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Plurality through Film: Subjectivity in Yoko Tawada's *Das nackte Auge*

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**PLURALITY THROUGH FILM
SUBJECTIVITY IN YOKO TAWADA'S *DAS NACKTE AUGE***

by

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BACHELOR OF ARTS, ENGLISH AND GERMAN

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes an examination of the subject formation of the nameless protagonist and first-person narrator of Yoko Tawada's novel, *Das nackte Auge*. Situated and framed by poststructuralist theorists such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, this thesis argues that the protagonist's plurality of subject positions is established through her encounters with film, particularly in relation to the French actress Catherine Deneuve, in a process that reveals the overlapping networks of social, historical, and political structures that intersect to express her subjectivity as formed under systemic racism and sexism. Tawada's novel provides an opportunity to examine how the protagonist is formed by and resists structures of imperial power, colonial subjugation, and gendered violence. The protagonist gradually begins to understand how her body holds traces of trauma beyond that of an individual experience, and how there is no existence outside the ideologies that shape the way she resides in a world dominated by a camera lens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Function of Trauma in Yoko Tawada's <i>Das nackte Auge</i>	10
Chapter Two: Catherine Deneuve's Star Image and Production of Sexualities	35
Chapter Three: Performativity and Finding a Stage with Deneuve	61
Conclusion	82
Works Cited	86

Introduction

In this thesis, I intend to explore how Yoko Tawada's understanding of subjectivity shapes her novel, *Das nackte Auge*. Tawada's novel is told from the perspective of a nameless Vietnamese girl invited to give a presentation in East Berlin. She is kidnapped by a West German man and tries to go home but accidentally travels to Paris, where she obsessively watches films starring the French actress Catherine Deneuve. Deneuve's connection to imperialism is underscored in the film *Indochine* (1992), in which she plays a plantation owner in colonial Vietnam. While the protagonist remains critical of capitalist and imperialist society, her subjectivity is nevertheless determined by Deneuve, a white woman, and the camera lens that frames her. I begin with the question: what is subjectivity and how is this concept expressed through Tawada's protagonist?

I define subjectivity as an identity based on variable subject positions, an understanding of self that is constructed within unstable relational systems. In other words, there is no inherent, stable basis for an identity, such as a gender, sexuality, or language. This situates Tawada's work within a discourse espoused by political theorist Chantal Mouffe and philosopher Michel Foucault. In my thesis, I begin with an investigation of how symptoms of trauma affect the protagonist of *Das nackte Auge* and how, despite being traumatized, or perhaps even because of being traumatized, she becomes more critical of her shifting subject positions in relation to film. The first chapter focuses on symptoms of postcolonial trauma as they manifest themselves in the protagonist's imaginary relationship to Deneuve, which I examine through the lens of Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry. The second chapter is devoted to an exploration of how the protagonist's understanding of her subjectivity, especially in

relation to her sexuality and sexual experiences, is affected by Deneuve's star image. In the third and final chapter, I analyze her relationship to film through the lens of Christian Metz's discussion of primary and secondary identification, and I do this in conjunction with a consideration of Judith Butler's concept of performativity.

This thesis will contribute to existing research on Tawada's work by focusing on the protagonist's subjectivity in relation to film and trauma. Many scholars have discussed Tawada's creative use of language and the subjectivity of characters that cross physical and linguistic boundaries; expanding the analysis on subject formation in Tawada's work, my thesis will focus on the role of visual narratives for the constitution of subjectivity. Specifically, I focus on the protagonist's ever-changing relationship with Deneuve's star image, one that I interpret as inviting analysis to the larger sociopolitical structures that oppress Tawada's protagonist.

Definition of Subjectivity/Identity

The search for identity is a common topic in literature and film, my thesis begins with these questions: How is subjectivity constituted? Is it through homeland, native language, or something else? Japanese author Yoko Tawada explores such questions in many of her works through characters that define themselves in relation to ever-changing, unstable surroundings. Because of this instability in environment, identity is never fixed or singular, and is best understood as subjectivity, or rather, subject positions that change dependent upon varying situations. In other words, it is a social process influenced by many interactions. In an interview, Tawada has mentioned that she finds the idea of identity based on just one language or homeland strange: "When I was introduced to

European culture and its modern concepts of identity, I noticed that there is an unrelenting search for one single identity. I, however, could not work with that idea” (“Ein Wort, Ein Ort” 11). For Tawada, this means that identity is a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to one-dimensional essentialism.

Because of Tawada’s rejection of identity notions based on fixed or singular subject positions, it is worthwhile to situate her ideas in the context of poststructuralism. Political theorist Chantal Mouffe understands identity as follows,

...the social agent is constituted by an ensemble of subject positions that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences. It is constructed by a diversity of discourses, among which there is no necessary relation but a constant movement of overdetermination and displacement. The ‘identity’ of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification. (33-34)

She writes that identity is located within a dynamic, ever-fluctuating relational system. Identity can be defined as an ensemble of subject positions that fluctuate depending on the situation and are not based on a stable, fixed point of identification. Michel Foucault also discusses such construction of the subject in a relationship system based on power in his essay “The Subject and Power.” He disagrees with the formation of identity based on fixed relationships and writes, “We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries” (336). For Foucault, the concept of a stable, singular identity is a method of maintaining the status quo throughout every level society—an individual, a subject, is defined in order

to build and maintain power relations. Tawada also embraces an understanding of identity based on alternating subject positions as her characters cross both physical and linguistic borders. During an interview, Tawada described these ideas, saying, “Nowadays, human existence is made up of continual, varied interchanges. What I refer to as ‘I’ is made up of what I hear, what I read, what I see, and how I react to it” (“The Postcommunist Eye” 43). This seems to imply a flexible identity formation that could be simultaneously *fremd- und selbstbestimmt* (foreign and self-determined). Subjectivity is determined by subject-subject relations and subject-object relations; however, choosing how to react to these relations grants the subject self-determination as well. Ultimately, subjectivity must constantly be redefined and shifts in relation to new situations and tensions.

Trauma and Its Role in *Das nackte Auge*

The first chapter focuses on the text through the lens of trauma. I define trauma and consider symptoms of this phenomenon, such as the disruption of memory¹ and its effect on the protagonist’s subjectivity. I analyze her traumatic encounters in relation to the colonial trauma as a result of France's colonization of Vietnam, and this colonial trauma is interpreted partly through the lens of Michael Rothberg’s discussion of multidirectional memory, in which different traumas intersect to find expression in solidarity. Rothberg criticizes the Western framework through which much of trauma studies is conceived and calls for a more multifaceted approach in considering trauma, in which the psychic traces of trauma can be located in the institutional racism of postcolonial and imperialist

¹Such as discussed by Roger Luckhurst among other trauma scholars.

societies. Indeed, the protagonist's displacement and sexual exploitation mirror colonial trauma suffered by her home country. Her experiences also often reflect those of characters played by Catherine Deneuve, which prompts my analysis of trauma through the lens of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry; Bhabha argue that the colonized people's forced mimicry of their colonizers undermines imperialist subject positions. Tawada's protagonist suffers from symptoms of trauma, causing her to confuse sometimes whether she is remembering her own experiences or those of the film characters. Her memory is disjointed and unreliable, and she seems to suffer from dissociation. She vacillates between a perpetrator and victim subject position, and any limited comprehension of her trauma Tawada's protagonist has is mediated by film characters played by Deneuve.

Aleida Assmann defines individual and collective memory and discusses how they function within the context of identity formation and writes: "Every 'I' is connected to a 'we' that provides important foundations for the establishment of a personal identity" (9). The protagonist of Tawada's novel is connected to her communist upbringing in North Vietnam and often adopts subject positions in relation to that "we." She understands many of her encounters through a communist lens critical of capitalist society. In an interview, Tawada confirmed that she wanted to consider Western society from her protagonist's communist perspective, saying: "Durch die Augen der Vietnamesin, die kommunistisch eingestellt ist, wollte ich die kapitalistische Welt betrachten" (Horst). Although it has been mentioned that Tawada dismisses the idea of identity based solely on heritage, she does not disregard its influence. In a different interview, she discussed

the repetitive nature of conflicts and their effect on the present. Explaining how trauma endures, she states:

It is not accurate, however, to say that a conflict is over and another has begun. No, all conflicts are related. In my eyes, the Vietnam War is not over, and colonialism in Southeast Asia is not over either. I don't have the impression that communism, as a topic, has been resolved and that suddenly an entirely new issue has reared its head. That is simply not the way it is. Our present becomes more visible when we look at it from the perspective of that which is only supposedly over. ("The Postcommunist Eye" 45)

For Tawada's protagonist, imperialist conflicts are not resolved as she continues to understand her present in relation to these past conflicts. Outside of cinema, she does not display much awareness of world events and does not even notice when the Berlin Wall falls. She overwrites her trauma-affected memory with film, using it to reach an understanding of her varying subject positions within capitalist society.

Catherine Deneuve's Star Image and the Protagonist in *Das nackte Auge*

Chapter two primarily addresses Deneuve's star image, which I interpret as having a particularly large influence on the protagonist's performance of sexuality and relationships to other characters. For example, she understands sexual encounters with her West German kidnapper in relation to the film *Repulsion* (1965), in which Deneuve stars as a woman who loses her grasp on reality as she is having nightmares of being raped. Many of Deneuve's roles are sexual in nature, such as her bisexual vampire character in *The Hunger* (1983). Gwénaëlle Le Gras explains how the film "made of her a gay icon" in her article "Soft and Hard: Catherine Deneuve in 1970," in which she

discusses the binary of purity/impurity in the actress's star image. This eroticism plays a prominent role for Tawada's protagonist as her sexual encounters mirror those of characters from films starring Deneuve. She is attracted to the actress and indicates as much while watching *The Hunger*: „Ich hatte nichts mehr dagegen, ein Vampir zu werden, dazuzugehören, Blut miteinander zu teilen, um zusammenzuleben. Mit Miriam“ (81). Miriam is played by Deneuve, and Tawada's protagonist wants to become a vampire to be with her. The films *Tristana* (1970) and *Belle de Jour* (1967) also feature Deneuve in heavily sexualized roles, which influence the protagonist's understanding of sexuality and patriarchal oppression.

Because the protagonist mirrors the sexual relationships of multiple film characters, I argue that this leads Tawada's protagonist to understand her subject positions as a series of performances. In film, she finds strength in Deneuve's star image as a kind of overarching net of interrelated subject positions allowing the protagonist to reinterpret the films' normative narratives. For example, the protagonist connects Deneuve's portrayals of weaker characters to roles in which Deneuve's characters had more agency. She is never just one woman playing one role for Tawada's protagonist. Her understanding of a decentered subjectivity leads me to consider Foucault's explanation of the creation of subjects through power in relation to sexuality. He writes that "... it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct" (1520). Power is exercised in the creation of sexual subjects, which are categorized and analyzed into a singular subject position. Tawada's protagonist resists categorization into one subject position through her

ambiguous narration, and she finds an expression of her unstable subjectivity in Deneuve's star image as she sees her various roles as connected and feeding on each other. In the second chapter, I will discuss further how the protagonist's identification with Deneuve's star image destabilizes her subjectivity at the hands of imperialist and sexist power structures in which the protagonist systemically oppressed.

Cinema and Performance in *Das nackte Auge*

In my final chapter, I consider Christian Metz's discussion of primary and secondary identification in relation to the protagonist's subjectivity in the cinema. Throughout the book, she addresses Deneuve with the formal you, *Sie*, and identifies with the actress's various roles, which mirror her own experiences. This corresponds to Metz's concept of secondary identification, i.e. character identification. Through her role as a spectator the protagonist finds meaning in her life.

Das nackte Auge is organized into thirteen chapters, each titled for a film starring Deneuve. The protagonist's understanding of herself and how she navigates Paris is based upon these different films. She even comes to understand her subject positions as a series of film roles, which I argue reveals the performativity and therefore instability of her migrant subject position. I consider Judith Butler's discussion of performativity when she writes:

The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground". (2552)

Through her mimicry and literal performance of societal norms, the protagonist's subjectivity can be analyzed in relation to this unstable groundlessness. She literally performs as she takes on fictional names and falsifies her reasons for being in Paris. It is rarely clear whether she acts of her own volition or because she is fulfilling a role that is expected of her as an undocumented migrant woman.

In my interpretation, I argue that cinema helps the protagonist to grow more critical of how her subjectivity is formed. She provides commentary on the societal and historical structures that systemically disadvantage her and, in a kind of ironic solidarity, finds expression of her unstable migrant subjectivity in a white French actress. As she comes to understand her subjectivity as a series of roles like those of Deneuve, the performativity and therefore inherent instability of her subject positions is exposed. Her ambiguous narration reinforces a subjectivity that cannot be singular. I explore how Tawada's protagonist's attraction to and obsession with Deneuve ultimately reveal a groundless, adaptable identity in which prescriptive essentialist norms are undermined and hollowed out. Despite the protagonist's subversive narration, she cannot fully resist the perspective controlled by the camera, the naked eye, always functions as a constant that dominates the protagonist's understanding of herself and her environment.

Chapter One

The Function of Trauma in Yoko Tawada's *Das nackte Auge*

Introduction: Trauma and Postcolonialism

Trauma disrupts memory, therefore disrupting identity formation. Aleida Assmann writes, “As questionable as our memories may be, the ability to remember nonetheless constitutes what it is to be a human being” (12). What we remember and how we share these memories with others largely determines who we are. Because memories are unstable, subject positions shift from moment to moment, and trauma plays an important role in subjectivity as it can disrupt and rewrite the past. Colonialism is an example of a kind of trauma that affects whole groups of people whose cultures are disrupted and overwritten by their colonizers. Colonial trauma, or postcolonial trauma, is a type of collective trauma characterized by “dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide” (Craps 3). Entire cultures are lost and reformed by colonization. (To name just a couple of US examples, this loss of culture is evident in members of many Native American tribes who cannot speak their native tongue, and among slave descendants who have developed Black Pride in lieu of a memory of a specific cultural inheritance.) Craps writes that “Postcolonial critics and theorists [...] have [...] suggested theorizing colonization in terms of the infliction of a collective trauma and reconceptualizing postcolonialism as a post-traumatic cultural formation” (2). In Yoko Tawada's book *Das nackte Auge*, this colonial trauma is not experienced directly by her protagonist, but it is the legacy she inherits from her family and countrymen. As a kind of multi- and transgenerational trauma it manifests itself differently from trauma to an individual psyche that has been discussed predominantly in

the context of the Holocaust. Michael Rothberg argues for the need to reconceive trauma since there is a

[...] need to supplement the event-based model of trauma that has become dominant over the past fifteen years with a model that can account for ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence as well. The implications of this latter, collectively-articulated argument are far-reaching; [...] insight[s] that theory needs to globalize itself more thoroughly and responsibly holds true for many prevailing theoretical tendencies. (“Decolonizing” 226)

Rothberg refers critically to the dominant Western framework and articulates the difference of colonial trauma as a wound that leaves different psychic traces, existing today in continued systems of oppression formed by institutional racism that affect minorities in Western countries and the people of postcolonial countries. Indeed, Rothberg questions whether the notion of trauma “provides the best framework for thinking about the legacies of violence in the colonized/postcolonial world” (226). The focus on the Holocaust in trauma studies, a single event that has formed the basis of this Eurocentric² approach, needs to be reframed. So how can we address the trauma of colonial spaces within a field dominated by a Western viewpoint?

