

## Challenging Familiar Boundaries and Blurred Lines in Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*

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### Abstract:

Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* engages multiple fields—including Asian German studies, animal studies, postcolonial theory, and the public humanities—through the story of an unnamed polar bear writing her autobiography. The novel blurs the boundary between humans and animals, using ambiguous language and narrative perspective to examine questions of identity, agency, and the rights of both humans and nonhumans. Tawada's polar bear, as narrator and author, challenges traditional hierarchies and compels readers to reconsider what it means to give voice and recognition to the marginalized.

At the same time, the novel aligns with postcolonial and public humanities concerns by decentering dominant narratives. By foregrounding a perspective historically excluded from both literature and society, Tawada's work enacts a form of narrative justice, inviting readers to engage with experiences of displacement, otherness, and historical silencing. Reading the novel through these intersecting lenses illuminates how literature can serve as a tool for empathy, ethical reflection, and social critique.

Ultimately, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates the value of attending to underrepresented voices in both fiction and reality. By exploring the ethical and political dimensions of storytelling, Tawada's work reminds us of the transformative potential of literature to foster understanding across boundaries of species, culture, and historical experience.

**Keywords:** Asian German Studies, Animal Studies, Public Humanities, Postcolonialism, Censorship

In the last decade the field of Asian German studies has been considered a relatively recently established field of studies. In the past fifteen years, there has been an economic boom in East and South Asia. Because of this, scholars are interested in connecting Asia to the rest of the world. In 2009, the German Studies Association added ten panels of Asian German studies at the annual conference which have remained in place. These panels have researched and presented various topics relating to Asia and Germany: the relationship between the German language and East Asia as well as many Asian German encounters from the eighteenth century to the present day that are literary, cultural, and political. These panels have also surveyed important eras such as colonial, imperialist, and Nazi periods (Zhang 106).

This field aims to answer various questions such as, “What is Asian German studies?”, “Aren't the ‘German’ and ‘Asian’ parts so different in size, history, and internal diversity that a comparison can only be out of balance?”, and “How can research connections made between Asian and German language, literature, and culture field insights that can be useful for related fields?”. The field of Asian German studies also allows scholars to research other fields such as area studies and postcolonial studies. Area studies connects social sciences and the humanities to understand various parts of the world such as Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Many areas are involved with area studies such as political science, economics, linguistics, and cultural studies. Furthermore, this allows for other questions to be asked that relate to other parts of the world such as: “What is the relationship of Asian German studies to Asian American studies Turkish German studies, Arab-German studies, Afro-German studies, multicultural German studies, or global German studies?” (Zhang 107).

Asian German studies offer a unique perspective by showing connections around the world such as with canonical and non-canonical writers, and thinkers, as well as transcultural connections with German-speaking countries and Asia. Asian German studies works alongside area studies and postcolonial studies and exemplifies the impact of Asian cultures and languages on Germany, German-speaking countries, and other parts of the world. Asian German studies, for now, is labeled as a broad umbrella term for the many diverse topics and cultures such as South Asian and East Asian German studies. These can be narrowed down even further such as to Vietnamese German studies and Muslim German Studies. Moreover, these different cultures can then be researched in terms of cinema, global, linguistic, and historical studies—the possibilities are endless (Zhang 108).

The canonical Asian German studies author, Yoko Tawada, was born March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, in Nakano, Tokyo in Japan, and currently lives in Berlin, Germany. A common theme in her work is the relationship between words and reality. Moreover, she explores the possibility that different languages may aid in assimilation into different cultures. Her work also challenges the connection between national language and nationalism. Tawada's work usually involve themes of traveling across geographical and cultural boundaries as well as abstract boundaries such as reality and dreams, which often draw on her own experiences. She has won many awards such as the Akutagawa Prize, Tanizaki Prize, Noma Literary Prize, Izumi Kyoka Prize for Literature, Gunzo Prize for New Writers, Goethe Medal, Kleist Prize, and a National Book Award.

In the early stages of her career, she wrote in Japanese and used a translator to produce her works in German, but later began to generate manuscripts in both English and German. Scholars have adopted her use of the term exophony to describe the way she writes in a non-native language. In her work, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, she utilizes elements of magical realism, such as with animal anthropomorphism, to challenge the blurred line between animals and humans (Yoko Tawada).

Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates the blurred line between animals and humans through language as well as by comparing human rights with animal rights. Moreover, the public humanities, according to Brooks and Scarry, are also depicted in the novel as well as in the public sphere. Furthermore, Tawada's text aligns with postcolonialism as it decenters the dominant, in this

case human, voices. Overall, this paper aims to show how ideas of Asian German studies, animal studies, public humanities, and postcolonialism manifest in Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* and in the *real* world.

In the introduction of her work *Animal*, Erica Fudge writes that “animals present a challenge to humans” because they are similar and different than us with the way they “form bonds, communicate with each other...manage monogamy” (Fudge 7). Fudge writes that the line between humans and animals is often blurred and confused with the way “we live with animals, we recognize them, we even name some of them, but at the same time we use them as if they were inanimate, as if they were objects” (Fudge 8). An example of this blurred line is most common in the idea of a pet. According to Fudge, a pet occupies the space between the animal and human because “they live with us, but are not us; they have names like us, but cannot call us by our names” (Fudge 28) which evokes a fear about boundaries because they are “neither fully animal, and therefore properly outside of the bed, nor fully human, and therefore properly inside...which produces fears about the status of both pet and owner” (Fudge 29).

This idea of the blurred line between animals and humans manifests in different ways throughout various cultural works such as seen with the idea of a pet, but also with forms of communication and rights. Furthermore, Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* depicts this idea central to animal studies, this blurred line and familiar boundary, through ambiguous language used to describe humans and animals as well as by blurring the line between human rights and animal rights.

The first section of *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* follows an unnamed polar bear who is writing her autobiography. Written from her perspective, this section follows her journey in Germany and Russia as she goes through the writing and publishing process. Without knowing the title of the novel, it would be quite ambiguous to know whether the protagonist was a bear or not. Her story begins by her earliest memories of life, learning to walk, “Every stumble moved me forward, but could you call that walking?” and drinking her mother's milk, “My tongue could still remember the taste of my mother's milk” (Tawada 3). Although many people cannot recall their first steps or drinking their mother's milk, these two distinct moments in development are ambiguous as they could apply to any mammal, in this case, humans, or bears. This ambiguous language continues as the main character describes herself: “I had a bear's thirst” and “my bearish weight” (Tawada 4). The way she is describing herself in comparison to a bear could represent that she is a bear or that she is commenting on her weight saying that she is heavy, like bears are, or that she has a large thirst like a bear does.

Using idioms and adjectives relating to bears makes it quite ambiguous whether the main character is a bear or human. There are many phrases that blur the line between human and animal such as “I am so hungry I could eat a horse,” “You lucky duck”, and “A little birdie told me”. These phrases show our relationship to animals and the way we use them when we communicate. Of course, these phrases are not meant to be taken literally yet we all, for the most part, understand their connotation. The narrator also reflects about her time being bullied in school where her peers would call her “snout face” (Tawada 7). Again, this language of comparison between animals and humans

continues to cause ambiguity whether the narrator is a bear or is a human or if she is just describing herself in comparison to animals.

The line is continually blurred as we learn that she travels to conferences where “the topic of today’s discussion was The Significance of Bicycles in the National Economy” (Tawada 5). Not only does she attend conferences, but she also comments on and critiques them, “It’s a circus. Every conference is a circus”. She also shares her political opinions and critiques of the West, “Rejecting automobiles and worshipping bicycles: this is a sentimental, decadent cult already familiar to us from Western countries” (Tawada 7). Not only are animals unable to attend conferences, but we also know that they do not share their political views. The narrator’s statement about Western countries shows that she must be well-read on the news and or travels to various countries. Regardless, she attends conferences and holds conversations about her own political views about other countries—something that a human would do.

As the beginning of her section progresses, we learn about “a man they called ‘Sea Lion’” who was the editor of a literary journal, who also ends up publishing her autobiography. It is unclear, again, whether this man is a sea lion or just looks like one, “Sea Lion looked more like a seal than a sea lion, but his nickname was Sea Lion.” Other describing his physical appearance, Sea Lion’s species remains unclear for the remainder of the novel.

Moreover, not only does language used to describe the narrator and her friends blur the line between human and animal, but it is also blurred with sex, desire, and love. After we learn about Sea Lion, we also learn that he “claimed to be hopelessly in love with me” and “After he’d visited me backstage who knows how many times, he confessed his desire to share my pillow.” Because it is still unclear whether the narrator and Sea Lion are just two humans falling for each other, or two animals, or one of each, this confused the line between humans and animals as humans would, usually and hopefully, not engage in bestiality. On this note, the narrator notes that Sea Lion “already knew that nature had made our bodies incompatible” (Tawada 17). Although the narrator makes it clear that they are incompatible, it remains unclear as to how. Is she a bear? A human? Is he a sea lion? Is he a human? Nonetheless, as Fudge mentions, this blurred line between humans and animals causes a fear of boundaries, as instilled in the readers when we learn that, potentially, a human may want to be involved, sexually and romantically, with an animal.

