

Tsushima Yūko and the Ethics of Cohabitation¹

SPECIAL ISSUE

- **Memento libri: New Writings and Translations from the World of Tsushima Yūko (1947~2016)**
- **Home Ground**
- **People's Voices, Mother's Song**
- **Tsushima Yūko and the Ethics of Cohabitation**
- **Smashing the Great Buddha, Crossing Lines: Tsushima Yūko's Nara Report**
- **The Remains of the Japanese Empire: Tsushima Yūko's All Too Barbarian; Reed Boat, Flying; and Wildcat Dome**

Reiko Abe Auestad



Laughing Wolf (Shinchōsha, 2000)

Abstract

Borrowing from Judith Butler's notion of the ethics of plural and heterogeneous cohabitation, this essay reads two of Tsushima Yūko's novels in light of how they negotiate proximity and distance in forging ethical connections that constitutes such cohabitation; the first is her autobiographical work of mourning, *On Grieving* (2017). The second is the historical time-travel novel, *Laughing Wolf* (2000), crowded with humans and animals both spectral and real. The essay argues that reading these two modes of writing together can enhance the felt connection between the personal and the historical by turning thin relations into thick ones through the act of remembering.

Keywords

Tsushima Yūko, ethics of cohabitation, WWII, memory, shared vulnerability, autobiographical novel

Introduction

Despite our differences in location and history, my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a “we,” for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous “we” of us all...This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, 2006, 20.

In today’s globalized world where we are constantly confronted in the media with images and accounts of suffering from war and other disasters elsewhere, we are compelled to reflect on questions of “proximity and distance” and our ethical obligations, as Judith Butler suggests in her 2012 essay. The essay, “Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation,” is a later addition to the ethical inquiry Butler initiated in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack and the ensuing geopolitical situation in the Middle-East.² How should we respond to atrocities taking place far away from us, for which we bear no direct responsibility? Is it tenable to argue, as some do, that our obligations emerge only in contexts bound by communities, cultures, nations, or national alliances? The point of her essay is to contest the parochial mentality implicit in the latter question and see the possibility of ethics that depend instead on the “reversibility of proximity and distance” by “accepting and negotiating the multilocality and cross-

temporality of ethical connections we might rightly call global.”³ In concrete terms, she builds her argument on the irrevocable fact of interdependency of life, “sociality,” on the earth, which is made poignant through our shared vulnerability—the vulnerability that follows from our “precariousness.”⁴ Our life is necessarily in the hands of others, she reminds us, since we are all constituted in, and dependent on our relationship with them.⁵ Drawing on Hannah Arendt, she goes on to emphasize that we therefore do not, or rather, *cannot* choose with whom we will cohabitate the earth. It is a matter of neither contract nor volition: we have no choice but to accept the “heterogeneity of the earth’s population as an irreversible condition of social and political life itself.”⁶ Arendt’s famous critique of Eichmann hinges upon precisely this point, that he thought he could “choose” which population to cohabitate the earth with, a mistake with catastrophic consequences. What we are obligated to do then is to “devise institutions and policies that actively preserve and affirm the nonchosen character of open-ended and plural cohabitation.”⁷

This essay traces two leitmotifs that run through much of Tsushima Yūko’s literature, both of which resonate extremely well with Butler’s arguments about earthly cohabitation. First of all, the negotiation of proximity and distance in forging ethical connections that constitute earthly cohabitation; and secondly, its necessarily unchosen and heterogeneous character. Reading her literature through the lens of these undercurrents, I believe, makes more explicit the political/ethical stakes in Tsushima’s project, which still has an important role to play in our day. Many of Tsushima’s early novels are autobiographical—revolving around a female protagonist, a single mother, struggling to come to terms with the deaths of her family members; the father she hardly knew, the mentally handicapped brother to whom she was very close, and her eight-year-old son.⁸ Haunted by their deaths, these novels

enable at the same time the “rebirth” of these figures by way of affective association and creative remembering. Indeed, the power of Tsushima's novels lies in their ability to evoke the presence of these personal ghosts—a power which she effectively exploits in her later works that touch upon issues with larger global and historical implications such as the dark legacies of colonialism, minority people's rights, and anti-nuclear activism.