Many scholars including Rothberg have criticized trauma theory for its Eurocentric framework, but few have extended the arguments beyond Europe, possibly due to the need for special knowledge of other cultures. Craps describes colonial trauma

² The focus on the European context is in part due Aleida Assmann’s and other Holocaust scholars pioneering work on trauma and cultural memory was done in Germany with focus on the Holocaust. The term “Eurocentric” also tends to problematically imply a cultural and racial homogeneity within Europe that does not exist.

as "...a collective experience, which means that its specificity cannot be recognized unless the object of trauma research shifts from the individual to larger social entities, such as communities or nations" (4). Craps is of course referring to the imperialistic institutions in place that continue to oppress entire groups of colonized peoples. This collective traumatic experience is not limited to explicit violence, but also includes everyday forms of aggressions and microaggressions that disadvantage people of color in ways which perpetuate frameworks of institutions formed during times of colonialism and slavery. Racism is a trauma inflicted on nonwhites in many Western and postcolonial countries; it is not a trauma that can be limited to a specific time period or country because of its ubiquitous and ongoing nature. Rothberg cautions against the use of the term "the West" for he notes that the "West-and-the-Rest" paradigm can never be free of the "aura of racism" ("Decolonizing" 228). He points to the diversity within the so-called West that goes ignored when the term is used. Speaking of a Western or Eurocentric perspective, for example, implies a homogeneity that is not the reality. I recognize the term "the West" not as a homogenous voice or perspective, but rather a viewpoint in which attitudes and positionalities of white people are privileged, and I will continue using the term throughout this chapter because I wish to discuss the West in relation to these racist limitations in perspective, which I consider in the context of Tawada's novel *Das nackte Auge*.

The inability to escape a Eurocentric viewpoint is precisely the main concern of Tawada's protagonist as she learns to understand her surroundings and events in the novel almost exclusively in relation to various films starring Catherine Deneuve. What limited understanding she reaches of her trauma she achieves through Deneuve. The

totalizing Eurocentric paradigms superimposed on the protagonist's trauma do not drown out her connection to her country's colonial past, but rather amplify how microaggressions function within postcolonial trauma as the trauma of the white woman is privileged over hers. The inability to escape a Western perspective only further illustrates the insidious institutional power of racism in postcolonialism. I will briefly examine the protagonist and her traumatic encounters partially through the lens of Michael Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory. He writes that "memory works productively: the result of memory conflict is not less memory, but more—even of subordinated memory traditions" ("Mapping" 523). It should be noted that here Rothberg specifically talks about comparisons of the Holocaust to postcolonial traumas in which he argues against ideas of competitive memory, in which the evocation of the Holocaust is assumed to drown out the specificity of other traumas. Rothberg, in fact, argues against a hierarchical memory contest and emphasizes mutual interdependence of discourses about trauma. I concentrate primarily on the victims and perpetrators on two sides of the same trauma and I consider Rothberg's ideas in relation to the intersection of asymmetrical traumas that produce opportunities to articulate the trauma of Tawada's protagonist. Indeed, he argues that "public memory is *structurally multidirectional*—that is, always marked by transcultural borrowing, exchange, and adaptation" ("Mapping" 524). This means that different traumas can intersect and achieve expression in various cultural mediums. This occurs for Tawada's protagonist as she reaches an understanding of her subject position in relation to the colonial trauma inflicted on her home country, particularly through *Indochine* (1992), a film about the Vietnamese colonial uprising against France, which features prominently in Tawada's novel. The nostalgic imperialist

lens of the film emphasizes the perspective of the European colonizer but nevertheless functions to illuminate the trauma inflicted on Vietnam, just as Rothberg describes in his conception of multidirectional memory.

In the following, I will argue that Tawada's protagonist relives the colonial trauma of Vietnam in a French movie theatre, an experience that causes her to further critically define her subject position in relation to the imperialist world of western Europe. The imposition of a white perspective, in which she identifies with Deneuve, does not drown out the victim's side of trauma, but rather serves as a vehicle to facilitate articulation of her trauma ironically. Her subordinate position to the privileged Deneuve does not outcompete an expression of her trauma, but rather serves to further illustrate the macro- and microaggressions inherent in postcolonial trauma. I will consider how the trauma of the oppressor and the oppressed interact to perpetuate colonial trauma, how Tawada's protagonist is both implicated as a perpetrator against her will, and how she finds limited resistance in irony.

Indeed, Tawada's protagonist ironically identifies with and even mimics Deneuve in such a way that I find it useful and highly relevant to consider Homi Bhabha's discussion of mimicry in colonial spaces. In this chapter I focus heavily on Bhabha's conception of colonial mimicry, which he describes as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126). Despite being forced to conform to foreign norms and values, colonized subjects are never granted the full status and rights of the colonizers, and this causes colonial discourse to be "therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (126). As an Asian

woman in the West, the protagonist represents a migrant subjectivity. She possesses an indeterminacy in her subject positions, despite the imposition of a Eurocentric perspective on her own because she is not privileged as a nonwhite person. I consider how the protagonist's identification with Deneuve undermines the Western paradigm of essential identity and therefore creates instability that is especially mirrored in *Indochine*. The following reading of the text is guided by two fundamental questions: In what way is the protagonist's subject position tied to colonial trauma? And how is this trauma expressed in the mimicry of the perpetrator, as well as the intersection with asymmetrical traumas of other groups?

The Protagonist and Her Ties to Colonial Trauma

Tawada's text critically explores the imposition of the Western perspective as it is conceived by an outsider, beginning with the silencing of the naïve and young protagonist. She constantly thinks about the communist ideals she learned in school, but never gets the chance to give her presentation in East Berlin about the trauma Vietnam has suffered due to its colonial past. She intends from the beginning to discuss systemic oppression under imperialism but is made drunk by a West German man named Jörg, before he kidnaps her from East Berlin to West Germany. Silenced and dislocated by the alcohol, the girl blacks out and is transported to West Germany. Jörg intends to keep her as the mother of his children. She wants to leave but he says to her: "In deinem Bauch befindet sich mein Kind. Es wäre intelligenter, wenn wir zuerst eine glückliche Familie gründen und dann zusammen deine Eltern besuchen" (17). He tells her this as if it were a suggestion, but she has no means of leaving him or contacting her family. Unsure of how

to escape, she spends some time at his home thinking about the sexual exploitation of Asian women. She criticizes the Japanese for the word “geisha”. She thinks: “Warum hatten sie das Wort ‚Geisha‘ exportiert? [...] Als Preis dafür müssen wir aber heute noch als potentielle Geishas leiden.” (21). The “we” she refers to are Asian women like herself who have been forced to suffer in at the hands of Westerners who treats them as sexual property. In this context, she understands “geisha” to mean a kind of prostitute. Although not an accurate portrayal of a true geisha, who is actually an entertainer trained in traditional Japanese arts, she is referring to a common confusion of geishas with prostitutes; this misunderstanding of geishas’ cultural significance began when American soldiers, during occupation after World War II, called Japanese prostitutes geishas. It is an interesting connection since Tawada’s protagonist intended to give a presentation on Vietnam’s suffering at the hands of American imperialism. She considers this sexual exploitation to be a part of capitalism. She makes this connection in a nightmare, in which she says: “Ein kapitalistisches Land ist immer gezwungen, etwas zu exportieren, auch wenn es nichts bringt und viele Opfer kostet” (21). This statement seems to echo what she was taught in school, thus she connects capitalism with the sexual exploitation she endures in Jörg’s house. He is killed by two men in this dream, who inform her that Jörg wanted to rape her “politically,” for the two men say: “Er ist ein Spion aus Bochum. Er wollte dich politisch vergewaltigen” (21). This West German man has kidnapped her and violated her in a way that is not only personal, but indicative of a larger political system in which people like her are often exploited and disadvantaged. Rather than thinking explicitly about her own suffering, the protagonist recognizes Jörg as a representative of this systemic oppression and believes he deserves to suffer for it. When

she wakes up to discover her kidnapping, Jörg sits in the kitchen drinking coffee. She thinks:

Sicher hatte irgendeine westeuropäische Firma südamerikanische Arbeiter betrogen und ihnen die Kaffeebohnen für einige Münzen abgekauft. Ich wünschte heimlich, dass die Geister der minderjährigen Arbeiter, die in der Kaffeeplantage gestorben waren, in der Nacht bei Jörg auftauchten, um ihn zu quälen. (19)

She connects his transgression against her not just to him as an individual, but to a larger neo-colonial system that violates many people from different continents, from Asia to South America. Her situation is not symmetrically comparable to being worked to death on a plantation, but nevertheless she analyzes the bigger picture, standing in solidarity with other victims of imperialism in order to process a fraction of her own situation. In his conception of multidirectional memory, Rothberg discusses the importance of solidarity in the intersection of traumas. He writes that a “radically democratic politics of memory needs to include a differentiated empirical history, moral solidarity with victims of diverse injustices, and an ethics of comparison that coordinates the asymmetrical claims of those victims” (“Mapping” 526). It can be productive to examine the parallels between asymmetrical traumas. Indeed, expressions of solidarity can serve to bring attention to differentiated subject positions, such as Tawada’s protagonist’s solidarity with the victims of the indirect exploitation of Jörg’s western imperialist mindset. Rothberg writes about how “Attention to hybridity and heterogeneity [...] can serve as part of a more thoroughgoing indictment of imperial politics and legacies that draws attention to the parallels as well as differences between forms of violence inside and outside the metropole” (“Decolonizing” 228). She faces a life as an “exported” geisha,

and her anger at Jörg comes across as more analytical and detached from the situation because of the conclusions she draws about the bigger picture of imperialism in the parallels of different imperial legacies. She recognizes that this systemic oppression could continue into the future, as Jörg leaves the kitchen and closes the door behind him. The door makes a sound that causes the protagonist to reflect: “sie könnte in den kommenden zehn Jahren nicht mehr geöffnet werden” (19). It is a door to her own trauma that she will not be able to fully process, except perhaps given plenty of time.

The protagonist’s relationship to her colonial past at the start of the book is mainly that of an indoctrinated model student. However, after she escapes to Paris, she acknowledges that her position in society has now changed. In her new environment, she believes no one will take her seriously. She thinks: “Wenn ich offen von mir erzählen würde, würden die Polizisten mich verhaften, anstatt mir zu helfen” (49). In Paris, she is not a model student anymore, but a criminal, an undocumented immigrant. She is shocked to discover she has accidentally taken the train to Paris, a city she naturally connects with the evils of capitalism, which becomes apparent as she begins to think of what she has heard about Vietnam’s colonial past with France. What she knows emerges in anecdotes of her family. She first recalls her uncle claiming to have the opportunity to work in Paris, and her father’s displeased response:

Mein Onkel gab einmal an, dass er vielleicht die Gelegenheit habe, geschäftlich nach Paris zu fliegen. Daraufhin antwortete mein Vater verächtlich, es sei lächerlich, wenn jemand, der aus einer armen Bauernfamilie stamme und es durch die Revolution geschafft habe aufzusteigen, plötzlich Sehnsucht nach Paris entwickelte. (39)

Her family had benefited during the colonial revolution, but her uncle still wished to travel to France. An elitist urge ironically still remained within her family, an urge to be associated with the powerful country. Multiple family members spoke of Vietnam's earlier connection to France almost fondly, and the protagonist recalls her aunt telling about their colonial past, when the aunt explored the ruins of a plantation that had previously belonged to the ancestors of a friend. She finds a French book, "*Balzac's Seraphita*" and mentions her efforts to read it (40). Again, the elitist urge to be associated with France appears, as the aunt tried to read what French she could from a book taken from a plantation on land stolen from natives. This aunt was the first to tell the protagonist about Vietnam's connection to France: "Unser Land sei früher ein Teil Frankreichs gewesen, erzählte mir diese Tante, als ich noch klein war. Darauf soll ich geantwortet haben, 'Dann war Paris ein Teil unseres Landes! Wie schön!' Meine Tante hatte gelacht" (40). Of course, the protagonist does not recall this, but this social memory of her family is reinforced through stories. As a child, she could not understand Vietnam's subordinate position to France. As the protagonist is panicking on the train, this anecdote of her childhood misunderstanding calms her. She is traveling to a country with a historically dominant relationship to her own, but she is able to momentarily reverse and undermine the power dynamic by recalling her childhood misunderstanding.

The Mimicry of *Repulsion*

Once in Paris, film becomes the protagonist's primary medium through which she comprehends the world, and especially the colonial trauma of Vietnam, but also her own trauma of being kidnapped. The time she spent with Jörg is overwritten by the French

film *Repulsion* (1965), in which Deneuve stars a woman who has nightmares about being raped. The protagonist notes while remembering how she felt in the cinema:

Auf der Leinwand spielte nicht ich, sondern andere Menschen spielten ihr Leben. Ich konnte mir mich selbst nicht als eine Figur vorstellen, die in Paris lebte. Dafür konnte ich mir meine Körperhaltungen von früher zum ersten Mal bildlich vorstellen, zum Beispiel, wie ich in Bochum vom Bett aus die Wände betrachtet hatte. Das Schlafzimmer in ‚Repulsion‘ zeigte mir das. Es war nur nicht ich, die im Bett lag, sondern SIE. (51)

She is able to reach an understanding of what happened to her in Bochum because of the film *Repulsion*, and it becomes clear that the first chapter of *Das nackte Auge* containing her reflection on past events is colored by the lens of *Repulsion*'s camera. She notes that for the first time she is able to picture herself in relation to the surroundings of Jörg's house, but she also emphasizes that Deneuve, whom she addresses throughout the book with the formal you "Sie", is superimposed over herself. Whether she was actually raped while being kidnapped becomes more unclear because of the hallucinations depicted in *Repulsion*, but she suffers from a nightmare that could be a symptom of trauma from her own sexual assault. She describes the nightmare or hallucination without comment on whether it was real or a dream:

Jörg griff nach meinem Fußgelenk, hob es einfach hoch und hielt mich kopfüber. Dann öffnete er mit den Fingern meine Schamlippen und steckte alles hinein, was er gerade fand: die Zahnbürste, den Rasierapparat, das Fläschchen mit den Augentropfen und den Kamm. Nur die Nagelschere ließ er aus der Hand fallen. Ich schnappte sie und stach damit in seinen Spann. (25)

In the film *Repulsion*, there is no scene that quite mirrors the description of Jörg shoving household objects into her, although Deneuve's character, Carol, suffers horrific nightmares about sexual assault and eventually kills the men she dreams or hallucinates about. Tawada's protagonist also describes a hallucination of attacking someone "der wahrscheinlich Jörg hieß" and kills him, just like Carol does to two men in *Repulsion* (24). In the film, possible sexual abuse in Carol's childhood is alluded to at the end of the movie, when a family photograph shows a child Carol looking at a man, possibly her father, with loathing. Much of what Tawada's protagonist describes mirrors the events of the film, framing the time she spends in Jörg's house. Her unreliability as a narrator with disjointed memories provides another strong indication of trauma.

