culture about the particularity of Japan, while the *Journal des jours tremblants* was addressed more to the Japanese reader.

The closing chapter in the book is entitled *Franchir la barrière de Shirakawa* (*Shirakawa no seki koen to*, Crossing the Shirakawa Barrier), which is a line from the prose and verse travel diary *Oku no hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Interior)[27], a major text of classical Japanese literature by the famous *haiku* poet Matsuo Bashō[28].

The Shirakawa Barrier which the poet wishes to cross is located in Fukushima prefecture and was built around the fifth century to protect civilized Japan from the barbarians to the north. It was considered a gateway to the old Mutsu province, of which Fukushima was a part at that time. It is interesting to notice that the book opens up with an essay where the Tawada-narrator collates Fukushima with Hiroshima. What connects both is the suffix *–shima*, meaning 'island', as well as the tremendous human tragedies associated with those locations. Then the author ponders over the dissimilarity in the concept and attitude to the sea as well as the harbor,

[26] Ibid., p. 56.

[27] "Oku no hosomichi" is a poetic travelogue or diary which Bashō wrote on the basis of the journey he took in the late spring of 1689, propelled by the desire to see places praised by the classical poets whom he admired. See Mikołaj Melanowicz, *Literatura japońska*, *t. 1*, *Od VI do połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1994.

[28] Bashō Matsuo (1644–1694) the most famous poet of the Edo period in Japan, recognized for his works in the collaborative *haikai no renga* form.

saying that the distance to the sea is bigger in Japan than suggested by both the names referred to above, unlike in Hamburg for example, a city with direct access to the sea. This forms a point of departure for Tawada to enter into a disquisition on differences in mutual perception, the image of the Orient as it was established in Western culture, and vice versa.

A closer insight into the content of the Japanese text will help us understand why this part was initially written in Japanese. In 'Crossing the Shirakawa Barrier' Tawada criticizes Japan's government for its nuclear policy, asking herself how a country having suffered from atomic bombardment (Hiroshima) could purposely expose its citizens to the danger posed by the nuclear plant (Fukushima). This clarifies the previously mentioned collation of both, albeit different, catastrophes. The change of language in this part is justified by the Japanese addressee of this essay. Putting on her national uniform again[29], the Tawada-narrator gives herself the right to start a critical discussion about Japanese nuclear energy policy. In this essay her voice stands for all the Japanese, who may but tacitly share her opinion. By using her privileged position of a renowned author, Tawada speaks for the anonymous other, the invisible citizen whose voice remains unheard.

The fact that some of her essays initially appeared in the German-speaking press suggests that the author takes a distanced stance, adopts a distanced reflection and looks at the tragedy itself, in which as a German citizen she did not participate directly. Also, the use of German enables her to rationalize the narration, to clean it of emotions, which is crucial since the subject itself is delicate, provocative and prevents easy simplifications. The process of writing and thinking in German requires of Tawada a deep consideration of the words, style and form she selects. The decision to write an essay rather than a work of fiction may have its grounds in the purpose of avoiding *meta*discourse, universalizing the story that is being told. An essayistic narration is conceived of more as a presentation of one's individual point of view, which does not seek acceptance for its totalizing perspective, but rather invites discussion.

Also, by discussing the tragedy in German Tawada adopts a neutral position, she does not represent the Japanese – neither the victims, nor their insular outlook – and this act opens up her statements for broader debate about the problems she considers in her essays. I have just argued that the essayistic style in which Tawada publicly presents her individual opinions is more convenient for a real debate than the fictional style. On the other hand, the very use of German hinders metaphorical expressions, for there is always a risk of being misunderstood by the German reader. Therefore, Tawada elaborates on the differences between Occident and Orient in the context of the tsunami, earthquake and nuclear accident from March 2011 in a couple of essays written in German, or from a Western perspective. The question remains to what extent somebody who, by their place of birth, initial socialization and mother tongue, represents Oriental culture, is able to take an Occidental position of seeing things. Reading *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days* can be inspiring for a recipient from the Euro-American cultural environment, for it creates a valuable opportunity for a self-reflective look in the 'oriental light'.