The story of *Laughing Wolf* (Warai ōkami, 2000) follows a boy and a girl who remind us of the Tsushima siblings as they time-travel to the chaotic scene in the aftermath of WWII. Playfully calling themselves Akela and Mowgli, they try to connect with ordinary men and women struggling to subsist, and the hardships they share are mirrored in the newspaper articles from “real” life quoted on the same page. Starting with this novel, her negotiation between “proximity and distance” becomes more visible as she infuses stories of personal character into larger historical settings, with a focus on those who were made to suffer because they did not belong to the “chosen” population whose survival was prioritized. Through flashback structures and multiple points of view that include both haunted memories of “faces” from her earlier works, as well as “quotes” from real life stories, these later novels crisscross different localities and temporalities, reminding us of how our life is intertwined not only with “her” life, but with all of those other lives across time and space in a way that is never reducible to any specific “communitarian” affiliation.⁹

More concretely, this essay sets out to read *Laughing Wolf*, the only work among Tsushima's late novels available in English and which addresses issues related to memories of the Pacific War against her explicitly autobiographical works collected in the recent anthology, *On Grieving* (Kanashimi ni tsuite, 2017). I want to see how reading these two modes of writing together can enhance the felt

connection between the historical and the personal by turning thin relations into thick ones through the act of remembering.¹⁰ The network of affective associations that are triggered in us through our knowledge of her earlier works creates the very visceral qualities that render “thick” our ethical experience of reading about these people whom we have never met. *Laughing Wolf*, hailed as one of her masterpieces in the flyer for the new edition of Tsushima's collected works, not only weaves together stories of personal losses with public losses, but also addresses the issue of the non-chosen and heterogeneous character of plural cohabitation by staging for us an imaginary scene of an interspecies coexistence of humans and animals—through borrowed motifs from children's literature.¹¹ As Akela the wolf from *The Jungle Book* declares, distinctions between thick relations and thin ones, dead or alive, imagined or real, dissolve into “One Blood” within the pages of a book.

***On Grieving* (Kanashimi ni tsuite, 2017)**

Given the weight of the losses that informs Tsushima's oeuvre, it seems hardly a coincidence that the first volume to appear in the new posthumous edition collecting Tsushima's major works is titled *On Grieving* (July 2017) and consists of autobiographical pieces written in the wake of her son's tragic death in 1986. The afterword written by her daughter, Ishihara Nen, is also appropriately titled “On Grieving,” as if to echo her mother's words in the volume, which depict her emotional struggles to come to terms with her grief. (The essay appears in translation elsewhere in this issue under the title “People's Voices, Mother's Song”). Grief figures prominently also in Judith Butler's discussion of the ethics of cohabitation because it is often through our vulnerability to grief that we are made aware of our connection with the other—the tie that cannot be severed at

will.¹² As finite beings, we experience loss of life around us, and grieve. Grieving is transformative in the sense that it exposes our injurability in a way that puts distance between us and others, making it feel like a lonely activity to begin with. At the same time, however, it gives us an occasion to reflect on how, even in the most private moments of our life, we cannot escape the fundamental sociality that we are part of. Hence, it can unexpectedly make us realize our ties with, and dependence on others, for better or worse, in ways that we have not anticipated.

Ironically, it is language, a presumed means of communication, that becomes the first reminder of our paradoxical predicament by failing to function the way it normally does. In the eponymous piece called “On Grieving” included in the anthology, the protagonist, “I,” recalls her convulsive sobs at her son’s wake. She compares it to throwing up because of food-poisoning, or getting goose-bumps in the cold, and writes that the word “grief” seems utterly inadequate to them. In the face of the bodily, affective reactions that a trauma triggers, words lose their usual meaning and become quite powerless. To borrow from Butler again, the body is not quite ever only “our own,” in the double sense of the word: it not only has a dimension that is not under our control, but it is also exposed to the eyes of the others.¹³ It will be interpreted by them in *their* terms—terms understandable for all to see and hear through *their* language, whether we like it or not.