Symptoms of trauma also manifest themselves in her inability to keep track of time as she does not indicate how long she stays in Bochum, although she realizes that it has been at least a month, saying that "da ich wieder meine Tage bekam, musste ungefähr ein Monat vergangen sein" (30). Still, as more time passes throughout the book it is unclear how much and exactly when events occur. When she first wakes up in Jörg's house, she has no idea how much time has passed and comments: "Die verlorenen Zeiten waren nur als Erschöpfung im Körper spürbar" (16). It is in Jörg's house that she first describes time as disjointed with hallucinations, and she seems almost detached from the events that happen to her in Bochum. When she talks about sexual intercourse with Jörg, she provides no judgement of it apart from disinterest, even directly after describing her nightmare of being attacked by Jörg: "Ich wurde bald des sexuellen Verkehrs überdrüssig, weil man bei der Sache immer zu zweit war und keine neue Szene zu sehen bekam" (25). She passively allows anything Jörg wants to happen and simply accepts that

she and Jörg should be married. She never indicates that she truly loves Jörg or wants to be with him, and she even ironically comments on the fact that she seldom sees children playing on the streets near Jörg's house because "Wahrscheinlich gab es in der Umgebung gefährliche Entführer" (33). Tawada's protagonist is perhaps so traumatized from being kidnapped that she is incapable of giving a full commentary on her time in Bochum, and only begins to find articulation in irony as well through the lens of *Repulsion*. The protagonist describes the effect being in the cinema has on her, saying: "Meine Person verschwand im Dunkel des Kinosaals und es blieb nur noch meine brennende Netzhaut, auf der sich die Leinwand reflektierte. Es gab keine Frau mehr, die ,ich' hieß. Denn Sie waren für mich die einzige Frau, mich gab es also nicht" (54). Deneuve's roles so overwhelm her that she no longer sees herself as a subject separate from Deneuve. Her life mimics these roles, and the trauma experienced by Deneuve's character mediates her own emerging comprehension of her trauma.

Indeed, the entire chapter about her time in Bochum only partially represents the protagonist's presence because of the imposition of Deneuve. The events with Jörg so mimic Deneuve's character Carol from *Repulsion* that any events described by the protagonist may not have even happened to her. She finds a way to express herself through Deneuve in a kind of partial presence comparable to Bhabha's mimicry. Bhabha writes:

A desire that, through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. It is a desire that

reverses “in part” the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence. (129)

Bochum lies in a highly industrialized area in Germany, and the protagonist considers everything about her time in Bochum to represent the evils of capitalism and imperialism. Nevertheless, she mimics and produces a “partial vision of the colonizer’s presence” in her identification with Deneuve, who represents the power that oppresses the protagonist. This is evident in the chapter on the film *Indochine*, in which Deneuve stars as a plantation owner in Vietnam who has indentured servants. Bhabha’s mimicry is concerned with how colonizers disrupt the cultures of the colonized and attempt to make indigenous peoples like themselves, obvious examples being to force natives to practice the same religion and speak the same language. The “partial presence” occurs because, despite this mimicry, colonized peoples are not granted the same rights and status as their white oppressors, and this in turn undermines the systems the colonized are forced to mimic. I reconfigure and apply the lens of this mimicry to Tawada’s protagonist in her limited comprehension of her trauma that is ironically mediated by Deneuve’s characters in various films. This very expression of her trauma through a movie star who is so strongly implicated in imperialism illuminates the protagonist’s positionality in regards to colonial trauma. It could not be more perfectly ironic that her trauma is overwritten and reconfigured through the lens of an imperialist subject position in what can be likened to a further act of colonial mimicry.

Mimicry of Capitalism in *The Hunger*

Despite her constant attempts to resist capitalist norms, Tawada’s protagonist imitates capitalist standards as she notices parallels between her life and Deneuve’s characters.

While living with Ai Van, she is reluctant to get a job in which she will be exploited. In a conversation with Ai Van, she claims that “Es ist unwürdig, als Kellnerin zu arbeiten, da sie Kunden bedienen muss” (75). Ai Van asks what is so bad about being a waitress, and the protagonist explains “Das waren doch Adlige und Kolonialherren, die ihre Diener zu Hause hatten und sich das Essen servieren ließen” (75). She views certain jobs as unworthy because she perceives echoes of a colonial past, noting the continued postcolonial trauma suffered by Vietnam and other colonized countries. At some point after her conversation with Ai Van, the film *The Hunger* (1983) influences her to accept a job in which the exploitation is much more apparent. She begins to work in a clinic illegally conducting experiments on undocumented immigrants. This job entails allowing the clinic workers to test different products on her skin each week and take blood samples. The protagonist is even proud of the work: “Ich hatte keinen Grund mehr, ein schlechtes Gewissen zu haben. Ich arbeitete, ich war eine Arbeiterin und nicht mehr niemand” (82). Working with the clinic gives her what she views a legitimate position in capitalist society. It is money someone in her position is often forced to accept, and despite her earlier objections to being a waitress, she does not seem to mind the unworthy nature of her job, specifically because of the film *The Hunger*. In the film, Deneuve stars as a bisexual vampire named Miriam who finds a new partner to turn into a vampire. Tawada’s protagonist compares being a vampire to a career as she watches the film:

Die Naturwissenschaftlerin ist kein Snack, sondern die ausgewählte Partnerin. Miriam saugt liebevoll ihr Blut aus, um sie zu ihrer Gleichen zu machen. Nach der Zeremonie wird sie keine Erforscherin der Natur mehr sein, sondern ein Vampir. Fällt ihr der Berufswechsel schwer? (80)

In the exploitative world of capitalism, a job as a vampire seems like a logical consequence to the protagonist. Watching Deneuve's relationship with another woman unfold prompts the protagonist to even note that she "...hatte nichts mehr dagegen, ein Vampir zu werden, einmal gründlich ausgesaugt zu werden, dazuzugehören, Blut miteinander zu teilen, um zusammenzuleben. Mit Miriam" (81). She is willing to become one of the vampires if it means she can stand on the same level as Deneuve and be her lover. She even adds: "Wenn ich genug Beute gemacht hätte, würde ich sofort mit einer dicken Spritze aus meinem Arm Blut abnehmen und damit Miriams Weinglas füllen" (81). The mention of drawing blood links her fantasies with Deneuve to her job as a guinea pig in the clinic. She sees the possibility of a reversal in her position in society because she sees herself as conforming to capitalist norms.

Her imitation of being a proper "Arbeiterin" can be viewed through Bhabha's conception of mimicry. Bhabha writes: "Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history" (131). Despite the illegal nature of the clinic experiments, the protagonist revalues this knowledge of a normative worker in a mimicry of capitalism. She explains when she goes to the cinema that she "bezahlte zum ersten Mal den Eintritt mit selbst verdientem Geld" (78). The protagonist recognizes the value in the ability to earn money and participate in the workforce. It logically follows that she should be "ausgesaugt" by a vampire in order to properly participate in a world in which she is systemically disadvantaged. Her only power in this situation comes in the understanding through Deneuve's character Miriam that she, too, may be able to obtain a powerful position like a vampire. In *The Hunger*, Miriam's immortal youth is even stolen from her

by her partner, the new vampire and former “Wissenschaftlerin” Sarah. The film ends with Miriam, trapped in a coffin in a storage room, screaming Sarah’s name. It is a power reversal that illustrates the potential threat of mimicry when configured to Tawada’s protagonist and colonial discourse. By mimicking a vampire and undermining Miriam’s authority, perhaps the protagonist could overthrow her, like Sarah did. Bhabha writes: “The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double-vision that is a result of what I’ve described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object” (129). By granting even partial recognition to colonized subjects, this creates a menace that reveals the inequalities inherent in the colonizer’s normative values and the instability thereof. This disruption of colonial authority can eventually lead to revolution—such as during the revolution in Vietnam. Tawada’s protagonist finds a point of resistance as she considers becoming a vampire. She does not mention the end of the film or the possibility of overthrowing Deneuve or white capitalist society, so it is not clear if she is merely infatuated with Deneuve and the fantasy of vampires. However, her logic about the career of a vampire clearly expresses her subject position’s implication as a cog in the capitalist machine.

To some extent, the protagonist recognizes that she is rather powerless in the capitalist system and what resistance she does find has no effect. She argues with Ai Van and her French husband Jean when they dismiss France’s role in colonization because “Wir unterstützen zum Beispiel die Wirtschaft der ehemaligen Kolonien in Westafrika“ (93). The protagonist tries to argue against them, but realizes that she cannot win:

Ich wünschte mir, Jean und Ai Van mit scharfen Argumenten totschiagen zu können. Aber ich konnte ja noch nicht einmal richtig sprechen. Außerdem hatten meine Worte keine Gültigkeit, denn ich schlief in der Wohnung, die Jean bezahlte und aß aus dem Topf von Ai Van. (93)

She has little choice but to accept conforming to the system that supports her. Despite her resistance to capitalism, she finds herself implicated no matter what she does.

***Indochine* and Identification with Deneuve**

The complexity of the protagonist's position becomes more obvious when she watches the previously mentioned film, *Indochine*, in which Deneuve stars as a plantation owner. In the film, Deneuve has an adopted Vietnamese daughter named Camille, with whom the protagonist seems at first to identify. While watching a scene in which Deneuve feeds Camille mango, the protagonist notices how it affects her. She responds: "Gib mir auch ein bisschen Mango! Gib mir! Mir, mir, mir! Meine Sprache wird kindlich, wenn ich Sie anspreche" (86). She becomes the daughter being fed mango, and Deneuve a sort of mother figure. In the film, Deneuve's character, Elaine, dismisses the differences between white people and people of color when she says: "The difference between people isn't skin color. It's this. The taste...the fruit. A child who has eaten apples all his life cannot be like me. I'm Asian. I'm a mango." Elaine claims to identify as Asian, but it is merely on a superficial level. Elaine is a plantation owner who even whips her indentured servants and tells one "Do you think a mother likes to beat her children?" The servant responds by telling her that she is "[his] father and [his] mother". She speaks from a position of privilege, of authority and oppression, while feeding Camille the mango. Camille has eaten nothing but this mango from a white woman her whole life.

Tawada's protagonist's fixation on the mango reflects the mimicry of French elite that Camille is being groomed for in the film. Elaine mentions that "We have to help create an Indo-Chinese elite" when justifying her decision to urge a Vietnamese friend to have her son—Camille's fiancé in an arranged marriage—educated in France. Vietnam later in the film undergoes the war (the First Indochina War of 1946), of which the adopted daughter becomes a leading figure, opposing the imperialism supported by Elaine. However, the protagonist notes that she is unable to continuously identify with Camille. In the last scene of the film, Camille tells Elaine to go back to France because the colonial Vietnam is gone. Tawada's protagonist says: "In mir weinte Elaine, nicht Camille" (98). She points out that she feels sorry for Elaine because she is identifying with a white woman rather than the Vietnamese girl. She feels sympathy for the imperialist perspective. While she had consistently held on to her opposition to imperialism, the perspective of the film causes her to identify with the white, imperialist woman. She does not explicitly articulate that she feels her voice has been drowned out by a white perspective, but rather notes most of her feelings and observations of an imposition of the perspective rather passively. Bhabha writes:

Almost the same but not white: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines as such both against the rules and within them. (130)

The passive nature of the protagonist's mimicry comes with being trapped in an ideological framework that naturally represses voices against normative values. Camille

tells Elaine that Indochina is gone, but Tawada's protagonist continues to feel its repressive force as she cannot even bring herself to identify with Camille, a revolutionary figure.

Indeed, the protagonist goes on to realize that this history plays a bigger role in her life than she had previously realized. She thinks about the revolution and the impact of film in her life:

Über die Revolution hatte ich einiges in der Schule gelernt. Ich hatte manchmal Mitleid mit den Ländern, die sich aus Versehen schon kapitalistisch entwickelt hatten und deshalb eine böse Rolle in der Geschichte spielen mussten. [...] Aber es entstehen immer wieder neue Gegenwarten. Eine unsichtbarer und grausamer als die andere. So wie Sie eine Rolle im Film spielen, spiele ich auch eine Rolle in der Geschichte. Ich frage mich manchmal, wer mein Regisseur ist. (89)

She knows exactly who her director is. It is Deneuve. She poses a rhetorical question because she knows the capitalist paradigms on which these films are based distort her perspective. The new presents that keep emerging are based on traumas from the past. The powerless immigrant stranded in Paris begins to recognize the continuation of colonial patterns and their enduring impact on her life.

The Last Metro and Confused Memories

The articulation of the protagonist's trauma is mediated primarily through her implication in perpetrator subject positions, but it still intersects with other victim traumas through this lens of the imperialist perpetrator. In the tenth chapter of Tawada's novel titled after the film *The Last Metro* (1980), the protagonist finds a strange expression of her situation as an undocumented immigrant in the parallels between events of her own life and those

of the film. The lens of the perpetrator causes her trauma to ironically and problematically intersect with the trauma of Deneuve's character, Marion. In *The Last Metro*, Deneuve plays a woman who owns a theater and whose Jewish husband hides in the basement from the Nazis. Tawada's protagonist begins working in a theater as an actress, and much like the Jewish husband, Tawada's protagonist also must hide in the back room when the police come to find and question her for being an undocumented immigrant. She describes how she "stand mitten in den Requisiten, die man zurzeit nicht brauchte" (154), comparing herself to a prop that currently has no use. She draws no connections between her need to hide and the plot of the film, perhaps because she cannot fully understand the film, but she does recognize that she can no longer distinguish between her own life and the film, that the specificity of her own situation is lost. For example, she recalls:

Eines Tages überraschte ich Arlette und Nadine in der Damentoilette. Sie standen dort halb ausgezogen und streichelten sich gegenseitig ihre Brüste, indem sie mit ihren Handflächen Kreise darauf zeichneten. Später war ich nicht mehr sicher, ob ich diese Szene bloß in einem Film mit Ihnen gesehen hatte. (152)

This is a description of a scene from *The Last Metro*. The theater workers who are the protagonist's coworkers have the same names as characters from the film. She even feels victimized by the director of the play, who represents the anti-Semite Daxiat, a main antagonist from the film. She describes her encounters with him, saying: "Seltsamerweise wuchs in mir der Hass gegen den stämmigen Mann im Anzug, Monsieur D., der jeden Tag nach meinem Kragen griff und seine Zähne zeigte" (151). Deneuve's character, Marion, also despises Daxiat and refuses to have dinner or speak with him. Yet again, the

protagonist's limited comprehension of her trauma is configured through a film starring Deneuve, and here it even intersects with the victims of anti-Semitism in a constellation that evokes Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory. The marginalized position of an undocumented immigrant finds expression in a film centered on anti-Semitism under Nazi occupation in France. By no means should the traumas be equated, and to compare them would only result in a problematic and unproductive conception of competitive memory. As has been previously explained in Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory, traumas of different groups can intersect asymmetrically to facilitate expression of traumas that have no or little platform. Tawada's protagonist does not and cannot compare her situation to a Jewish man hiding from the Nazis because she does not recall the specificity of her own story. She simply finds expression of her *persona non-grata* status as an undocumented immigrant because of the story in *The Last Metro*.

The Mimicry of Deneuve

In an interview, Tawada discussed the perpetuation of colonial violence. She said:

It is not accurate [...] to say that a conflict is over and another has begun. No, all conflicts are related. In my eyes, the Vietnam War is not over, and colonialism in Southeast Asia is not over either. I don't have the impression that communism, as a topic, has been resolved and that suddenly an entirely new issue has reared its head. That is simply not the way it is. Our present becomes more visible when we look at it from the perspective of that which is only supposedly over. (Brandt 45)

The colonial past cannot just go away, and awareness of the "supposedly over" colonial trauma gives the protagonist insight to her subject position as a filmgoer, in which her

trauma is overwritten by the white woman. Her development as a critical thinker, aware of the framework of ideology, becomes the most apparent at the end of the book as she views yet another film, *Dancer in the Dark*. The protagonist confusingly sees herself in the character of a white woman with blonde hair much like Deneuve. She describes the woman: „In die grauen Haare konnte man blonde Strähnen machen lassen, aber waren diese Augen, die Nase und die Wangen vietnamesisch?“ (183). In this scene, she is literally overwritten, her Vietnamese features barely recognizable underneath those of an older, white woman. This is the most literal manifestation of mimicry in the book.