Not only is the line between human and animal blurred with the use of language and descriptions, but also with the idea of human and animal rights. While the protagonist is writing her autobiography, she comments that “at the time there was a protest movement in West Germany against the exploitation of circus animals. The movement’s spokespersons argued that taming wild animals for the circus violated human rights.” This protest movement bases its argument that circuses violate human rights, which shows the harm being done to animals. At the time there were Western journals written that critiqued Socialist abuse of animals, claiming that “wild animals would never take an interest in the stage if human beings did not compel them by force.” Going off Fudge’s idea of how humans use animals, these journals reflect how humans are the root cause of this abuse

and that we would never force a human onto a stage, and questions why humans would do the same to an animal. Moreover, because of this abuse of the use of animals, the narrator says that these Western journalists, “discovered my autobiography as something that might be used as proof of the Socialist abuse of animals” (Tawada 34).

Although her autobiography may be proof of this abuse in circuses, especially considering how she writes about her lived experiences as being forced into the circus and ultimately decides to leave to work a desk job that will allow her time to write her autobiography, I argue that these Western journalists embody Fudge’s idea of animal use just as the circus trainers do. Although I believe that many circuses do use and abuse animals, these journalists are doing the same to the narrator by seeing her autobiography only as a way to justify and support their own argument. Moreover, rather than reading and appreciating her work for what it is, they only see it for its use value against their opponent, thus using her and her work for their own motive, just as the trainers reduced animals down to their use value when forcing them to work for the circus.

As this movement continues, our narrator comments how she realizes how intertwined her fate and animal rights are with human rights, “I began to realize that my fate and the fate of human rights were inextricably entwined.” Despite her understanding of this blurring between rights, she also critiques the idea of human rights, “the concept of human rights had been invented by people who were thinking only of human beings.” Again, Fudge’s idea of how animals are used manifests as the narrator thinks about and critiques human rights with the way humans only care about themselves and their rights. Moreover, without the idea of animal rights there would be no human rights, there would just be rights, “if human beings want to possess human rights, they have to give animals animal rights” (Tawada 55).

Without creating a binary and drawing a stark line between human and animal, there would be no categories and differences between rights. She even begins to critique the way humans categorize animals for the sake of animal rights, “it averred that large mammals enjoyed more rights than smaller animals, like mice, for example, and attributed the discrepancy to the tastes of certain groups of people, who valued larger things more than smaller ones. She uses this theory about caring about larger animals more than smaller ones to attempt to justify and understand why the journalists want to use her autobiography and give her rights, “apart from this theory, I couldn’t think of any other reason why people kept chasing after me to give me human rights” (Tawada 54).

Overall, this line between humans and animals is blurred but becomes clearer only when humans need to use animals for their own benefit by making a difference between themselves. The narrator again blurs this line as she encounters translation rights issues as well as the movement against circuses and claims that “I am living proof of human rights violations, and I am not even human” (Tawada 59). Again, the line is blurred only when politicians and translators need to have evidence for their arguments but once they do not need to use an animal, the line becomes dark and clear that animal are not us.

The public humanities manifests throughout this first section to show the importance of

putting yourself in someone else's shoes and decentering the dominant voice. While talking to an old friend, Ivan, he gives our unnamed narrator advice to start an archive of her experiences, "You ought to keep a journal if you're interested in stockpiling your experiences" and that she must have the courage to do so: "You must have the courage to write, like the author of this diary!" (Tawada 13). After considering the advice of Ivan and deciding to write an autobiography the bear's thoughts are that her "desire to go on writing my autobiography was by that point already three times the size of my fear of having my existence destroyed" (Tawada 16). Despite her fears, she takes Ivan's advice and begins to write her autobiography, which later Sea Lion publishes.