---

[29] Tawada often uses a metaphor of the tightly fitted costume, when talking about the relation between an individual and her/his mother tongue. See for example: 'Ifuku to shite no nihongo [Japanese as a Costume]', in Yōko Tawada, *Katakoto no uwagoto* [Smattering of Incoherent Muttering], Tōkyō: Seidosha 2007, pp. 109–119.

Given, what has been said so far about the use of German, I would argue that Tawada's goal when writing in German is to sound objective, to bring that discussion about dissimilarities between two civilizations up to an academic/scientific level of universality or objectivity. Expressing her ideas in German deprives Tawada of her victimhood, in other words, this decision allows the author to adopt a neutral position in the discussion of the topics she is considering in the book, one of which is the issue of language as a tool of oppression. Provocatively she raises this problem in the language of the old oppressors, given the Germans' colonial and war history:

> In the Japanese empire during the colonial era, Koreans were forced to speak only Japanese. In this sense, I could understand the hatred which Mr. Bengani and the people from his population vowed for the African language. However, it was difficult for me to understand how he could totally separate English from British colonial politics. (…) English managed to avoid being perceived as an incarnation of apartheid.[30]

The last thing I would like to analyze in this essay is Tawada's ability to cast a self--reflective glance on the materials she collects from her specific fieldwork, which is constituted on the one hand by the German/world environment of intercultural interactions, and on the other hand by the space of Japanese public discourse, upon which I will touch in the following paragraph. The moments of self-reflection appear in the text very differently, when the Tawada-narrator claims that she has *"*realized that a number of (her) prejudices came from the history of Japan".[31] The most important observations with regards to the crisis caused by the triple accidents: the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear accident are formulated in the second part of the book, the *Journal des jours tremblants* (Journal of Trembling Days). She records the aftermaths of the catastrophe from her German perspective, offering the Japanese citizen in the first row a reflection on the circumstances they found themselves in this period. If she had not lived far from the country of her origins for such a long time, she would not now be able to make all these remarkable comments on the people's behavior and attitude and the way the politics-driven public discourse exploited it.

Firstly Tawada remarks that the Japanese are trained in certain survival techniques, which are indispensable in a time of crisis:

> The moment I find out about a catastrophe, my heart automatically starts beating more slowly, and I become calm as if I had taken a tranquilizer. To survive, it is necessary to avoid panicking (…). It's seemingly in Japan that I learned to unconsciously adopt that attitude as a survival technique. Indeed, people in Japan, after the earthquake, stay calm, patient, affable and obliging (…) with this kind of attitude, one loses her/his critical mind and probably one's political mind likewise.[32]

The very word 'catastrophe' reduces Japanese to that state of calmness and obedience; a calmness which helps them avoid chaotic actions such as protests; an obedience which

[30] Ibid., p. 43.
[31] Ibidem.
[32] Ibid., p. 93

neutralizes the critical spirit towards the information served by the media, for instance. This poses a risk.

Aware of the manipulative techniques used in the communication process, Tawada observes the work of Japanese media with deep concern. "Once again I have the impression that the Japanese public discourse which takes place in a time of natural catastrophe is strongly manipulated".[33] She is concerned about the way the catastrophe is turned into political propaganda[34] regardless of the dramatic circumstances of the citizens: "Several things struck me. For instance, I didn't understand why they would speak so much about the power cut, as if it were the main problem. I suspected that some people were even taking advantage of this situation to demonstrate the importance of central nuclear plants".[35]

This specific state of emergency, in which people are vulnerable to images and information that they are being fed with by the mass media, served perfectly to change public opinion on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which outlaws war as a means to settle international disputes involving the state, and therefore in order to maintain international peace based on justice and order, Japan declared that armed forces[36] with war potential would not be maintained. Tawada notices that Japanese television has used the catastrophe to reinforce the role of the army in public security in the minds of Japanese people by a selection of reports from the site of the catastrophe with soldiers as the main heroes. These types of arguments are the key sociological issues in Tawada's journal, and these phenomena could not have been revealed if not for the writer's work, at least in part.