Bhabha writes that:

...mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory “identity effects” in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no “itself”. (131)

The protagonist’s mimicry of white woman unveils instability in a subject position so heavily filtered through Deneuve. She is, again, “almost the same but not white” (130). She sees herself in the character of a blind woman who relies upon the character Kathy, played by Deneuve, to understand what is happening in films at the movie theatre. She notes that Deneuve controls her reception of media:

Meine Freundin Kathy übersetzt mir nämlich die Bilder in die Fingersprache und tippt sie auf meine Handfläche. Meine Hand ist meine Leinwand, und die Finger von Kathy sind die Autoren, denn ich bin sicher, dass sie die Geschichte umschreibt, wenn sie ihr nicht gefällt. (184)

This last chapter of the book underscores the protagonist's grown awareness of ideology and its dominating influence in her perspective. She is unable to escape it. Her perception of her own story has been warped in a mimicry of Deneuve.

Throughout *Das nackte Auge*, the protagonist's viewpoint is largely framed by the camera, and she recognizes this at the end. She is the naked eye. Her eyes, her perspective, evolve throughout the book as she re-experiences the colonial trauma of her country, an experience that is repeated in her displacement and exploitation at the hands of a white man and reflects indirectly the systemic violence against her people. Yet she realizes that she is implicated in this colonial trauma through the lens of the perpetrator, the literal lens of the camera. Over the course of the book, the protagonist grows weary of the imposition of ideology. She questions forced perspectives in the cuts she notices in film. She says: "Meine Augen wollten alles sehen. Wo blieben eigentlich die Bilder, die aus dem Film ausgeschnitten wurden?" (116). She wants to know what is being left out, how she frames her perspective, and grows into a more critical thinker as she questions who controls perspective.

The imperialist Western perspective of the perpetrator's trauma frames the protagonist's own experiences. She re-experiences colonial trauma while necessarily also being implicated in the perpetrator's subjectivity. The protagonist's subject position cannot be firmly affixed to a binary system of victim and perpetrator since she fluctuates between identifying with her people and the superimposed imperialist perspective. She ultimately grows more critical of any ideology as she recognizes that these frameworks are difficult to cast aside. The title of her story 'the naked eye' implies and challenges the notion of a view unfettered by any ideology. It is only through her awareness and

criticism of the ideological system of capitalism does she in any way subvert its control over her.

Chapter Two

Catherine Deneuve's Star Image and Production of Sexualities

Introduction: Sexuality and the Visual Focus on Catherine Deneuve

Why is Yoko Tawada's protagonist obsessed specifically with Catherine Deneuve? Why does she find expression of her traumatic situation through a woman who, unlike herself, benefits from white privilege? Deneuve's star image does not simply represent the imperialist nostalgia of France in regard to its former colony Vietnam, although as discussed in chapter one, the protagonist finds ironic expression of her trauma through Deneuve's role as a plantation owner in *Indochine*. However, the protagonist also discovers strength and expression in the diversity of Deneuve's various roles, and often uses this diversity of subject positions to reinterpret and undermine the power structures that ensnare her.

Still, it is true that Deneuve's star image is strongly implicated in the elitist side of capitalism. Although the French star system is different from that of Hollywood, which controls and markets persona, Charles Exley describes how Deneuve's "activities on-screen and off-screen [...] fortify [a] close association with France at the moment of decolonization, modernization, and consumption" (62-63). Deneuve's famous blank expression is known as the beautiful face of L'Oréal Paris makeup, and she is associated with couture icon Yves Saint-Laurent and Louis Vuitton luggage. Exley discusses how each "of these commercial partnerships can be said to reinforce the connection between her refined features and a decidedly luxurious style of consumption" (63). However, she is not simply a symbol of capitalist ventures. Deneuve is also known for her support of progressive international political campaigns. She has lent her support to numerous

movements, such as movements supporting “abortion rights, eradication of landmines, and more” (63). Despite a progressive tone to her image in international causes, Exley mentions how Deneuve’s “father had participated in some sixty radio broadcasts in collaboration with Nazi propagandists toward the end of the war” (63). Deneuve is unfortunately by association implicated in Nazi imperialism, and despite her charity work, the elite nature of her star image shines through in her numerous associations with high-end brands and products.

Recently (in January 2018), Catherine Deneuve, along with more than a hundred other Frenchwomen signed a public letter denouncing the #MeToo movement and its French equivalent aimed at exposing sexual misconduct in the workplace. An article in *The New York Times* quoted the letter as saying, “a woman can, in the same day, lead a professional team and enjoy being the sexual object of a man, without being a ‘promiscuous woman,’ nor a vile accomplice of patriarchy” (Safronova). This fits Deneuve’s own star image; the actress has starred in many roles in which she is heavily objectified and finds only a limited, degrading agency by using her body or sex as a source of power. It can hardly come as a surprise, yet it is still disappointing, that Deneuve would denounce a movement created to target a culture in which many of her films are largely complicit.

Despite her many performances as non-heteronormative character and status as a gay icon, many of these representations are not positive, as many of the characters she plays fall victim to unhappy fates. To name only a couple of examples, in *The Hunger* (1983), the film that “made of her a gay icon” (Le Gras 34), she stars as a bisexual vampire whose lover usurps her and locks her in a coffin. In *Les Voleurs* (1996),

Deneuve plays a woman named Marie, a lesbian whose relationship with a criminal named Juliette ends unhappily. Sexuality and eroticism take center stage in many of the films featured intertextually in Yoko Tawada's novel *Das nackte Auge*. Known for her beauty, Deneuve has chosen to play many characters who explore perverse sexualities. While discussing Deneuve's star image as it relates to sexuality, Gwénaëlle Le Gras comments that "Deneuve's beauty could be a hindrance, typecasting her in superficial roles" but that the actress has countered her "pure" image by often "sully[ing] her purity by taking on the roles of prostitutes [...] less conventional sexualities: sado-masochism [...] lesbianism" (34). Despite an emphasis on the more non-normative erotic side of Deneuve's star image in Tawada's novel, the actress has a reputation for her adaptability to various "pure" and "impure" roles. Le Gras compares Deneuve's roles in the film *Donkey Skin* (1970)³ and *Tristana* (1970), in which Deneuve's star image relies on common binaries of "accessibility/inaccessibility, beauty/ugliness, male fantasy object/woman with agency, purity/impurity" (27). Le Gras explains how these binaries play a central role for Deneuve's star image and lead "to the iconic version of her persona which we see in *Belle de jour*" (27). Control and expression of erotic desire is an important theme in the film *Belle de jour* (1967), in which Deneuve plays a bourgeois woman leading a seemingly simple and pure life as a housewife, but who actually chooses to live a secret double life working as a prostitute called Belle de jour for her own pleasure. Le Gras describes how a polarity between "day/night, reality/unconscious

³ The film is based on the fairy tale by the same title, in which a princess must flee when her father becomes interested in marrying her. In this movie, Deneuve stars as the princess, who is portrayed as innocent and "pure".

is rooted in Deneuve's persona as established by *Belle de jour*. [...] Belle de jour is always hesitating between two worlds, figured in particular by faraway gazes which express her disconnection from the real world" (29). This same hesitation and disconnect between worlds largely characterizes Tawada's nameless protagonist, whose grasp on reality is unreliable as it often reflects events in films starring the French actress.

Deneuve's many roles cause her to represent a diversity and plurality of sexualities for Tawada's protagonist. The protagonist's sexuality is left purposely ambiguous; it is unclear whether she truly cares for any of the men she has relations with throughout the book, or whether these relationships only mirror those in the various films starring Deneuve. In this chapter, I intend to explore the protagonist's subject position in relation to an ambiguous sexuality, and I discuss how her obsession with Deneuve leads the protagonist to frame sexuality and question patriarchal norms through roles played by the actress. I mainly consider Deneuve's performances in *Belle de jour* and *Tristana*, but I begin with *Repulsion* (1965). In *Repulsion*, Deneuve stars as Carol, a woman whose disgust for men and sex has taken on extreme dimensions. Carol becomes mentally unstable, represented in her nightmarish visions of cracks in the walls of her apartment, and her paranoia causes her to shut herself into her apartment and kill the two men who visit her. These films all focus on the sexually deviant side of Deneuve's characters, who are often punished for their non-heteronormative sexualities, which sometimes hurt others as well.

In relation to the protagonist's subject position, I will also briefly consider the production of subjects through the lens of Foucault. Analyzing the sexual subject, Foucault writes that rather than being censored, sex is multiplied by power. He explains

that there “was installed rather an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy” (*The History of Sexuality* 1506). Foucault explains how discourses about sex have exploded in the last three centuries and power is exercised through subjecting these sexualities—understood both as producing subjects and subjecting them to analysis. Tawada’s protagonist, however, resists any definitive analysis with her detached, ambiguous voice. I argue that the protagonist finds resistance to patriarchal structures in film through irony and ambiguity with her own understanding of the *Dachfigur*⁴ of Deneuve’s star image, which she uses to reinterpret and undermine ideology to fit her own narrative (163). Her unclear comprehension of sexual encounters resists the patriarchal power structures that exploit and relegate her to a singular, stable subject position. Her apprehension of such exploitation often manifests itself in her concern of her criminal status as an undocumented immigrant. This chapter is guided by the following questions: How does the protagonist perform sexuality in relation to the roles played by Deneuve? And to what extent does she find resistance to sexist dynamics through the ambiguity and irony she finds in Deneuve’s star image?

Desire and the Invitation to Cinema

The majority of the films referenced in *Das nackte Auge* are not Hollywood films, and although the star image theory I discuss refers specifically to Hollywood⁵, some of it can

⁴ Tawada’s protagonist is referring to an over-arching character she sees in Deneuve. This is her image of Deneuve’s star image.

⁵ Hollywood has established the dominant paradigm for star image conceptualization and provides a useful basis for a discussion of the star image.

be reconfigured and applied to Deneuve's image in the context of Tawada's novel. I agree with Charles Exley, who describes how Tawada's protagonist has stitched together "her own reading of Deneuve as a star text on the basis of her frequent viewings of Deneuve in thirteen different roles" (64). Exley explains that this "particular image of Deneuve cultivated in Tawada's novel is built on an extensive familiarity with her filmography," it is also a very specific selection of roles from which to build an understanding of her star image (63-64). With this in mind, I will briefly discuss star image theory and its applicability for *Das nackte Auge*.

John Ellis writes that,

Stars have a similar function in the film industry to the creation of a 'narrative image': they provide a foreknowledge of the fiction, and invitation to cinema.

Stars are incomplete images outside the cinema: the performance of the film is the moment of completion of images in subsidiary circulation, in newspapers, fanzines, and so on. (598)

He focuses mainly on stars within Hollywood and how Hollywood markets persona in distribution through various non-film media enticing viewers into the cinema to see the completion of the image in the film performance. A similar distribution of Deneuve's star status familiarizes Tawada's protagonist with the actress. One of her first encounters with Deneuve, after seeing the film *Repulsion*, occurs when the protagonist receives a magazine containing photos of scenes from the film *Zig zig* (1975), in which Deneuve stars as a prostitute named Marie. Immediately after arriving in Paris, Tawada's protagonist meets a prostitute, not coincidentally named Marie, and the two live together in a basement. The protagonist's obsession with Deneuve begins after seeing *Repulsion*

while still living with Marie, who learns of her interest in the actress and gives her the magazines with pictures from *Zig zig*. Tawada's protagonist spends her time looking at these pictures, and she comments that, "Es dauerte noch lange, bis ich verstand, dass es nicht unbedingt eine wichtige Rolle spielt, ob man einen Film tatsächlich gesehen hat oder nicht" (48). Regardless of whether she had seen the film or not, her reality has already begun to reflect that of film; this altered reality manifests itself through the film characters appearing in the protagonist's life, such as Marie. Cinema begins to function as a strong undercurrent in the events in her life, such as discussed in chapter one, when various films overwrite the personal experience of her trauma. Upon seeing Marie for the first time, the protagonist believes that she looked so good, "dass sie besser eine Filmschauspielerin hätte werden sollen" (43). Marie is Deneuve, mediating the protagonist's introduction to film. Many characters from the thirteen films appear in the protagonist's life, although most of them play relatively small roles and have no character depth. Exley comments that it is interesting how Marie "comes to life in the novel in a way she cannot in the film because [the protagonist] has never seen the film in question" (59). Marie provides the protagonist with a safe space from which to navigate Paris and the Parisian cinema.

Ellis describes the star image as paradoxical in that it "is at once ordinary and extraordinary, available for desire and unattainable" (598), and these binaries are reflected in the imaginary relationship Tawada's protagonist pictures between herself and Deneuve, who functions as her invitation to cinema and makes film accessible to her. Deneuve's function as both available for desire and unattainable appears when the protagonist watches *Belle de jour* and sees Deneuve's character, Séverine, provide her

services to an Asian man that the other prostitutes reject. The man has a fetish involving a bee in a box, and so the protagonist dubs him an *Imker* (beekeeper) and compares herself to him directly addressing Deneuve, hoping that she will find her attractive:

Wenn Sie eine Vorliebe für mongolische Imker haben sollen, könnte es sein, dass ich Ihnen gefalle. Die Landschaft aus meinem Gesicht ist eine Mischung zwischen der Indochinesischen Halbinsel und der mongolischen Steppe. [...]
Eines Tages werde ich Sie besuchen, an Ihre Haustür klopfen und sagen, ich sei die Tochter jenes Imkers. Sie werden mir die Tür öffnen. (118)

Deneuve would open the door for Tawada's protagonist just like she opened a metaphorical door to cinema. In the protagonist's fantasy, Deneuve is both available for desire and returns it. In reality, she is unattainable, and the relationship is completely one-sided. Still, the protagonist does not doubt that the actress would accept her because she already sees her as granting access to the cinema. She later comments that when she tries to watch other films not starring the actress, she finds them inaccessible, "Ich war auch bei drei Filmvorführungen im Institut dabei. Diese Filme blieben mir aber unzugänglich, weil ich darin keine Figur fand, die ich ansprechen konnte" (164). Without Deneuve, Tawada's protagonist finds no invitation into the cinematic world. Deneuve grants her a relationship to a system of meaning and a method of adjusting to new environments.

The Subversive Gaze in *Repulsion*

Tawada frames Deneuve's star image in a film about an outsider, creating an accessible starting point for the protagonist in a confusing Western world. In *Repulsion*, Carol is a Belgian manicurist living in London with her sister. Carol is characterized by hesitation, a blank expression, and incomprehension. She often gazes into nothing; the first shot of

the film is a close-up of her blank stare. Other characters ask her more than once if she is dreaming, and the camera provides several close-ups of her detached expression. She interacts awkwardly with men and makes excuses when Colin, a potential suitor, tries to take her out on dates. Her sister's relationship with a man named Michael disgusts her, and she even aggressively buries her head in a pillow when she overhears her sister having sex with him through the thin walls. In many ways, Carol and the protagonist are similar. Tawada's protagonist depends on others for lodging throughout the book, and Carol relies on her sister. Both are foreigners in their respective countries of residence, and Carol even stands out as a blonde among brunettes. Carol eventually kills Colin and her landlord as her paranoia consumes her. (A paranoia that is taken to an extreme but is nevertheless not completely unwarranted; the landlord implies that she should pay the rent with her body and Colin breaks into her apartment to demand answers from her.) The protagonist understands her relationship to Jörg through Carol and imagines killing him, penetrating his body with a pair of scissors:

Bevor ein Mann, der wahrscheinlich Jörg hieß, sich nachts auf meinen Körper legte, hielt ich bereits die Schere an meiner Brust, zusammengeklappt und mit der Spitze in Richtung Himmel. Er sprang mit einem Schwung auf mich, und die Schere durchstach sein Fleisch. Ich spürte, wie die Klingen zwischen seinen Rippen nach innen ragten. [...] Es schien, als würde in dem Raum eine Weile Frieden herrschen.