Often portrayed in the media through embarrassingly clichéd expressions such as “devastated by grief,” or “in tears of grief,” “the mother who has lost her child” is taken to be the ultimate symbol of “grief”—a proto-example of the ready-made use of language that Tsushima’s protagonist “I” tries to resist. One can cry for many different reasons, she protests. “She might be crying from anger at those who feel no doubt over the relevance of

these ceremonies for death,” or from despair at not being able to escape the pitiful gaze of others who categorically look at her as the archetypical symbol of grief.¹⁴ Examples of hollow, ceremonial words that make her cringe are many. Tsushima’s point is not that they are necessarily wrong because it is not the correct use of the words that is at stake. Rather, the problem is that language does not give access to the whirlpool of feelings, and thoughts that she is in thrall of, regardless of who the speaker is. She is unable admits to not being able to find the right words herself. The best she can do is to keep denying the validity of the words thrown her way, every time she feels uncomfortable with them.

As determined as she is to “deny” them in her private reflections, however, she is part of a sociality that she cannot will away, something she is acutely made aware of when she is with others, for example, in a conversation with an acquaintance who is unaware of her recent loss:

- Well then, you sound like you’re busy, so I will hang up, but time surely flies, doesn’t it? Your eldest daughter is in junior high school, isn’t she?
- I wanted desperately to hang up, but gave her a reply, in spite of myself.
- You’re right.
- And your youngest? Will he be in the fifth year of primary school?
- ...
- Sorry, I made a mistake? Maybe it was the fourth year?
- “Yes, that’s right, and good-bye for now” would have been all it took to put an end to our conversation, but I was agonizing over my inability to say it and simply gasped.¹⁵

This scene demonstrates how we are enmeshed in relationality in ways that intervene in our self-understanding, challenging our notion of autonomy. In the course of the narrative, the

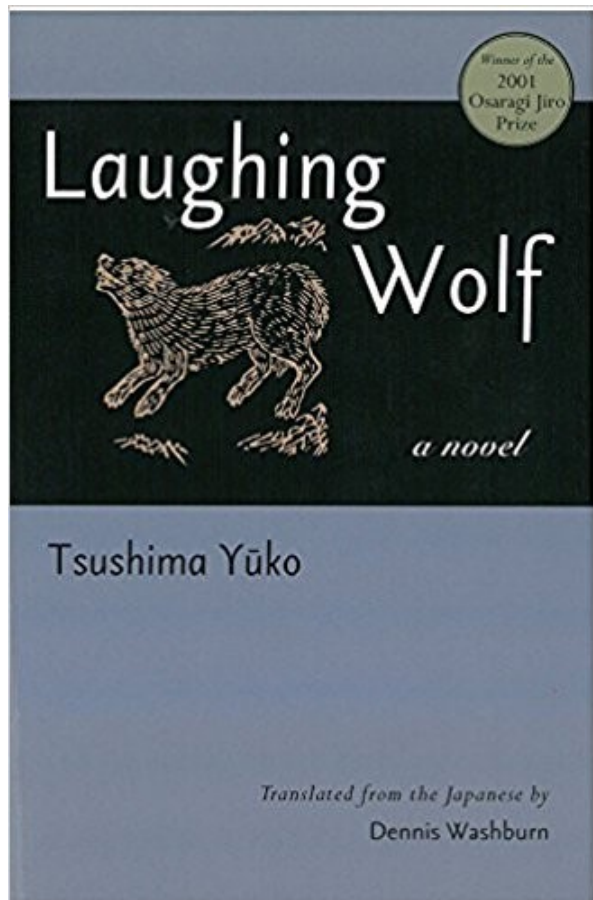
protagonist repeatedly stops and falters, as the “I” stumbles into the other that impinges upon her, with social forces that she cannot escape.

