Well-known for their surrealist effects and anti-referential nature, Tawada Yōko’s texts pose the question of their social signification as a riddle. This ambiguity is underscored by Tawada’s use of translation as a central compositional technique, underscoring interlingual porosity and the instability of the relation between sounds and words. My talk will propose that Tawada’s texts can be read as “open” texts (Roland Barthes) that deploy translation as an “active” and “activist” practice. Eschewing thematic readings that assume unproblematic text-context relations, I will consider translation as a formal practice that calls attention to both the potentialities and violences attending the transnational circulation and dislocation of commodities, images, signs, and bodies under global capital and its assimilationist strategies.