Der Welt den Frieden: die Arbeit war erledigt. (24)

Her nightmares or visions based on *Repulsion* seem strange and are unexplained because the protagonist is reflecting on her time with Jörg through the camera lens of the film, which she looks through for the first time in Paris. While reflecting on her time in

Bochum, the protagonist also thinks about how her own mother wanting to prepare her to be a conventionally attractive woman: “Meine Mutter pflegte mich leidenschaftlich über Sexualität zu unterrichten, als wollte sie aus mir einen vollkommenen weiblichen Knödel zubereiten” (28-29). The protagonist remembers her attempts to quote Confucius to resist her mother’s teachings, but the philosopher had little effect. Confucius teaches to obey one’s parents, and so the protagonist ponders, “Aber was sollte ich machen, wenn die dummen Eltern gegen Konfuzius waren?” (29). Tawada’s protagonist attempts at using philosophy grants her no agency, and when later subjected to the same dilemma, she responds by adopting a new philosophy she discovers in film. Carol’s incomprehension and sex-repulsed attitude becomes her own.

Le Gras notes that new characters played by Deneuve are inflected with previous heroines through her star image, meaning that in any films that follow her portrayal of Carol, if spectators “have seen *Repulsion* (Polanski, 1966), they will at other moments read the heroine’s character in a more perverse light” (31). Because *Repulsion* features in the first chapter of Tawada’s novel, Carol frames and modulates much of the protagonist’s experiences throughout *Das nackte Auge*. Like Tawada’s protagonist, who rarely speaks apart from her first-person narration, Carol is largely mute; indeed, Deneuve’s performance lacks energy, her expression often a characteristic blankness. John Ellis writes that when actors underperform, the star

... is not performing here, so much as ‘being’. In other words, what the film performance permits is moments of pure voyeurism for the spectator, the sense of overlooking something which is not designed for the onlooker but passively allows

itself to be seen. This is different from the star's image in other forms of circulation, where the elements of intentionality are very marked. (603)

He discusses underperformance and the effect 'naturalness' produces for the viewer. Deneuve does not seem to be performing a detached, paranoid woman, but behaving as one. This underperformance is part of the star image, affixing the supposed behavior firmly to the star, especially when the stars are represented as "being" themselves. It is a behavior Tawada's protagonist carries with her throughout the book, hesitant and mute. She views the ordinary with the same suspicion as Carol⁶ and questions the normative from her unusual perspective.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I am interested in the following questions: how does Tawada's protagonist perform sexuality in relation to roles played by Deneuve, and how does she find resistance to sexist dynamics through Deneuve's star image? Carol's attitude strongly influences the protagonist's understanding of several sexual relationships and encounters throughout the book. When Tawada's protagonist meets Marie, she does not acknowledge the sexual nature of the encounter. Before learning Marie's name, she sees the prostitute on the street and believes her to be soliciting pedestrians to pay for a room for the night. Marie leads the protagonist inside a building and to a bed, and the protagonist notices: "Die Frau zuckte zusammen, als hätte sie Angst vor mir. Was an meinem Körper konnte so angsteinflößend wirken?" (45). Marie believes the protagonist wants to sleep with her. The protagonist comes to the conclusion that Marie might suffer from hallucinations, not unlike Carol, although

⁶ Tawada's protagonist is disinterested in sex like Carol, but she never takes it to the same extreme. Carol murders two men.

Marie's reaction reminds her specifically of a great aunt who hallucinates a soldier "ohne Beine" (45), perhaps because she is traumatized from the war. The protagonist recalls how she could not speak with her aunt, "Auch meine Großtante konnte ich nicht sprachlich trösten. Man musste stattdessen alle Fragen bejahen und die Fragende streicheln, um sie zu beruhigen" (45). Marie misunderstands the gesture, and the protagonist describes how she undresses "aus einem mir unbekanntem Grund" (45). Tawada's protagonist has no reference point to mediate comprehension of the encounter and simply describes its progression until the two are interrupted. Marie then takes Tawada's protagonist to her basement apartment and leaves her mostly alone, apart from giving her the magazine with pictures from *Zig zig*.

The beginnings of her imagined relationship begin with this magazine, inviting her to speak to Deneuve. She even finds a Russian-French dictionary to translate an interview with the actress in one of the magazines. The interview mirrors how the protagonist starts having imagined conversations with Deneuve, addressing her with the third-person plural formal "Sie". She describes what she learns from the interview, "Ich stellte fest, dass die fette Stimme oft 'Sie' sagte, aber auf den ganzen neun großen Seiten nur einmal 'ich', die fein gedruckte Stimme hingegen, die viel mehr redete, sehr oft einen Satz mit 'ich' begann" (57). The protagonist adopts the Sie-ich relationship from the interview. From this basis, she begins to both pose questions for the French actress and then provide her own answers. Charles Exley describes the use of pronouns in the book as functioning ...in a manner similar to both spectator and star, as all are potentially ambiguous, open ended, and determined by their context. Although her gender is not in question,

the fact that Watashi's⁷ identity is not locked in by name or left unspecified correlates with her migrant subjectivity. (61)

Referring to Deneuve as “Sie” leaves her identity open, her different roles interconnected under the umbrella of her star image, which Tawada’s protagonist uses to modify her understanding of any particular role. Her own nameless identity is primarily that of “ich”, the first-person subject, whose power resides in her ability to narrate events and reinterpret their meaning. Later in the novel, the protagonist even recognizes that she projects a lot of her own feelings and ideas onto Deneuve, creating her own idea of her. She addresses Deneuve, saying:

Keine einfache Botschaft zwang mich in die Enge des Verstehens. Besonders bei Großaufnahmen war Ihr Gesicht so faszinierend offen wie eine Leinwand vor der Filmvorführung. Es war meine eigene Krankheit, dass ich immer sofort ein Gefühl darauf projizieren wollte. (96)

Tawada’s protagonist is seeing what she wants to see in Deneuve’s star image. She identifies with Deneuve because of her open, blank expression, i.e. she is a blank screen onto which the protagonist can project her own story. She feels a kind of ironic solidarity with Deneuve, ironic because of the elitism and the colonial nostalgia tied to Deneuve’s image.

Robert C. Allen writes that, “Stars [...] are complex images containing multiple meanings. Their polysemic (literally: many-meaning) nature enables different people to see different things in the image of a particular star” (607). Deneuve’s image rests on a

⁷ “Watashi” is the first-person Japanese pronoun, which Exley uses to refer to Tawada’s protagonist. He is writing about the Japanese version of the novel.

set of meanings caught up in complex contradictions, i.e. not merely a one-dimensional capitalist icon, but much more than a representative of capitalism to Tawada's protagonist, who treats her as an imaginary confidant. She projects her desire to resist imperialism and describes Carol's craziness as "anarchistisch" (103). Just like when her mother tried to teach her about sexuality, she finds resistance, but she decides to question meaning with a medium that allows her to project her own meaning. She questions Deneuve, wondering why she does not also fight using roles she has previously assumed:

Haben Sie den Ekel vergessen? In diesem Film sind Sie eine Frau, die verlassen wurde und auf etwas Neues wartet. Sie sind eine bürgerliche Frau, die sensibel und liebenswürdig ist und sich zufällig in einer Krise befindet. Diese Krise finde ich langweilig. Warum beißen Sie nicht in den Hals des verschlafenen Mannes, um sein frisches Blut zu trinken? (103)

She recalls several films, including both *Repulsion (Ekel)* and *The Hunger*, while she watches *Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre* (1988). Deneuve's character grows close to a man, and this relationship annoys Tawada's protagonist. She criticizes it, wondering why Deneuve does not seize control with the power granted to her as a vampire or reject the man and the heteronormative implications of a relationship with him just as in *Repulsion*. Through the lens of Carol's repulsion, Tawada's protagonist questions and undermines the normative. The anarchy she sees in Carol is a denial of heteronormativity, of patriarchal standards that reduce women to mere sexual objects. While living in Bochum, she compares herself to an object, "[Jörg] schien abzuwarten, bis ich von allein zu einem Teil seiner vertrauten Umgebung würde, so wie ein neues, zu gut gestärktes Hemd im Laufe der Zeit geschmeidig wie eine zweite Haut wird" (32). Jörg does not treat her like a

person, but as something to own and to use. She is reduced to a sexual object, and in this paradigm, Jörg expects her to have no more agency than a shirt. *Repulsion* grants her a limited form of resistance.

***Tristana* and Ai Van and Jean**

When the protagonist begins living with Ai Van and Jean, their relationship also evokes *Repulsion*. Her first night, she hears them in the next room having sex, and she also hears, “die Schattenmänner aus ‘Repulsion’ in der Wand keuchen” (60). Throughout the book, the protagonist does not forget Carol’s “Ekel” from *Repulsion*, which gives her a method to undermine heteronormativity (103). The film *Tristana* also mediates the protagonist’s understanding of Ai Van and Jean’s relationship, which closely mirrors that between the girl Tristana and Don Lope, her adoptive father and also husband. Jean is much older than Ai Van, who is a young woman only slightly older than the protagonist, but whose age is not revealed. In the film, Tristana grows to detest Don Lope and leaves with another man, but returns and marries the old man when she loses her leg. The leg is replaced with a wooden leg, and the protagonist describes Tristana’s stony-faced expression as if it were, “ein Möbelstück aus Edelh Holz” and further comments “Vielleicht sind wir alle auf dem Weg, uns in ein Möbelstück zu verwandeln, um alles erträglicher zu machen” (68). The amputated leg, symbolic of castration, reduces Tristana to an object for Don Lope. He is ecstatic at her return; she is not. Tawada’s protagonist feels sorry for the girl, who is lower class but must endure the rich, old man because of her beauty. At the end of the film when Don Lope gets sick, Tristana does not call a doctor. Instead, she opens the window to let him freeze to death, and the protagonist asks, “Ist das auch eine Art Klassenkampf, dass Tristana das Fenster des Schlafzimmers öffnet, anstatt den Arzt

zu rufen, so dass der alte, kranke Mann erfriert?“ (71). She understands Tristana’s situation not as an individual occurrence, but rather as a systemic problem, one which is related to classism.

This same power imbalance exists in a modified form between Jean, a white, French man, and Ai Van, a Vietnamese woman. The protagonist observes that despite Jean’s high position in society, he is unable—and also unwilling—to help immigrants like herself. She says, “Jean war Rechtsanwalt, konnte aber nicht immer mit dem Gesetz Menschen helfen. Eines Tages bat Ai Van ihn, einen in Marseille sesshaften Verwandten zu retten“ (65). When he refuses because helping the relation could be “problematisch” due to his undocumented status, Ai Van becomes angry and responds: “Illegal sagst du? Er ist kein illegaler Mensch, sondern mein Verwandter!” (65). Ai Van protests the dehumanization of her relative. The societal mechanisms in place disadvantage people like the protagonist, who is constantly concerned about her illegal status. She eventually leaves Ai Van and Jean after Jean gives her money, reminding her of a neighbor from her childhood who would give children candy and requested, “unverständliche Dinge” in return (99). Jean had never given her money before, and it is implied that like the pedophile neighbor, he seeks to prey on her. She leaves without an explanation to Ai Van, her sudden departure resembling that of Tristana abruptly fleeing Don Lope.

***Belle de jour* and Foucault**

In the movie theater, the protagonist meets Charles, who introduces her to a Vietnamese man named Tuong Linh, who “...hatte eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit dem Verlobten von Camille in ‘Indochina’” (104). The protagonist moves in with Tuong Linh and just like Camille in the film *Indochine*, she becomes engaged to him. It is while living with him

that she sees *Belle de jour* for the first time. The main character of the film, Séverine, often daydreams about sadomasochistic fantasies, such as being whipped by her husband's servants. Thinking back on the film *Indochine*, the protagonist reinterprets the scene using her knowledge of Deneuve's star image, saying to Deneuve, "Haben Sie sich auspeitschen lassen, weil Sie bereuen, dass Sie in Indochina einem Arbeiter Peitschenschläge gegeben hatten? Es war nicht Ihre Schuld, dass Elaine in der ausbeutenden Klasse geboren wurde" (111-112). Her conceptualization of Deneuve's image allows her to use it to undermine the power dynamic established by the portrayal of imperialist nostalgia in *Indochine*. The protagonist does not blame Deneuve for her position in the exploitive class, but rather understands her as a victim of circumstance, entangled in a power structure over which she has little influence. Deneuve's star image enables Tawada's protagonist to produce a logical answer to her own question of why Deneuve would allow men to abuse her. The protagonist understands Deneuve as being at the mercy of a system of male directors who mistreat her and comments "Dieser Regisseur behandelte Sie nicht sanft. In einem anderen Film schnitt er Ihnen ein Bein ab, dieses Mal lässt er Sie durchpeitschen und mit Kot bewerfen" (113). She recalls Tristana's symbolic castration and objectification and notices a pattern. Analyzing the potential systemic implications, she looks at men sitting in a café around her and muses, "Die Männer, die unter der Markise eines Cafés saßen und friedlich Espresso tranken: Auch sie ließen vielleicht in einer anderen Szene ihre Ehefrauen auspeitschen" (114). Her observation touches on the possibility of a widespread systemic oppression of women, in which abuse is masked under a civil façade. However, the protagonist recognizes an agency in Deneuve denied to her male counterpart. She comments, "Ich kannte Sie besser

als dieser Mann. [...] Der Mann von Séverine konnte diese Abschnitte Ihres Lebens nicht kennen, denn er war bloß eine Figur in einem Film. Ihm war es nicht erlaubt, einen anderen Film zu besuchen” (119). Because Deneuve has an image that transcends a single film, the protagonist understands her as having a great capacity to migrate between roles and subject positions, a fluidity that undermines a system that seeks to disadvantage her.

This interchangeability of various roles is a source of strength for the protagonist. She does not want to be assigned a fixed subject position, nor does her migrant subjectivity allow for it. Charles Exley writes that,

Deneuve addressed always in the second-person is composed of an array of largely complementary roles. Watashi by the same token learns to play different roles in different situations in her life in Paris. This non-specific quality of their names is connected to their in-betweenness. (61)

Both the actress and Tawada’s protagonist exist in a kind of in-between state, fluctuating between various roles, and the use of the pronouns “Sie” and “ich” prevents them from being identified with any one particular role. Here I find it relevant to briefly discuss Foucault’s writing on subjectivity and how subjects are produced by power. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes about how concern over population produced discourses, “in which the sexual conduct of the population was taken both as an object of analysis and as a target of intervention” (1507). Subjects were produced by power in order to better subjugate them, to classify and better analyze them. He describes how the persecution of non-normative, “peripheral sexualities entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*. [...] The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (1517). Foucault describes in

detail how these discourses led to the multiplication of legal sanctions for perverse sexual behavior, and that “sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness” (1513).