Reflecting on her own muddled emotional state, however, prompts her to think of the vulnerabilities of others as well, especially her own mother, who experienced the loss of *her* son, the protagonist’s elder brother, many years earlier. One important dimension in the sudden flash of empathy for her own mother has to do with the socially marginalized position of both her brother and her son, the former because of his mental disabilities, and the latter because of his status as a child born out of wedlock, still considered a handicap in Japan. And both also grew up in a fatherless family. In that sense, there is an extra layer to their susceptibility to anguish and self-doubt; a feeling of inadequacy and regret shared by mother and daughter both for having failed to give protection to those who needed it most. As she admits herself, the awareness of the vulnerability of the socially marginalized, which was nurtured throughout her life, was very much behind her drive to continue writing—a point of departure that set the ethical framework for her later novels.

In the novella “In the Afternoon” (Mahiru e) included in the same anthology, the tenor of the narrative shifts from lamentation to reminiscence with signs of hope for the future.¹⁶ The work includes many flashbacks to her own childhood in which memories of her handicapped brother dominate—memories that are closely associated with the house in which they lived. The brother passed away when the house was still newly built, thirty some years earlier. There is a scene in which the gathering of their relatives celebrating the completion of the house takes center stage. Thrown into relief here are the contrasting images of, on the one hand, the adults chatting and sitting in the warm living room inside, and on the other of the children—the “I” and her brother, playing outside, separated from the adults by a glass

door. From up in a tree she has climbed, she looks into the living room through the glass door, and spots her adult self, sitting together with her baby son, whom she addresses as “you.” Is she dreaming? In a mixture of dream and memories, she strikes up a conversation with her son, asking if he does not see himself on the other side of the glass door, too, together with her on the tree. Here the other side of the glass door comes to represent the children’s other world.¹⁷ And her brother, her son and the child that she herself was, are endowed with ability to move back and forth across time between the two worlds. It is as if the experience of loss has given her opportunities to reflect upon a cycle of life and death that continues beyond the vicissitudes of individual life—the motif which Tsushima takes up again in her non-autobiographical *Laughing Wolf*.

***Laughing Wolf* (Warai ōkami, 2000)**



Dennis Washburn's translation of 『笑いオカミ』 (Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies, 2011)

Laughing Wolf revives many stories from the past that are fictional and yet also carry familiar components from Tsushima's life and broader experiences of real life which some of us are sure to recognize. It opens with a story about a homeless four-year-old boy, Mitsuo, and his father struggling to survive the chaotic aftermath of the war in 1946. They live in a graveyard, and witness a triangular love-suicide, an incident that makes big headlines in the major newspapers. Mitsuo learns later that one of the men who died was a well-known artist, and his widow has been left alone with the care of their two small children. This fictional event evokes in many readers images of Dazai Osamu, Tsushima's own novelist father

who died that same year in a love-suicide, as well as of the Tsushima siblings left behind. A new story begins when Mitsuo, discharged at seventeen from the orphanage where he has lived since his father's death, does some research on the surviving family's whereabouts, and meets the youngest child of the widow, Yukiko, now twelve years old. With the traumatic love-suicide as a shared memory, Mitsuo and Yukiko develop an alliance that gradually grows into friendship and eventually comes to resemble a brother-sister relationship.