While walking around West Germany she realizes that people want to read her autobiography and view her as a celebrity, "I've read your work! I find what you write so fascinating. I'm so looking forward to the next installment. What a stroke of luck, getting to chat with the author in person" and soon she realized "a hedge of people had sprouted all around me" (Tawada 23). After the first installment of her work is published, Sea Lion gives her advice that she cannot let her story go unfinished, "What a shame it would be if a life story as gripping as yours remained incomplete" (Tawada 26-27). Sea Lion's advice aligns with Scarry's idea where when we read, we are "entering imaginately into the lives of other people, including those without social power: women, servants, and children" (Scarry 43). In this case, by people reading the bear's autobiography, they are entering into her life, or stepping into her shoes, to learn from and about her previously repressed story as a female bear being abused while working in the circus.

As she continues talking to Sea Lion, she argues that the title of her work, "Thunderous Applause for My Tears," is unfair and was written on a whim because she is "incapable of tears." Sea Lion argues back with her and says, "You hear the word 'tears,' and right away you assume it's *your* tears that are meant. But the world doesn't revolve around you. It's not you who should be shedding tears, it's the reader" (Tawada 27). According to Brooks, by reading fiction we gain empathy which allows us to put ourselves into the shoes of others and understand their lived experiences and unique perspective. By Sea Lion telling the bear that she automatically assumes everything revolves around her when it does not, and that she needs to consider her audience. Furthermore, not only do the readers gain the empathy and perspective from an underrepresented bear, but the author also gains empathy and learns to consider the perspective and feelings of her audience.

Although I agree that it is important to read literature to put yourself in someone else's shoes and learn from their perspective and experiences, Sea Lion demonstrates how, for authors, this can lead to censorship in their own work, especially something as personal as an autobiography. While writing her autobiography, she includes political thoughts and opinions relating to her situation, especially as she lives in West Berlin. The Sea Lion warns her about this, "It would be better if you skipped the political criticism—your philosophy is boring. What your readers want to know is how you mastered the high art of stagecraft without losing your wilderness, and what that felt like. Your experiences are important, not your thoughts" (Tawada 31). Moreover, I believe this harmful censorship can begin to hinder the ability to experience someone's authentic experience because if they are forced

by their audiences' wants and their publishers demand to change their narrative and thoughts, in addition to the issues around translation, "Sea Lion had sold Eisberg the translation rights without informing me", (Tawada 33) this deprives the audience of an authentic, holistic perspective of the author. Although many writers may let what their audience wants to read influence and censor their writing, this did not stop the bear from writing her authentic life experiences and views, "I would simply go on writing, even if Sea Lion didn't want to print what I had written. Perhaps I would even find a better publisher" (Tawada 35). Now she does not fear whether people will buy her autobiography, rather she is more concerned with publishing her unique and authentic story, rather than being consumed by greed like Sea Lion is.

As we have seen, one way to reason with why she is writing and publishing her autobiography is because, like Brooks and Scarry write, is to give a voice to an underrepresented minority and by doing so, her readers will be able to put themselves into her shoes and, hopefully, begin to understand her perspective and experiences. In other words, audiences who read literature or absorb cultural works that represent the voices of previously repressed communities learn a sense of empathy, which allows them the ability to see through this new lens. Seeing through this new lens allows for people to use these skills that they learned from reading someone else's story when they are in the *real* world. Moreover, they will be able to be empathetic towards people that are different from themselves and be able to listen and understand that their lived experiences and diverse perspectives are valuable, just like their own.

A second way that this choice to write and publish could be justified is, as the unnamed polar bear touches on, the greed of Sea Lion. As she notes, he appears to be more concerned with what her readers will purchase and digest, rather than her *actual* perspective, thoughts, and criticisms. She hints at this being solely about Sea Lion's greed with the way he "encourages" her to get back to work, "Instead of crying, you should be meeting your deadline" and "Are you done reciting your lines? Then go home! I've got work to do!" (Tawada 27). Not only does he encourage her to constantly focus on work and attempts to censor her thoughts and critiques, but he also sells the translation rights to her work, without telling or asking her, and does not give her any of the profit. Rather, he is found hiding foreign currency and being secretive with what he does with the money he earns from her work. When she tries to confront him and settle this matter, he again tells her to get back to working, "If you have enough time to manage your translation rights, you ought to be able to write more installments!" (Tawada 33).