Heteronormativity in society produces subjects, including those considered sexually deviant such as homosexual people, to be subjected to institutions of power, such as prisons or hospitals. Tawada’s protagonist never explicitly mentions her sexuality, although she does compare herself to Juliette, a criminal and lesbian in the 1996 film *Les Voleurs*. She describes criminality as a smell that clings to the lesbian woman, “Juliette zieht sich ihre schwarze Lederjacke an. Es riecht nach dem Kriminellen. [...] Die Kriminalität ist mein Geruch” (143). However, her primary concern, which she mentions several times throughout the book, is her undocumented status. She does not want to be identified as a criminal, and even though the police are not looking for her, she first enters a movie theater to avoid being discovered by them. She says, “In der Dunkelheit bestand keine Gefahr, von einem Polizisten beobachtet zu werden” (51). Although it is unlikely to be discovered, she likes to remain unseen in the darkness of the movie theater. She finds criminality thrust upon her against her volition. Tuong Linh wants to marry her and acquires her a fake Japanese passport so that they can fly to Thailand for the ceremony, but she is caught by airport security. While in a holding room, she watches the 1976 film *Si c’était à refaire* in which Deneuve plays a criminal, causing Tawada’s protagonist to muse, “Wer einmal verhaftet worden war, musste ohne Ende die Rolle der Gefangenen spielen und fliehen” (132). Despite the strength she finds in the web of positionalities within Deneuve’s star image, she sees herself as constantly fighting the power structures attempting to label her as a criminal, her resistance to and implication within imperialist power structures always coexisting.

Indeed, the protagonist believes the airport security will use medicine against her, “Wer waren die, die mich wie eine Tube auspressen wollten? Hypnose und Medikamente waren ihre Waffen” (128). This mirrors Foucault’s argument about hospitals and prisons producing subjects to subject them to analysis, in this case in the form of hypnosis and medication. She does not want to participate in a discourse in which she is systemically disadvantaged and attempts resistance by shouting random words she has heard in the airport, such as “correspondance!” (128). Not wanting her life before the airport to be used against her, she refuses to tell the airport security who she is. She narrates, “Das Leben vor dem Flughafen existierte für mich nicht mehr. Meine ersten und einzigen Wörter stammten von dem Ort, von dem aus ich nirgendwohin fliegen konnte” (128). Holding onto this in-between state of her subjectivity is her only way to defy what she sees as an attempt to medicalize, analyze, and expose her. Upon finally escaping the airport, she realizes that she is most likely pregnant. She strangely believes that she might have to sacrifice her child to the screen of the cinema in order to leave Paris. She says, “Ich wollte mein Kind vor der Leinwand aussetzen und das Cinéma verlassen, was bedeutete, Paris zu verlassen” (132). Her subjectivity, which she has molded after the various roles provided in cinema, entirely depends on it. She thinks she may have to sacrifice another person. Bending over, she speaks directly to her vagina, “Ich werde dich verlassen. Du bleibst hier. Die Leinwand ist deine Windel und deine Milch. Ich muss fort, du bleibst hier” (132). She believes that leaving the baby—and there is also the implication of leaving her sex—would grant her passage out of Paris. She recognizes how the cinema plays a prominent role in forming her subject positions, and so she compares the screen to a diaper and milk, the medium and means that metaphorically raised her.

The protagonist then suffers an apparent miscarriage and awakens inside a room in a hospital, which she compares to a cage, “In dem Raum gab es mehrere Betten, es war sicher eine Charité, vielleicht auch ein Kerker” (134). In the same sense as Foucault, the institutions serve a similar purpose, to separate the normative with the deviant, the unwell from the well. She immediately escapes the hospital and considers how people are separated and categorized, “Unzählige Dächer trennten die Menschen voneinander, die illegalen von den legalen, die kranken von den berufstätigen, die verstummten von den Juristen, aber das große Dach des Pariser Himmels hatten wir alle gemeinsam” (135). The Parisian sky symbolizes a welcoming space for all people to gather, where none are separated based on illness, joblessness, and more. Her observations mirror Foucault’s description of a kind of systemic oppression in which power is exercised through the production of subjects, in which the normative are separated from the non-normative. He writes:

I have studied the objectivizing of the subject in what I shall call “dividing practices.” The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others.

This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the “good boys.” (“The Subject and Power” 326).

Power produces individuals, categorizing and dividing them from others. Tawada’s protagonist takes comfort in the “Dach” of the Parisian sky that no one can divide.

Decentered Subjectivity

At the beginning of this chapter, I questioned to what extent Tawada’s protagonist finds resistance to sexist dynamics in Deneuve’s star image, and I argue that she finds a plurality of subject positions—undermining that power structure that attempt to define

and analyze, like in Foucault's discussion of subjectivity—through this image. Deneuve's star image provides a "Dach" for the protagonist. She describes this overarching conceptualization of the actress while watching the film *Place Vendome* (1998):

Es war erstaunlich, dass ich sogar in dieser hilflosen Figur wieder Ihre Charakterzüge entdecken konnte, wie ich sie von den anderen Filmen kannte. Als hätten alle Regisseure sich vorher abgesprochen, damit eine *Dachfigur* für die verschiedenen Rollen entstehen konnte. Als hätten Sie schon als Kind ein Drehbuch für Ihr Leben geschrieben und später nur die Rollen angenommen, die dazu passten. Als hätten Sie immer mit unsichtbaren Fäden von hinten die Regie geführt. (163; emphasis added)

In the film, Deneuve stars as a recovering alcoholic. Although Tawada's protagonist finds no strength in this particular role, she understands Deneuve's changeability between various subject positions as an interconnected web of roles. Having escaped the hospital and unable to reconnect with Tuong Linh, she begins living with the prostitute Marie yet again, and during this time she becomes an alcoholic, drinking herself into a passive stupor. She explains that due to her alcoholism, she does not want to go to the movie theater, "Tagsüber wollte ich noch nicht ins Kino gehen. Abends konnte ich zwar in Ihren neuen Film flüchten, aber Marianne, die Frau, die Sie in dem Film spielten, war keine Hilfe für mich. Sie liegt schlapp im Sofa zwischen leeren Weinflaschen" (162-163).

Deneuve's passive helplessness in the movie too closely mirrors her own, and despite her previous use of Deneuve's image to reinterpret the plot of the film and the power structures in society, she decides against continuously viewing this film as often as she has others. She begins going to an institute with a library. The librarian, a German woman, uncovers her past with Jörg and reconnects her with him. Reuniting with Jörg

reminds her of the constant flight and suspicion she has had to suffer as an undocumented immigrant, and she becomes panicked. She remembers, “Nein, das ist Jörg, er hat doch nicht die Uniform eines Passkontrolleurs an, und ich bin keine Kriminelle, sondern eine Bibliotheksbesucherin” (166). She quickly thinks of her position in society, but like Deneuve’s various roles, chooses to occupy a subject position in which she is not deprived by the imbalance of power. Jörg has exposed her secret, but she struggles against the system seeking to categorize her disadvantageously. Jörg even says to her, “Du solltest mit mir nach Bochum fahren und dich erholen. Dort besteht auch die Möglichkeit, sich therapeutisch behandeln zu lassen”, but the protagonist is quick to reject his offer and says, “Eine Therapie? Ich bin nicht krank” (167). Jörg functions as a representative of a system that will produce the protagonist as a subject to be treated and medicalized. He is a white, documented man in a dominant position over her in the heteronormative patriarchal society, and she sees him not just as an individual, but a representative of abuse and exploitation. When she first reunites with him, she even comments that, “Jörg hatte immer noch dieselbe Ledertasche dabei, deren Leder mir wie die Haut der eigenen Eltern vorkam” (165). He seems sinister, as if he would take advantage of his (or perhaps her) parents, and his suggestion of therapy is necessarily implicated in the protagonist’s impression of him. Foucault describes how power produces such subjects when a pervert fondles a girl and is caught. In this example, Foucault writes how the pervert is acquitted

...of any crime, they decided finally to make him into a pure object of medicine and knowledge—an object to be shut away till the end of his life in the hospital at

Maréville, but also one to be made known to the world of learning through a detailed analysis. (1511)

This exercise of power produces a sexually deviant subject categorized as ill and robbed of his liberty for the rest of his life to be studied. Tawada's protagonist understands her subjectivity as a multitude of subject positions, and while she acknowledges her connection to crime as an undocumented migrant, her plurality protects her from definition through a fluid and ever-changing subject position.

This same expression of subject positions found in Deneuve's image provides the protagonist with a method to undermine normative Western paradigms. She watches the film *Est, Ouest* (1999) with Jörg. The film tells the story of a family promised amnesty for defecting if they return to the Soviet Union. This turns out to be a lie, and the family suffers in the Soviet Union. Tawada's protagonist constantly questions the validity of this portrayal and asks "Wie heißen die Feiglinge, die sich hinter der Leinwand verstecken? Ich warte nur noch darauf, dass Sie endlich auf der Leinwand erscheinen, um die Handlung, die mir nicht gefällt, zu verändern" (171). She appeals to Deneuve to appear, and through the actress's image, the protagonist can reimagine the plot. Deneuve, however, plays only a minor role. The protagonist waits for her appearance and complains, "Und die schöne Schauspielerin, die in keine Liebesgeschichte verwickelt ist und bis zum Ende frei bleiben wird, erscheint [...] immer noch nicht. Ich warte auf Sie, die ich gut kenne, die mich immer noch nicht kennt" (174). She recognizes the one-sided nature of her imagined relationship with Deneuve, whom she depends on to subversively reinterpret systems of meaning. As the film progresses, a champion swimmer manages to swim to freedom and escapes to Paris. The protagonist understands that he is not truly

free, but subject to the authorities to whom he is insignificant. She describes his situation, “Als er in Frankreich ankommt, ist er nicht mehr frei. Die Behörden entscheiden, was mit dem kleinen, unbedeutenden Flüchtling passieren soll” (177). She relates to his migrant positionality and his relative powerlessness against the capitalist government, one he thought would save him, but only provides a new kind of oppression. She continuously questions the validity of the filmic perspective, and Jörg becomes frustrated and screams at her, “Das war nichts anderes als Elend dort, nichts anderes als ekelhafte Hochstapelei! Erkenne das und vergiss endlich die vergangenen Bilder!” and so she responds “Ja. Ich werde sie vergessen, aber dafür muss ich mit dem Sekundenzeiger in meine Augen stechen” (180). She takes the second hand of a clock, a phallic symbol with a symbolic power over time, and blinds her eyes—the nakedness of which she now recognizes as false. She understands how the camera is biased, and she rejects its gaze and Jörg’s patronizing demands that she sees the way he does, through uncritical eyes. She creates her own cut in time, and so she is no longer in Bochum, but Berlin.

The last chapter of the novel constitutes the most confusing mixture yet of the protagonist’s life and a film, which this time is *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). In the film, Selma is an immigrant working at a factory in the United States to save enough money for her son’s eye operation. She has passed down a genetic condition that will eventually cause him to go blind, one from which she also suffers. Although the protagonist in Tawada’s novel sees herself in the same position as Selma, her story is different. The first explanation for her blindness is not a genetic condition or an intentional blinding prompted by Jörg’s outburst—although this is later alluded to with a mention of “der misslungenen Augenoperation” (183). Selma exists as a separate character from

Tawada's protagonist and learns from neighbors that the protagonist, referred to as the "Dame mit dem Hündchen" due to her small dog, lost her sight in an attack (181). She describes, "An einem Abend im Jahr 1988 war ein ausländisches Mädchen in der Nähe vom Alexanderplatz von einer Gruppe Jugendlicher überfallen worden" (181). The woman with the dog intervenes to save the foreign girl and is blinded from her efforts. It is unclear whether this girl is meant to represent a younger version of the protagonist overwhelmed and assaulted by a group of adolescents before the Berlin Wall has fallen. Tawada's protagonist's use of the second hand of a clock symbolizes her attempt to traverse time and save her younger self from the systemic oppression she endures in the West. In Deneuve, she finds an expression of intersectional solidarity; both women suffer varying degrees of oppression at the hands of the patriarchy. The protagonist ironically identifies with the white woman who does not have the same migrant positionality, but through her she nevertheless finds a "Dachfigur" to express an interconnected web of subject positions (163). She projects onto this star image a subversive plurality that undermines the systems of meaning that seek to define her, objectifying her as a gendered, migrant subject.

Chapter Three

Performativity and Finding a Stage with Deneuve

Introduction: Film and the Stage

The French actress Catherine Deneuve provides the protagonist of *Das nackte Auge* with a lens in the form of various roles with which to critically consider the systems of power and meaning that ensnare her. Through the literal lens of the camera, the protagonist comes to understand her life as a series of roles, much like those of Deneuve. She ironically performs roles refracted through the white actress, who enables her to understand her subject positions in relation to film.

Tawada's protagonist starts her story in the first chapter of *Das nackte Auge* with an image of the naked eye, mirrored in the last scene of the film *Repulsion* (1965) featuring a close up of Deneuve's eye. From this vantage point the protagonist begins to see her life as a stage mediated through film on which she performs various subject positions. The film *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) features in the last and thirteenth chapter of Tawada's novel, in which the protagonist literally inserts herself into the position of the main character, Selma, and the two characters' stories become confusingly intertwined. In the film, Selma escapes the drudgery of her everyday life by participating in musicals with the help of her friend Kathy, played by Deneuve. Just like Selma, the protagonist finds a stage to express herself supported through Deneuve, as well as the lens of the camera.

Christian Metz describes this very identification with the camera as primary identification. He writes that "In other words, the spectator *identifies with himself*, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as the condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject" (823). The

viewer identifies with the gaze of the camera in primary identification, which grants a seemingly omniscient power as the camera records the events of the film. Tawada's protagonist encapsulates this identification as she is literally the "naked eye". This means that her identification with Deneuve is secondary. Metz writes:

As for identification with characters, with their own different levels (out-of-frame character, etc.), they are secondary, tertiary cinematic identifications, etc.: taken as a whole in opposition to the identification of the spectator with his own look, they constitute secondary cinematic identification in the singular. (827)

The protagonist reaches an understanding of her environment through the gaze of the camera, a gaze which is often singularly fixed on Deneuve's characters, as she is often featured in many close-ups in the various films referenced in *Das nackte Auge*. The protagonist's fixation on Deneuve develops into a comparison with her own life as a series of performances similar to the thirteen films mentioned in the book. The protagonist continually performs roles, taking on fictional names and background stories, much like the actress.

Familiarity with and understanding of performance and the role one presents to the world is gradually developed for Tawada's protagonist. Catherine Deneuve influences the protagonist's understanding of her position as a kind of performance, which also extends into her familiarity with theater. She comments on the enormous impact of theater in Deneuve's various performances:

Ich hatte in Paris nie ein Theater besucht, aber das Theater war mir durch die Filme vertraut, in denen Sie die Rolle einer Bühnenschauspielerin spielten. Mir gefielen Sie besonders gut, wenn Sie in einem Theater arbeiteten. Die Leinwand

im Kino, die mich in ihre Räumlichkeit sofort hineinzog, war eine nackte Täuschung, während ich die Distanz zu Ihnen messen, akzeptieren und genießen konnte, wenn Sie auf einer Bühne standen. (151)

Through the camera the protagonist familiarizes herself with the theater stage. She recognizes how the screen deceives her senses, figuratively placing her into the theaters in which Deneuve's characters perform. I am interested in how this secondary identification with Deneuve not only accustoms the protagonist to considering her own relation to performance and theater, and to Catherine Deneuve herself, but also how this aspect of Tawada's novel underscores and reveals the instability of performativity of subject positions for her protagonist. I consider this in relation to Judith Butler's discussion of gender performativity. Butler explains the performed nature of gender and how this is concealed in an assumed naturalness. She writes:

That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (2553)

Tawada's protagonist's commentary constantly highlights her social performance because she continuously questions the normative. The various roles she experiences in a French movie theater and her corresponding reflection and repetition thereof match Butler's description of a sustained social performance, a performance that is taken quite literally from the performance of a French actress not only in film, but in Deneuve's

portrayal of actors on the theater stage, a double performance that serves to further highlight performativity in Tawada's protagonist's subject positions. Through her unnatural mimicry of Deneuve's multiple roles, I examine how this unveils the performativity of the protagonist's subject positions as she deviates from and challenges societal norms. She is often too helpless and passive to resist her entanglement in imperialist power structures, but nevertheless she undermines normativity as she performs Deneuve and realizes her own story as a kind of film framed by the lens of the camera. In this final chapter, I consider exactly how the protagonist finds expression of multiple subject positions through the lens of the camera in relation to both primary identification and performativity. She defines her migrant subjectivity in relation to the series of roles Deneuve performs, and this causes her to not only reveal the performativity of social norms but to grow more critical of the power structures that form her as a migrant subject. The following questions guide my exploration of Tawada's protagonist's subjectivity in this final chapter of my thesis: To what extent does the protagonist grow into a more critical thinker through primary and secondary identification? How does she unveil the performativity in her subject positions as she understands her life in relation to a film?