Together, they get on a random train from Ueno Station, and travel around the north of Tokyo, going wherever the train happens to take them. The reader soon realizes, however, that this is no ordinary journey. They have traveled through time to chaotic scenes from 1945 to 1947, when food shortages were still acute, and they become witnesses to the harsh survival-of-the-fittest conditions facing Japanese people from all walks of life. In fact, soon after they board the train, they are inspected by police officers on the look-out for any illegal possession of food. They confiscate any rice that exceeds the personal ration limit of 3.6 liters:

The cop pulled a heavy-looking cloth bag, a tiny can, and a bundle wrapped in straw out of a piece of luggage, and dumped the contents into a hemp bag that a man wearing an armband was carrying. Rice, barley, potatoes. A short distance away, the cops were also confiscating the food of a woman who had children with her. She had broken down in tears. Some people were clenching fists and heaping abuse on the cops.¹⁸

The newspaper headline from 1 August 1946 excerpted in the middle of the chapter, reads:

90% of Passengers Violate the Law

Angry Voices from Train Windows
Rage at the Inequality of
Government

Policies—an Account of a Ride on
“The White Rice Express.”¹⁹

Everywhere on the train, they see exhausted faces of men and women, repatriates and ex-soldiers, in “dirty work trousers” (*monpe*) with rucksacks. Many of the passengers they share space with are on a desperate hunt for food for themselves or their families. They are all aware that they might be caught at any moment. The ordeals they endure together include hunger and bouts of diarrhea on the train, as well as an attack by wild dogs that takes place when they leave the train. Mitsuo and Yukiko, the two fatherless children, take on a special meaning in the sense that Mitsuo becomes a double of the mentally handicapped elder brother whom Yukiko lost earlier (again reminding the reader of the Tsushima siblings). The incidents that they experience in their journey more or less all have sources of inspiration from real life, which is hinted at by excerpts from real newspaper articles from the early postwar period that are scattered throughout the novel.

At Mitsuo’s suggestion, they call themselves Akela and Mowgli, modeled after *The Jungle Book*. After a while, they change their names to Remi and Capi, this time taken from *Nobody’s Boy*, another favorite book of Mitsuo’s from his time in the orphanage. *The Jungle Book*, and *Nobody’s Boy* as the source of inspiration thus open up intertextual windows to a wider audience through the countless versions and adaptations that have appeared as books, films and animated series.²⁰ This double insertion of familiar faces makes it easier for the reader to enter into this strange other-world that mixes together romantic fantasy, adventure, history and cruel realities. What the two children share in common with their fictional models,

Akela/Remi and Mowgli/Capi, is their adventurous fighting spirit in the face of the dangers lurking in every step of their journey. Fantasizing about the beautiful ship the Swan (*hakuchō gō*), which unites Remi with his biological mother and brother in *Nobody’s Boy*, they get off the train at Kurihama and decide to sneak onto a boat off the coast. Onboard they meet cholera-stricken men lying about in soiled blankets who are refused permission to land because of the fear of contagion. Five hundred, or perhaps a thousand of them, people who have survived the war and finally reached the homeland coast, are now left to their own devices—left, that is, to die. At the end of the chapter Tsushima includes several excerpts from newspaper reports on the existence of a “ghost-metropolis” at sea, crowded with repatriates suffering from cholera.

26 April 1946; A Metropolis of Cholera on the High Sea; Repatriates Short of Food...There are an additional nine ships with repatriates from the region of Guangzhou who are suspected of carrying cholera. These have yet to arrive in port, and within a few days the population of the floating metropolis here will eventually swell to 120,000 or 130,000. ...²¹

Like the real Japan circa 1946 that is glimpsed in the newspaper reports, Akela and Mowgli’s jungle, Remi and Capi’s nineteenth-century France, and Mitsuo and Yukiko’s postwar Japan are all places experiencing severe material shortages and where the distinction between moral rules governing thick relations and thin relations (the law of the jungle, the code of Man Pack) is sharply thrown into relief—places where no one can afford to be equally “nice” to everyone. They are all tested in their ability to judge their thick and thin relations wisely, and to play their cards accordingly. In other words, they live in a world where they are forced to

prioritize with whom they want to cohabitate the earth.