In addition to these two, completely plausible reasons, we can turn to ideas of postcolonialism and race studies to think of another. Postcolonialism focuses on oppressed people and their perspective by allowing silenced subaltern voices a chance to speak. By allowing subaltern and repressed voices a chance to speak this allows a variety of voices and cultures a chance to share their perspective and traditions, rather than only the dominant voice having their perspectives being showcased and valued. Postcolonialism allows a space where subaltern people are allowed to speak for themselves and in their own voices, rather than being spoken for or silenced.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a postcolonialism theorist, wrote an influential article "Can the

Subaltern Speak?" where she raised questions for postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and race, minority, or *subaltern* studies. Her work references examples of subalterns such as women, Indians (South Asian Indians), and Indian women (Parker 368). Moreover, her work also references the Hindu practice of widow burning, "sati." In short, this practice is where some Hindus consider a widow to be a good wife if she wants to be burned. The British empire, as Parker says, saw themselves not only as conquerors but also as good liberal conquerors. Since they considered themselves good liberal conquerors, they allowed Indians to follow their own practices. When the British empire encountered the practice of the "sati" they were conflicted because they did not want to interfere with the Indian practices, but they also felt like widow burning was horrific and must be stopped. Their solution was that widows could be burned only if they agreed. Going off the idea of whether the subaltern, or repressed people, can speak, this article regarding the sati raises questions when a widow does say she wants to be burned. For example,

Who is speaking? Is she choosing for herself, or is that impossible, because she has been interpellated into a misogynist set of expectations for feminine behavior? Is she speaking for herself, or has she been so absorbed into patriarchal culture that she speaks for the patriarchy, or even if she believes that she speaks for herself? Can we even tell whether it is one or other, and, if so, how can we tell? Can people who oppose or support sati speak for the sati better than she speaks for herself? (Parker 369).

Overall, postcolonialism allows a space where repressed and oppressed voices, perspectives, and cultures have a space to speak and represent themselves. Despite this, as Spivak's article shows, there are many contradictions and questions raised about whether a subaltern, or repressed perspective, can speak for themselves or if it will always be the system that interpellated them and continues to speak for them.

The first section of *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates this idea of the subaltern gaining their voice and perspective and sharing it with the world. We learn that in the beginning of this section that the unnamed polar bear was originally a circus performer but decided that she did not enjoy this oppressive lifestyle and decided to pursue a career that would allow her free time to pursue her dream—writing and publishing her autobiography. From the beginning she is portrayed and viewed as subaltern because of her oppressive and repressive past in the circus. Moreover, we even learn how, because of her former upbringing with the circus, she forgot her childhood before she started working and found that to be oppressive, "I was remembering my childhood—even though honestly I'd forgotten all about it for years—and now I find it oppressive" (Tawada 13).

Despite writing her autobiography and sharing her perspective, she continues to be viewed as subaltern as we learn how Sea Lion continues to attempt to repress and censor her thoughts and perspectives. The way the Sea Lion continues to attempt to suppress her authentic perspective relates to the questions raised in Spivak's journal. Even if she is writing her own autobiography and sharing her perspective and life, is she really speaking for herself? Is society speaking for her? How can we tell whether it is her, society, or Sea Lion speaking for her?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, the first section of the novel shows how important

it is to her to have the autonomy over what she writes, how it is published, and how it is translated. As she continues to advocate for herself and her authentic, unique perspective she becomes more confident when handling Sea Lion's remarks and continues to publish without him. Moreover, as she shares her voice, she gains a fan base who view her as a celebrity and want her to continue writing and publishing her story. Overall, this shows how important and life-changing it is when all perspectives are shared and valued. Not only it is important for these voices to be shared with the world to serve as a way for the dominant voice to be silenced and educated, but it is equally important for the repressed person and their self-worth. Moreover, they are able to finally be viewed as just as valuable and important as others and are, hopefully, able to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for. Decentering the dominant voice manifests in Tawada's work as the polar bear writes her work and realizes the importance of doing so and how much of an impact she is making not only on her audience, but for herself.

In conclusion, Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* shows the importance of intersectionality and giving a voice to those previously repressed. The idea of blurred lines between humans and animals, in addition to the other ideas of animal studies throughout the work, shows how important intersectionality is. If this work was not written from the perspective of a polar bear, this could raise questions of how the overall message would be perceived and interpreted and if the meaning would be changed. For example, if by the end of the novel we learned that this was written by a person of color, questions could then be raised about the meaning of this and the reason. Would this be saying that the experiences of animals and of people of color are similar? Are they silenced, used, and valued in similar ways?