Christian Metz and the All-Perceiving Subject

In the first chapter of Tawada's novel, the naked eye frames the protagonist's narration. She begins by describing it:

Ein gefilmtes Auge, angeheftet an einem bewusstlosen Körper. Es sieht nichts, denn die Kamera hat ihm schon die Sehkraft geraubt. [...] Wer kann später wissen, dass es einmal ein Auge war? Die Kamera tritt langsam zurück. Neben einem

umgekippten Sofa steht ein Schrank auf dem Kopf, man kann keine Geschichte aus dieser Ruinenlandschaft rekonstruieren. (7)

For her, the camera is all-consuming in its power. Primary identification is not merely an identification with an innocuous gaze, but it also represents the tyrannical forced perspective of the movie camera, literally robbing the protagonist and also Deneuve of her “Sehkraft” (power to see) as she cannot choose what to see. It is through the camera that she constructs her story, although this ominous beginning, taken from the end of the film *Repulsion*, indicates the enormity of the task ahead of her. At the end of the film, Carol stares blankly upwards in the arms of a man, her gaze more unfocused than at any other point in the film, completely detached from reality. Tawada’s protagonist begins with the description of Deneuve at her most powerless because to be able to see is strength for the protagonist. She constructs her story through the “Blick der namenlose Linse” (7). She herself is a nameless lens, trying to make sense of her traumatized subject position that the ending scene of *Repulsion* embodies in its ruined landscape of disheveled furniture.

This ability to see gives the protagonist a sense of control over her surroundings. Conversely, it also makes her feel uncomfortable when others look at her too long. When she has sex with Jörg and cannot see him, she also feels ashamed, “Ich schämte mich, ihm meinen Rücken zu zeigen. Da ich ihn nicht sehen konnte, kam er mir zu nackt vor. Genauso war es mit dem Gesicht. Ich mochte nicht gerne, wenn er sich zu lange mein Gesicht anschaute” (32). Jörg tries to reassure her that what they are doing is normal because it also happens in the movies. There is a certain irony in Jörg using film as a reference, because that is exactly what Tawada’s protagonist does—her reality imitates

that of art, or film. She understands this imitation quite differently because of her recognition of the gaze as a powerful force. Seeing the same films over and over in the cinema, she comments, “Schon wieder sah ich den Film. Als Kind hatte ich ein Buch so oft gelesen, dass die Seiten auseinander flogen. Warum sollte ich nicht einen Film so oft besuchen, bis die Leinwand sich in Fetzen auflöste?” (67). She believes that her own gaze is powerful. Watching films repeatedly grants her an illusion of agency. Metz writes about this feeling granted by primary identification: “At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am *all-perceiving*” (823). Being the one who does all the seeing, rather than being analyzed, identified, and objectified by others, lends Tawada’s protagonist strength. Conversely, she also loses her Self entirely to film.

The agency she finds through film is a double-edged sword that dominates her understanding of herself in relation to her surroundings. She recognizes this herself, “Nachts ging ich heimlich aus dem Haus, um noch einmal die Leinwand aufzusuchen. Ich war ein herumirrendes Boot, die Lichter der Kinotheater waren Leuchttürme” (81). In the cinema, she can forget who she is as the cinema forms her subject position for her through the lens of the camera. She often refers to the cinema as a womb on multiple occasions, such as when she goes to see *Indochine* (1992), “Mir fiel nur das Wort ‘cinéma’ ein. In diesem Wort trafen ‘China’ und ‘Ma’ zusammen. Der Eingang des Kinos empfing mich wie die Arme einer ‘Ma’. Sie lehnte mich nie ab, auch nicht an diesem Tag, obwohl ich den Film schon dreimal gesehen hatte” (91). She is formed as a subject in the movie theater’s metaphorical womb, given a safe space from which to look out and the perspective is decided for her, a view in which her country is presented through a

nostalgic imperialist lens. The protagonist justifies her decision to spend so much time in the movie theater, thinking to herself about becoming a student. She does not believe that she has been lazy in avoiding studying at a university and rationalizes her behavior, “Ich habe eine Wissenschaft studiert, die keinen Namen hat. Ich studierte sie zusammen mit Ihnen auf der Leinwand” (110). She does not need to become a student because she finds definition of her subject positions in the cinema. Her studies are film, and “Ihnen,” Deneuve, the teacher.

Butler: Performance and Fictional Names

The lens of the camera on Deneuve frames the protagonist’s developing understanding of her subjectivity as a series of roles to be performed. The protagonist’s dry and sometimes ironic observations of the role she plays in relation to others unveil the performativity of her migrant subject positions. Tawada’s protagonist almost never acts in a way that could be considered authentic, but rather constantly highlights the unnaturalness of her actions as a kind of performance she feels is thrust upon her.

Indeed, she begins to question the strangeness of how others are ‘playing’ roles. She cannot know what is supposedly authentic. She comments on other women she sees outside of movie theaters in Paris:

Wenn ich aus der Metrostation heraufkam und bevor ich wieder in der Dunkelheit eines Kinos verschwand, sah ich Frauen, von denen ich nicht wusste, welche Rolle sie in der Wirklichkeit spielten. Sie achteten darauf, immer genug Erotik auszustrahlen, denn die Möglichkeit der Prüderie würde sie verdächtig, fast asozial erscheinen lassen. (120)

Her observation underscores the performativity of gender as the women seek to tread the fine line between being both sexually available but not overdoing it in a socially unacceptable manner. For the protagonist, this is confusing in its ambiguity, as the women seem to be playing a role. She makes this comment after seeing the film *Belle de jour* (1967), in which Deneuve's character, Séverine, hides her sexual desires and secretly becomes a prostitute for her own pleasure. The film features her everyday life as a bourgeois housewife contrasted by her secret double life and daydreams of promiscuity, often cutting back and forth with no transition. The protagonist finds the cuts jarring and becomes confused as she wonders which performance is real. Indeed, Séverine's everyday life as a housewife is what is truly the performance for her character as she secretly longs for and pursues more in her double life. Butler writes about how performativity reveals the unnaturalness of gender in drag performances: "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency*" (2550). Drag queens imitate the series of social actions typically expected from women and therefore undermine the assumption of a "law of heterosexual coherence" (2550). Butler explains how in "... the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" (2550). Tawada's protagonist recognizes the constructed nature of gender as she questions other women's performance of sexuality. Their actions are not inherent to being women, but rather a social norm that hides its performed nature as it is assumed as natural. Following this same logic, the protagonist also questions Séverine's husband's behavior. In Séverine's fantasies he is sadistic, but in her everyday reality he is polite and soft-spoken

to her, and the protagonist wonders how maybe, “derselbe Mann [sich] unter anderen gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen anders verhält?” (112). Tawada’s protagonist assumes nothing is natural and ponders the influence of social setting in behavior. Her own developing understanding of life as a series of roles leads her to question how others play theirs.

Often, the protagonist seems to only go through the motions of what is expected of her as an immigrant woman, presenting herself to others as she is expected to behave. When she lives with the Vietnamese man Tuong Linh, he decides that marriage is the solution to her problem of being undocumented, and the protagonist repeatedly comments on how she feels detached from her own actions. For example, before Tuong Linh proposes his solution of marriage, he encourages the protagonist to apply to a language school. She fills in the forms and notices: “Ich trug den Namen ‚Thu Huong‘ ein und bekam dabei das Gefühl, als würde ich das für eine andere Person tun” (121). Thu Huong is a fake name she gives to Tuong Linh when they first meet, and she applies to school at his suggestion but never mentions feeling any personal conviction that she should attend the school. Her performance for Tuong Linh continues on their way to Thailand to get married; he has her dress as a Japanese woman to go through airport security. She is alarmed when he tells her that she looks Japanese and quickly checks her appearance in a mirror, “Ich starrte verunsichert auf mein Spiegelbild, um nachzuprüfen, ob meine Augen wirklich in kapitalistischer Kauflust glänzten” (124). She is momentarily concerned that she does not only seem to be Japanese, but also that her perspective has actually changed to that of a capitalist. Playing a role and putting on appearances so closely align with the

protagonist's own ever-shifting subjectivity that she believes her ideals and perspective might suddenly begin to conform to her outward reality.

When the protagonist gets caught by airport security with her fake Japanese passport, she has no identity she feels she can safely assume. She does not believe she can tell the officials the truth and recalls a solution of faking amnesia suggested to her by Ai Van and Jean. It does not seem like such a bad idea, she thinks, “Es schien zumindest einfacher zu sein, den Gedächtnisverlust vorzutäuschen als eine andere Identität vorzuspielen” (127). As an amnesiac, for once she does not need to pretend to be someone she is not. While waiting in a holding room, she sees the film *Si C'etait A Refaire* (1976) in which Deneuve plays a woman named Catherine. She thinks, “Es muss ein seltsames Gefühl sein, wenn der eigene Name identisch mit dem Namen der gespielten Figur ist. Wenn ich jetzt meinen wirklichen Vornamen erraten würde, würde er mir wie ein Rollenname vorkommen” (129-130). Even her real name would no longer seem like her authentic identity anymore because she has pretended to be different people with different backgrounds for too long. Without naming it explicitly, Tawada's protagonist is musing on performativity.

The exertion of constantly putting on a social performance exhausts the protagonist. She escapes from the airport and notices, “Am nächsten Morgen hatte ich keine Lust, mich daran zu erinnern, wer ich war” (136). She no longer wants to think about her various subject positions and is tired of evading the authorities. Her only refuge is the cinema and Deneuve, but even there she considers how she feels unworthy of the actress and might not be able to get to know her, even as a dog. The protagonist begins to

worry about the effort it takes to be a dog; rather than making her life easier, she contemplates all the details that could play into the role of such an animal:

Aber nicht jeder Hund hat Glück. Würde ich als Hund überhaupt von Ihnen ausgewählt? Was für ein Hund sollte ich werden? Wie konnte ich ein Hund werden? Angeblich gab es einen Film, in dem Sie eine Weile die Rolle eines Hundes spielten. Genauer gesagt spielten Sie die Rolle einer Frau, die einen Hund spielte. Leider hatte ich den Film nie gesehen. Deshalb konnte ich nichts von diesem Film lernen. (147)

Even as a dog, an animal outside of societal norms, she ironically sees a performance. One must take into consideration the breed of dog and how the role is played, and the protagonist laments further that she has never seen the film *Liza* (1972), in which Deneuve plays a woman who kills a man's dog out of jealousy and then replaces it by wearing a collar and barking. Even as a dog, there is no escape from the roles Tawada's protagonist assumes throughout her time in Paris.

In fact, she quite literally plays the role of a migrant when a theater company approaches her and explains they are looking for someone who looks just like her, a young Asian woman. She starts working in their theater and only has a few lines: "Mein Rollentext bestand aus kurzen Sätzen, in denen die Wörter ohne Bindemittel nebeneinander hingestellt waren. Wahrscheinlich stellte man sich vor, dass Migranten so sprachen" (149). To her, the text and delivery seem unnatural, and here the construction of an immigrant is highlighted. Her migrant subjectivity and the expectations placed upon it literally take center stage. The theater workers are concerned that she perform her part adequately and proceed to correct her in her delivery. She comments dryly on how her

lines and acting are constantly commented upon, “Meine Worte hatten noch nie so viel Aufmerksamkeit auf sich gezogen wie jetzt bei den Proben” (150). As an undocumented immigrant, she is often overlooked and marginalized in society, but on the literal stage she ironically receives more attention than ever before. Her subject position as an undocumented migrant woman is denaturalized in this performance more than ever before, as it is ironically Parisian theater workers telling her how to move and speak.

On the theater stage, actors are expected to repeat the same performance multiple times. Butler writes about this repetition of acts, “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (2552). Tawada’s protagonist experiences the tenuousness of her subject positions as she both repeats and deviates from social norms. There is no model or central factor for her behavior apart from the societal conceptions of her marginalized position. Her performance in the theater is not based on her own experience of being an immigrant, but on a constructed idea of appropriate conduct that she mimics, fully uncovering performativity as she conforms to the expectations of her fellow performers and the director on a literal stage.

Growing More Critical

As the protagonist develops an understanding of her subject positions in relation to performativity and the camera, she grows more critical not just of the roles played but also of the illusion created in film. In chapter six, she notices cuts and shifts in perspective and while watching the film *Drole D’endroit Pour Une Recontre* (1988), she questions the perspective when the illusion of the cinema is shattered. Deneuve sits in a

car, fighting with a man. The sound of the fight cannot be heard over the sounds from the highway, and the protagonist wonders, “Wo saßen wir Kinobesucher und wo saßen Sie wirklich, wenn wir Sie nicht hören konnten?” (101). For a moment, the primary identification with the camera is disrupted, and the protagonist is reminded that she sits in a movie theater. Her separation from Deneuve stands out to her as the camera, despite being so close to Deneuve, cannot capture her voice over the noisy traffic. The seeming omniscience of the camera fails, and as the protagonist goes on to watch the film *Belle de jour* in the next chapter, she takes note of the cuts, repeating “Schnitt” (cut) each time after describing a scene from the film (113). The cuts are jarring with little transition, and as Deneuve’s character Séverine is shown one moment indulging in a sadomasochistic daydream and then suddenly switches back to her normal life, the protagonist ponders:

Ich weiß nicht, wie diese Stunde mit dem Kuhkot in ihr bürgerliches Leben zu integrieren ist. Die Zeiten sind Spielkarten, die im Gedächtnis immer wieder neu gemischt und blind auf den Tisch gelegt werden. Es gibt keine feste Verbindung zwischen den einzelnen Karten. (113)

She cannot understand the French film and its cuts from one scene to another, from a sadomasochistic daydream to a regular bourgeois life. The scenes have no visual cues to differentiate them or mark one scene as fantasy and the other as reality. Tawada’s protagonist internalizes the cuts in the film and considers how they make sense when applied to her own story, recalling several events from before her arrival in Paris and considering the cut between, “Die Stunde im Hotelrestaurant in Ost-Berlin war abgeschnitten von den Stunden in der Pizzeria in Bochum. [...] Ich konnte nicht mehr

Punkt für Punkt bis nach Saigon⁸ zurückverfolgen, da alle Zeitpunkte auf der ganzen Erde zerstreut waren” (113). She first met Jörg in the restaurant of the hotel she stayed at in East Berlin, and after she was kidnapped, he took her to a pizzeria in Bochum. For her, there is a kind of literal blank between these events since she blacked out from drinking too much vodka, and she understands it now as a filmic cut. It is here that she literally begins to see her life as a film; it is her method to comprehend everything that has happened. She even thinks, “Wenn ich den Filmstreifen aus dem Projektor herausziehen und daraus meine eigene Straße bauen würde, könnte ich Bild für Bild nach Hause gehen” (114). Tawada’s protagonist sees the power of the camera in her own life, but she has not yet taken control of the power she contemplates. She thinks if she were to wield this power, perhaps she could return home to Vietnam.