It is in this context that Akela and Mowgli's wolf parents in *The Jungle Book* become a shining role-model in the children's imagination, because they courageously challenge the rest of the bunch—the apes and the humans with their Man-Pack code, which accepts “only real children,” or “at best the children of relatives.”²² Akela and the wolves adopt Mowgli, the human child, against the others' advice, and love him as their own. Similarly, Mitsuo and Yukiko learn to love each other like a true sister and brother. They thus represent the spirit of “children” who have not been defeated by the Man-Pack code, who have managed to retain their open-mindedness. The distinctions between a *real* child and an adopted child, someone's child and my own, thick relations and thin relations, all dissolve into “One Blood,” as Akela/Mitsuo declares. It reminds us also of the scene from Yoshiko's mother's house in “In the Afternoon”; there, the children on the other side of the glass door, create their own Utopian other-world, where the rules of The Man Pack do not apply—where children both dead and living can mingle. We can also detect in Akela a ghostly double of the now extinct Japanese wolf whose history is detailed in the prelude of the novel. Akela the wolf and Mowgli the mancub, Remi the orphan and Capi the dog, and Mitsuo and Yoshiko, mingling with the specters from the past—they all flourish together as “unchosen and heterogeneous” cohabitants, ignoring the boundaries between species (there is a gender crossing implication, here, too, as Yukiko must behave like a boy, Mowgli). In the end, however, the reader is confronted with the harsh realities of life in the form of Mitsuo/Remi's arrest. The police had to catch up with them sooner or later. They get separated when Mitsuo is taken to the police station in the end; Yukiko is “protected,” while Mitsuo, the “pervert,” gets “arrested,” in line with the code of the Man-Pack.²³

As an epilogue, Tsushima includes an excerpt from a newspaper article describing the famous “Kiyoko-chan incident,” an abduction that took place in 1946. The twelve-year-old Kiyoko was rescued from her young kidnapper Higuchi after travelling with him for half a year. She, however, famously told the police and her parents that he was a nice “big brother” to her, asking them not to punish him severely. Inserted at the end of the novel are additional newspaper excerpts reporting on the tragic fate of many children, whose images echo the similar destinies of many other children from the real and fictive Japan. A pattern of experiences with a strong personal touch (Mitsuo and Yukiko, Akela/Remi and Mowgli/Capi) about which the reader gains intimate knowledge in each chapter, subsequently finds a parallel in these newspaper articles, as if to bridge the gap between the familiar (thick relations) and the foreign (thin relations), proximity and distance in our imagination. For example, one of the quoted articles reads:

1947

The number of abandoned children increased dramatically in July and August. Reports to the Metropolitan Police have come in at the rate of about one child per day since the beginning of August. The police hand these children over to ward offices, where they are given provisional names...before being sent on to the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundling Hospital in Itabashi, where they are placed in an infant ward. As of 23 August, the ward was caring for 42 babies (12 boys and 30 girls). Most of the babies range from about two months to five months in age. According to Dr. Anno of the infant ward, all the babies have

been diagnosed as being less than 80 percent of normal baby weight, thus lacking the strength to survive. The death rate has climbed to more than 50 percent, and the babies are now dying at a rate of one child every two days (*Laughing Wolf*, 226).

Conclusion

In a 2001 interview with members of the I-Novel Research Forum, Tsushima argued that it is impossible to write a work of fiction that is *not* somehow rooted in the authorial “I” and that all fiction is therefore a form of I-fiction. Overemphasis on the value of fictive imagination and so-called “socially important themes” can, she warns, not only kill the “I” in a work, but can also kill off its relation to humanity (and thus its status as literature) altogether.²⁴ This sounds almost paradoxical because her literature is a treasure trove of “socially important themes,” rich with “fictive imagination,” a glimpse of which I hope to have shown in this essay. Given the context of the interview in a forum for the I-novel as a genre, however, her statement can be read simply as a message that for her, literature is inseparable from her life experiences. The impact of the losses she has suffered and the social discriminations she has witnessed have certainly given her insightful wisdom about life, namely, our fragility as social beings and the invariable interdependency of life that we are part of. This insight, in turn, gave her the impetus to write about injustices of all kinds befalling marginalized people in many places throughout history and to drive home through literature the necessarily multi-local and cross-temporal nature of our ethical connections.²⁵ One can perhaps argue that her literary strategy has been to let the reader participate in this negotiation between proximity and distance, the familiar and the

foreign, through repetition of tropes from her personal memories of loss—an important, even necessary step to guide us toward awareness of our interdependency.