By situating the readers in the perspective of a polar bear, we can learn from the perspective of an animal, or a subaltern perspective we previously may not have learned from or considered. The blurred line between humans and animals allows the readers to understand an important perspective on the argument of human and animal rights. Moreover, reading this from the perspective of an animal brings light to the importance and other perspective of how humans only use and consider animals when it benefits them, whereas if this were written from a different perspective, this would allow the readers to understand a different perspective that is also applicable to life beyond the reading the novel.

Tawada's work also shows the importance of giving a voice to previously repressed people as we have seen with the polar bear and how much of an impact this makes on her readers and herself. As we saw with Brooks and Scarry, by allowing minorities to share their perspectives and stories and by reading their work, we are able to gain empathy by being able to read through and understand a perspective different than our own. As the polar bear reads literature from other minority perspectives, such as Kafka's "A Report to an Academy," again relating to animal studies, she notes the impact this work had on her, "If I'd read the ape's report earlier, I'd have written my autobiography in a completely different way" (Tawada 51). Not only through her own writing and publishing journey do we see this importance and possibility of gaining an understanding through a different perspective, but also with her own journey of reading from the perspective of a repressed

minority. Because she read Kafka's work, she realized that if she read it sooner that it would have changed the way she wrote her own autobiography because of the impact it had on her and the way it caused her to have an understanding through a different perspective and way of life.

Although it is important to decenter the dominant voice and allow others the chance to share their lifestyle, perspectives, and culture it is also important to note that their literature and works are not valuable because they are a minority. As the polar bear's friend, Friedrich, reminds her, "What I mean is that this literature is valuable as literature, not because it was written from a minority perspective" (Tawada 50). Although it is important to allow minorities a voice and to share their perspective, it is just as important to not reduce their work down to their identity as a minority individual. Moreover, it is important to remember that they are more than the oppression and silenced they have endured and have more to share than just those aspects of their identity and perspective. Remembering this shows that being a member of a marginalized community, although sometimes traumatic, is something to be proud of. There are many beautiful aspects of minority communities, languages, and experiences that are worth sharing not because they are negative and can teach dominant voices a lesson, but because they are special and meaningful on their own, not just what they can do for others.

This idea of decentering the dominant voice while also not reducing minorities down to this one part of their identity is important and relevant today beyond fiction. As postcolonialism ideas emerge and are brought to the surface today, it is important to give voices to minorities while also making sure that the dominant voices are not over-stepping and attempting to speak for them. These ideas were especially prevalent during the events of George Floyd's murder in the United States and with the emerging Black Lives Matter movement where many white people were listening to black people's perspectives and stories, while using their privilege to help their perspectives be heard, while trying to not overshadow the importance of letting them speak for themselves and their own stories and lived experiences.

Overall, this first section intersects with ideas from Asian German studies, animal studies, public humanities, and postcolonialism. Through all of these intersections of various theories and ideas, we are reminded the importance of empathy. By listening to one another and each other's lived experiences and perspectives on life and other experiences, we can begin to understand our various, diverse walks of life, culture, and traditions. By doing so, the dominant, white voice can also allow underrepresented, repressed, minority voices the chance to be equally seen, heard, and understood. As a final intersection with the public humanities, the polar bear notes how important reading from another perspective was for her,

While I was copying out these passages from the book, I entered the story being told as its protagonist. I wanted to adopt what was being told as my own life story and live it myself down to the last punctuation mark. I read every sentence aloud and copied it down, but at some point, I stopped looking at the pages—a voice from inside the book was whispering the story to me. I listened and wrote (Tawada 71).

Again, by reading from the lens of a minority protagonist, the polar bear listened to the voice who was telling their story, and by listening to this voice, she realized how she wanted to continue listening and learning from this perspective to understand it. Just as she wanted to listen and understand a new perspective, her readers wanted to do the same with her work. Telling her how much her work meant to them and how they cannot wait for the next installment of her autobiography shows her own impact on her readers and that through her work, they are able to understand a new perspective on life. Moreover, just as Fudge shows us in *Animal*, by reading through the perspective of animals and attempting to consider our relationship to them, how we use and abuse them, and the way the line between humans and animals is blurred, we can understand and consider their own experiences and perspectives when making choices including them.

The intersections in Tawada's work remind us that we are all connected and intersecting each day, humans, and animals alike. By showing each other empathy by giving a voice to those who were silenced, we are then able to ensure everyone has a seat at the table and feels included, seen, and heard. Including various identities without making anyone feel like their minority identity, experiences, or perspectives are the only thing that makes them valuable and important enough to be heard ensures that they are not being heard for the wrong reasons or silenced for sharing the authentic aspects of themselves.

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