Conclusion

Natural catastrophe, and the crisis or chaos it entails, is an event which forces/inspires us to rethink the given world order (the sociological theory of crisis, conflict and change, from Comte, Durkheim, Dahrendorf, Merton, Giddens). In my essay I have attempted to show how by applying the method of analytic autoethnography, a sociologist can approach a literary work as valuable fieldwork material. Autoethnography determines three conditions for data to be considered an autoethnographic analysis. Firstly, the researcher must be a full member in the research group or setting; secondly, s/he should be visible as such a member in the researcher's published text; and ultimately the results of the analysis should fulfill the condition of commitment to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.

---

[33] Ibid., p. 94.

[34] The problem of Japanese mass media manipulating reports on Fukushima-related information in favor of the politicians requires deeper investigation, and goes far beyond the main topic of this essay. Here, just to sketch the background for Tawada's deliberations on this issue, I shall mention that this problem was discussed by European media (BBC, *The Economist*) as well as the Japan Times among others. See for example 'Secrecy and Lies', *The Economist*: http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21588140-tough-new-law-secrecy-has-suddenly-become-controversial-secrecy-and-lies (accessed 25.03.2014).

[35] Tawada, *Journal des jours*…, p. 92.

[36] Japan *de facto* maintains armed forces, referred to as the Japan Self-Defense Forces, which are supposed to be a kind of extension of the security police. The need to create a regular forced army has been the subject of vigorous debate over the last two decades.

I have argued that Tawada's membership in the setting of her study is constituted around three aspects: her Japanese nationality, which gives her the right to voice the interests of the mostly voiceless community of her compatriots. Secondly, as an artist re-acculturated in a European environment, living and writing in Germany, Tawada has learned the occidental perspective of perception. Lastly, thanks to her works, she enjoys the status of a renowned writer, a public intellectual whose voice forms a part of public discourse – a discourse which contradicts the official Japanese media.

The questions she considers in *After Fukushima. Journal of Trembling Days* concern such issues as the inequality of cultural encounters, which are usually related to power relations, and which is strongly related to the way we use/manipulate languages as well as the manner of communication. As a Japanese she turns an ethnographic eye onto pursuing sociological involvement into the political circumstances of the catastrophe. She expresses the feelings and emotions of other members of the Japanese community, with whom she shares the aftermaths of the tragic experience, bringing to light the fact that the state uses the media for their own purposes and interests. The reality is adjusted to the officially approved version of the situation of the possible radioactive risks. Inconvenient information is swept under the carpet at the cost of civilian safety. Her far-fetched analysis and reasoning demonstrate that deeply individual and self-analytical ethnography can rise above idiographic particularity to address broader theoretical issue. However, be that as it may, we should keep in mind that this book was not intended as sociological research, and the range of its argument is limited to the reflections and reality presented in this collection of essays.

Notes on Contributors

OLGA BARBASIEWICZ, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland (obarbasiewicz@iksio.pan.pl)

KAROLINA BROMA-SMENDA, Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland (karolina.broma@gmail.com)

EMIL CIECIELĄG, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland (emilc@tlen.pl)

MAŁGORZATA CITKO, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, United States of America (mcitko@hawaii.edu)

VERONICA GASPAR, National University of Music Bucharest, Romania (gasparveronica@yahoo.com)

BEATA KOWALCZYK, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Poland (beakowalczyk@yahoo.fr)

FORUM MITHANI, SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom (f_mithani@soas.ac.uk)

ANDREA REVELANT, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy (revelant@unive.it)

PARK SUNYONG, Kyungpook National University, Republic of Korea (xuanlingkorea@daum.net)

LEON WOLFF, Bond University, Australia (lwolff@bond.edu.au)