The literary critic Derek Attridge claims that reading literature is a creative activity, which is above all an “event” that involves letting something happen.²⁶ With emphasis on “openness of the mind to what it has not yet grasped,” he locates the act of reading at the boundary between the familiar and the not-yet-familiar, what he calls “otherness.”²⁷ He qualifies “otherness” however as something that “emerge[s] only as a version of the familiar,” from “within the subject as from outside it.”²⁸ In other words, it depends largely on activation of something that is already in the subject, at the “fringes of [our] mental sphere.”²⁹ This model of shuttling back and forth between the familiar and the unfamiliar by mobilizing something within ourselves, I believe, fits well with Tsushima’s literary project. By inserting familiar “faces” and ghostly specters from her autobiographical works in her fictional writings about imaginary strangers, Tsushima prompts us to do the same, to search for affective and cognitive resonance in our own life experiences and for cultural references that will help us connect with the other.

In relation to *Laughing Wolf*, I must admit that there is a special dimension to the affective resonance in my life. The abducted twelve-year-old girl from 1946 is the mother of my childhood best friend, whom I have known since we were three. We grew up together almost as siblings, and I know the family extremely well. I have heard people gossip and speculate about her past, even talking about her as a “kizumono” (a defective article/deflowered girl). But I can assure the reader that Kiyoko, my friend’s mother, now 83 years old, has to this day retained the open-mindedness of the twelve-year-old, which convinces me that she would most definitely

embrace someone else's child as her own, if such an opportunity ever offered itself.

As Natsume Sōseki repeatedly argues in his *Theory of Literature*, one's life experience plays a decisive role in the way we affectively respond to literary texts.³⁰ Even as that may seem like a limitation, confining us to our specific location in history and culture, we should also remember that reading defined thus as a creative event is itself a life experience, which can expand the horizon of otherness. For this to happen, however, we need to cultivate an openness of the mind—a disposition to let yourself be affected by the reading experience.³¹ Some readers may find

the dark and heavy tone of some of Tsushima's autobiographical works oppressive, even alienating. For all I know, the reason why I find myself attracted to Tsushima may be yet another function of my own life experience which has given me more than the usual share of loss. And needless to say, no amount of trauma and grief will change the fact that it is impossible to extend our caring relation to all humanity. Nonetheless, it must be within our reach to expand the circle of our thick relations a little by letting more otherness into our life, by cultivating a more receptive sensibility—with a "little help from our friends," namely literature.

Reiko Abe Auestad (r.a.auestad@ikos.uio.no) is Professor in the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages at University of Oslo. She is the author of *Rereading Sōseki: Three Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Novels* which was republished in a digital form in 2016 in the *CEAS Reprint Series for Rare and Out of Print Publications at Yale University*. Together with Alan Tansman and J. Keith Vincent, she is currently co-editing two collections of essays on Natsume Sōseki. See her recent essays and current projects [here](#).

Notes

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented as part of the panel, "The Rebirth of the Author," chaired by J. Keith Vincent at the European Association for Japanese Studies in Lisbon, and at the Art and Politics of East Asia Workshop, University of Chicago in 2017. I am grateful for critical feedback received on these occasions. I would also like to thank the editors, Michael Bourdaghs and Anne McKnight, for their insightful comments.

² "Precarious Life, Vulnerability and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26, 2012. Butler's efforts to reimagine ethics based on difference and vulnerability have attracted the attention of political scientists as well. See *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters* (London: Routledge 2008), eds. Terrell Carver and Samuel Chambers.