Passivity often characterizes the protagonist, and she rarely has much agency. When she watches a film on a VCR in the holding room of the airport, she discovers that she can pause the movie. The discovery astonishes her:

...ich konnte zum ersten Mal jedes Detail Ihres Gesichts sehen. In einem Kino konnte ich die Bilder nie anhalten, also rannen Sie mir immer durch die Netzhaut. Aber jetzt hatte ich die Macht, Ihre Bewegungen anzuhalten. Ich war erschüttert und lief aus dem Zimmer, ohne zu wissen, was ich vorhatte. (131)

Identification with the camera allows Tawada’s protagonist to exist passively. The camera controls her gaze, often fixated through close-ups on Deneuve’s face. Never

⁸ Earlier in the same paragraph, she refers to the city also as “Ho Chi Minh City”. There is no explanation of why she suddenly refers to the city by its former name, Saigon.

before has she had any control and does not know how to react when given the opportunity to pause the film as she pleases.

Later she more critically considers the illusion created by the camera and the power it holds over her and others. She begins to realize that her perspective does not always match with that of the camera. When watching *Indochine*, she identified with the Western perspective, portraying her home country Vietnam through a nostalgic imperialist lens. As she watches *Est, Ouest* (1999) with Jörg, she comes to the conclusion that the cinema cannot be trusted. In the film, the Soviet Union offers full citizenship to Russians who had left the country. It is a trick, and a doctor, his son, and his native French wife, Marie, endure much hardship in their new home, Kiev. The protagonist, who has been rediscovered by Jörg, goes to see the film with him. She complains about the perspective: “Kiew ist bestimmt eine wunderschöne Stadt, aber das zeigen sie uns nicht, flüstere ich Jörg ins Ohr” (170). She more critically than ever before considers how the camera frames the narrative. She is no longer an indoctrinated schoolgirl, either, but has learned of the flaws in capitalist society from her own experience. Before she encounters Jörg again, she sits in a café and thinks about the price of coffee, “Aber Warenpreise hatten nie mit Vernunft zu tun. Es war nicht Ho Chi Minh, der mich das gelehrt hatte, sondern meine eigene Erfahrung” (161). The coffee is overpriced, and she admits that she has now learned through her own experience. Her increased critical awareness transfers to the film, and she complains that Jörg is being tricked by the film’s negative portrayal of the Soviet Union: “Es gibt jemanden hinter der Leinwand, der Jörg und den anderen Zuschauern etwas einreden will” (171). She even becomes more aware

of how she feels herself being seduced into passive, non-critical thinking and angrily speaks aloud:

„Verschwinde!“, sagte ich zu der cinematografischen Strömung, die mich mitnehmen wollte. Lass mich in Ruhe! Ich will nicht mitgenommen werden. [...] Warum durfte ich als freier Mensch nicht zwischendurch die Bilder ausschalten oder korrigieren? (172)

Finally, she questions why she cannot take control of the story. She does not want to be drawn into the cinematic world she knows is biased. She even thinks that the film has the power to alter one's perspective permanently, "Vielleicht muss man gar nicht vor der Aufnahme ein Gesicht operieren, weil während der Filmvorführung heimlich die Netzhaut operiert wird" (172). Understanding dawns on the protagonist that the naked eye is not so naked after all. Deneuve, who only plays a minor role in the film, finally appears, and the protagonist recognizes her.

On her way out of Bochum, a blonde woman stopped the train to Paris for her, and she now recognizes that the woman was Deneuve, "Das ist die Schauspielerin, die damals für mich den Zug nach Paris angehalten hat. [...] Welche Freiheit wollten Sie mir damals versprechen?" (174). She accusingly questions Deneuve's screen image for leading her to Paris and the Parisian cinema, as she now understands that film has not truly offered her an escape from her troubles as an undocumented migrant woman. Jörg later shows her the text from the presentation she was supposed to give in East Berlin, and she recognizes "eine kindliche Schrift" (177). Since then she has grown into a woman who has been strongly influenced by Catherine Deneuve and her various roles through a camera lens, a lens the protagonist denaturalizes as she probes the conventions

of her surroundings with ironic questions and dry commentary. The twelfth chapter of Yoko Tawada's book ends with the protagonist refusing to accept the ideology that has been imposed on her, as she sticks the second hand of a clock into her eye. She rejects ideology as completely as she is able; using the very tools she has learned from film, she creates her own cut. At the end of chapter eleven she has been rediscovered by Jörg and feels helpless, and so she comments, "Ich hatte das Gefühl, in einem Film mitzuspielen, dessen Handlung mir unbekannt war" (168). Near the end of *Das nackte Auge*, she fights to eliminate this feeling of helplessness and creates her own film, reflected through Deneuve's various portrayals as she ends her story by inserting herself into the film *Dancer in the Dark*.

Finding Her Last Stage

The film *Dancer in the Dark* is a story about the sufferings of an immigrant woman, like Tawada's protagonist. Selma, played by Björk, is a Czech immigrant who moves to Washington state with her son. She suffers from a genetic degenerative eye condition and works in a factory to save money for an operation to save her son from the same fate. When not working, she rehearses to be in an amateur production of *The Sound of Music*. Her friend Kathy, played by Deneuve, helps her during rehearsals and also takes her to the movie theater and describes the films she can barely see. Selma's landlord steals her savings because of debts he has accrued from his wife's materialistic spending, and Selma confronts and kills him. She gets the money to an institution for the blind to pay for her son's operation but is caught and put on trial. Interestingly, she is pegged as a communist sympathizer, like Tawada's protagonist. Selma is sentenced to death, and right before she is executed, her friend Kathy tells her that the operation on her son was

successful. This gives her the courage to sing up until her last moment, performing for the execution onlookers and for Kathy.

There are several parallels between Selma's story and Tawada's protagonist. Both find a stage and a method of coping through performance facilitated by Deneuve, which underscores the performativity of their subject positions. In the last chapter of Tawada's novel, the protagonist's story and Selma's become intertwined. The protagonist is described as a blind woman with a dog, evoking her earlier consideration of being a dog and Deneuve's performance as a dog. Selma appears as a character in *Das nackte Auge* and the film character's love of theater is touched upon, "Sie wusste, dass sie zu schüchtern war, um einen fremden Menschen anzusprechen, aber ihr Traum war immer noch, in einem Theater zu arbeiten" (182). She meets the blind woman—Tawada's protagonist—and helps her with reading some letters, and so the two talk. The protagonist mentions her failed eye operation, and it is somewhat unclear who is speaking, "Nach der misslungenen Augenoperation bin ich nach Berlin gekommen. Sind Sie in Paris operiert worden? Nein, in Bochum, aber ich wollte dort nicht bleiben. Berlin ist mein Ausgangspunkt" (183). There is nothing to indicate that Selma has asked the question, an ambiguous overlap of the two characters. It is also unclear if Tawada's protagonist returned to Bochum with Jörg and blinded herself, or if she refers to a change in perspective that started after her kidnapping. Charles Exley writes about the protagonist's blindness:

By putting out her eyes Watashi relinquishes a kind of certainty of knowing, of seeing as natural, and it marks for both women a ceding of control, perhaps to the power of storytelling through either fiction or film. Tawada often seems to find

lyric potential in fumbling in the dark, in the fragmented phrase, and in the refusal to close a sentence or the narration in a final statement. (68)

I see her secondary identification with Selma as a metaphor symbolic of her weariness in regards to ideology and how perspectives are framed and controlled. Selma from *Dancer in the Dark* has no final statement and is executed before she finishes her song, and Tawada's protagonist is literally silenced by vodka, unable to give her presentation about Vietnam as a victim of American imperialism, as Jörg transports her to West Germany.

The protagonist admits her weariness of hearing others' stories, which she attributes to her blindness:

Das einzige Problem ist, dass die Leute mir sofort ihre Lebensgeschichten erzählen wollen, wenn sie von meiner Blindheit erfahren. Ich will aber keine Lebensgeschichten mehr hören, ich will nichts mehr hören, nicht einmal die Musik interessiert mich noch, sondern nur noch einige Geräusche, wenn überhaupt. (184)

She is jaded, and as a blind woman, she is in a position where others expect her to do nothing but passively listen to their stories. Unlike Selma, she is not even interested in music. Her story can be read as a criticism of systems of meaning and who controls them. As an underprivileged migrant woman, Tawada's protagonist has little agency in determining her own story and sees herself performing a role similar to Selma. The protagonist says that if she could see, she would work in a factory to hear the different sounds like "der Klang einer Schraube" (184). Like Selma in the film, the protagonist would work in a factory. Tawada's Selma is horrified:

Die Fabrikarbeit ist aber unmenschlich, erwiderte Selma, ich möchte nicht in einer Fabrik arbeiten, ich möchte lieber in einem Theater arbeiten. Auch das Theater ist unmenschlich, sagte die Frau ruhig und fuhr fort: Aber ich gehe trotzdem gern ins Theater, und noch lieber ins Kino. (184)

The protagonist recognizes the cruelty of systemic oppression she suffers in the systems of meaning that entangle her. At the beginning of this thesis chapter, I questioned to what extent the protagonist grows critically through primary and secondary identification, and how she unveils the performativity in her subject positions as she understands her life in relation to film. She has found her own answer, and at the end of the book has grown critical of film and the roles one has to play. Nevertheless, she recognizes that she is dependent on theater and cinema to understand her role, and she is inescapably bound to both mediums. She says she can no longer see the faces of the people around her, but she likes to watch them move: “Ich möchte den Tanz sehen, ich meine, die seltsamen, sinnlosen Bewegungen der Menschen” (185). This is a reference to when Selma from *Dancer in the Dark* also says to Kathy that she likes to watch dancing. Performativity is a senseless dance in that it is a series of socially constructed actions that have no base in one inherent ground. Judith Butler writes:

The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this “ground”. (2552)

Through breaks and contradictions from normative social behavior, the constructed and therefore unnatural nature of performativity is exposed. The protagonist sees the

senselessness in it all and grows to understand herself in relation to the power structures that oppress her. The powerful filmic lens that granted her a feeling of omniscience has fully taken over her life.

Conclusion

Describing her stance on subjectivity, Tawada states in an interview: “We are constantly changing, and change is not a threat. It is much more difficult to try to understand this process of transformation than to hold on to a rigid, permanent shape” (“The Postcommunist Eye” 43). *Das nackte Auge* is an investigation of this process as it occurs in Tawada’s nameless protagonist, who attempts to come to terms with her relationship to social and historical power structures. The echoes of Vietnam’s colonial past, reflected partly in the title of her silenced presentation on “Vietnam als Opfer des amerikanischen Imperialismus”, reverberate in her new surroundings (7). Much of her experience reflects the trauma of the colonized, as she is silenced and kidnapped to be a white man’s wife. Her understanding of her trauma is largely mediated through Catherine Deneuve, whom she both mimics ironically and comes to see as an imaginary companion in a kind of intersectional solidarity that helps her in coming to terms with her suffering as a migrant woman. Michael Rothberg argues for conceptions of memory “to move beyond discourses of equation or hierarchy” and instead sees the opportunity for expression of traumas as they intersect (“Mapping” 540). The fact that Tawada’s protagonist’s trauma is filtered through the various characters played by Deneuve only serves to express the nature of her trauma based on the marginalization of migrants. Indeed, as Homi Bhabha writes, colonial mimicry “alienates [the colonizer’s] own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms” (126). In this exact sense, Tawada’s protagonist mimics Deneuve and subsequently undermines the norms of capitalist society, which she constantly questions and probes.

Deneuve's star image is irrevocably tied to imperialism and the elite side of capitalism. Tawada's protagonist nevertheless identifies with her and sees her also as a product of and subjected to the same power structures that systemically disadvantage her. She thinks of Deneuve's connection to imperialism through her role in the film *Indochine* (1992) and addresses the actress directly, saying: "Es war nicht Ihre Schuld, dass Elaine in der ausbeutenden Klasse geboren wurde" (112). The protagonist sympathizes with Deneuve's role in imperialist society as one that is unavoidable. Deneuve is just as entangled in and objectified by the normative matrix as the protagonist. Deneuve's overarching star image facilitate the protagonist's understanding of self, prompting her to compare her own subject positions with those of Deneuve: "Aber das sind ja nicht Sie, sondern es ist eine Rolle, die Sie spielen, ich weiß. Wer ist das, wenn es nicht Sie sind? Wenn eine Frau in mir lebt, kann sie nicht bloß eine Marie oder eine Marianne sein. Wer ist sie?" (144). There is no one woman for the protagonist as she comes to understand her subjectivity as a series of sustained social performances. As Judith Butler describes in her conception of performativity, there is no "ground" to what could be considered a true, inherent identity (2552). Essentialist norms are undermined as the protagonist repeatedly performs various roles in a reflection of the white French actress resulting in an unstable and decentered subjectivity.

Undergoing a series of transformations, Tawada describes her protagonist as one that cannot be easily categorized or defined, except by the power structures that attempt to subdue and analyze her. In an example of how such power is exercised in the categorization of individuals, Foucault explains the explosion of discourses on sexuality:

[...] never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere. (1521)

The power structures that systemically oppress Tawada's protagonist lead to a largely *fremdbestimmt* (foreign-determined) identity. She never quite gains complete agency in determining her own subjectivity; indeed, the language of cinema is largely responsible for forming her as a subject. The power of language in determining and categorizing one's subjectivity is indicated several times, but especially when she describes how she often chooses to remain silent, to defy societal expectations and analysis:

In den Kinos gab es manchmal Männer, die mich ansprachen. Ich sagte ein Wort, das es in keiner Sprach [sic] gab, und ging weg. Dieses eine Wort sollte „Ich kann nicht sprechen“ bedeuten. Es war ein einzelnes Substantiv, das „ein sprachloses Subjekt“ bedeutete; oder es war ein Verb, das nur in der ersten Person Singular benutzt werden konnte und „nicht sprechen“ bedeutete. (74)

Tawada's protagonist repeatedly undermines the power that forms her subjectivity, and although she can ultimately not escape the influence of cinema on her life, she purposely chooses to remain in an indefinite, fluctuating subject position. Her plurality established through film is a process that reveals the overlapping networks of social, historical and political structures that intersect to express her subjectivity as formed under systemic racism and sexism. Her primary identification with the camera and secondary identification with Deneuve play the largest part in forming the protagonist as a subject. Cinema contributes to her understanding of a decentered self as the performativity of a

series of subject positions is reflected and unveiled through the various character roles of Deneuve.

The decentered nature of Tawada's protagonist's migrant subject position reflects back onto Tawada's writing process itself. In an interview, Tawada describes how she begins writing:

A single word can inspire me. When this happens, I want to create a whole text out of that one word, which seems to contain the entire microcosm. That is my dream, and it is how I often start writing. I use variations of this word, place associations next to each other, create word chains like branches of a tree, and play with different forms and shapes. Finally, I realize that I have to create an ending, but I don't find an ending because I don't want to and cannot have a result. A text is a weird and wonderful plant that has grown in all directions out of a single word knot. ("The Postcommunist Eye" 45).

There is never just one word. Nothing and no one exists in a vacuum, and so subject positions are interconnected. The trauma that disrupts Tawada's protagonist's sense of self is connected and filtered through the lens of imperialism, and this leads to the protagonist developing a meta-knowledge of herself in relation to the social constructs she cannot escape. The "naked" eye of the camera—naked in the sense that it is free of prejudice or other preconceptions—is not truly naked at all because it frames and controls the protagonist's perspective. There is no definite end for Tawada's protagonist. She is like Tawada's description of the branches of a tree, ever-changing and growing in a hard-to-define process of subjectivity. She is a plurality of subject positions, and she cannot escape the camera lens.

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