³ Butler, "Precarious Life," 137–8.

⁴ She ascribes "precariousness" to all because "life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life." Lecture at Nobel museum in Stockholm, 2011, "[Precarious Life: The Obligations of Proximity](#)." (accessed February 10, 2018).

⁵ Butler, "Precarious Life," 141.

⁶ Butler, "Precarious Life," 143.

⁷ Butler, "Precarious Life," 144.

⁸ Well-known examples include *Child of Fortune* (Chōji, 1978), *Woman Running in the Mountains* (Yama o hashiru onna, 1980), *Driven by the Light of the Night* (Yoru no hikari ni owarete, 1987) and *In the Afternoon* (Mahiru e, 1988).

⁹ Well-known examples include *Nara Report* (Nara repōto, 2005), *Amarini yabanna* (2004), *Ōgon no yume no uta* (2010), *Ashibune tonda* (2011), *Yamaneko dōmu* (2013), *Jakka dofuni* (2016), *Hangenki o iwatte* (2016), and *Kari no jidai* (2016). The range of localities in these novels encompasses Hokkaido and Okinawa in Japan, occupied Taiwan and Manchuria, Macao and Australia, and covers a timespan from the eighth century to the postwar era. For a succinct summary of Butler's critique of communitarianism, see "Vulnerability, vengeance, and community" by Robert E. Watkins in *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics* (2008).

¹⁰ *Laughing Wolf*, translated by Dennis Washburn (Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2011) and *Kanashimi ni tsuite* (On Grieving), Jinbun shoin, 2017

¹¹ See [here](#) (accessed January 6, 2018).

¹² Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics" In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2006, 22-23.

¹³ See Butler, "Violence": "The body is not quite ever only our own. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine," 26.

¹⁴ "Kanashimi ni tsuite" in *On Grieving*, 215 (my translation).

¹⁵ "Jakka Dofuni: natsu no ie" in *On Grieving*, 104 (my translation).

¹⁶ "Mahiru e" in *On Grieving*.

¹⁷ See Andō Hiroshi, "Mahiru e: hikari no shisō," in Kawamura Minato, ed. *Gendai josei sakka dokuhon vol. 3 Tsumima Yūko* (Kanae shobō, 2005): 100-103.

¹⁸ *Laughing Wolf*, 113.

¹⁹ *Laughing Wolf*, 115.

²⁰ Given the enormous popularity of animated and/or retold versions of *The Jungle Book* in Japan, I believe the appeal that Tsushima takes advantage of comes mostly from recent productions rather than the original 1894 English version by Kipling with its jarring Orientalist elements.

²¹ *Laughing Wolf*, 155.

²² *Laughing Wolf*, 171. Messua, Mowgli's human mother, too, later adopts and cherishes him as his own son. In *Nobody's Boy*, Remi's adoptive mother brings him up like her own son (in spite of the father's objection).

²³ *Laughing Wolf*, 231 and 233.

²⁴ *Shishōsetsu handobukku*, ed. Shishōsetsu kenkyūkai (Bensei shuppan, 2014), 201; 203-204.

²⁵ Finding the seed for the same mechanism of discrimination that the Nazis exercised in her own Japanese relatives' and neighbors' gaze toward her handicapped brother and elsewhere, she tries to grapple with it in her last, posthumously published novel, *Kari no jidai* (2016).

²⁶ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (Routledge, 2017), 3.

²⁷ Attridge, *The Singularity*, 31.

²⁸ Attridge, *The Singularity*, 108.

²⁹ Attridge, *The Singularity*, 43.

³⁰ Natsume Sōseki, *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*, edited by Michael K. Bourdaghs, Atsuko Ueda and Joseph A. Murphy (Columbia University Press, 2009).

³¹ For a discussion of differences in our critical approaches deriving most of all from our dispositions, see Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (University of Chicago Press, 2015).