

國立臺灣大學文學院外國語文學系

碩士論文

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures


College of Liberal Arts

National Taiwan University

Master Thesis

記憶拘禁營：日裔加拿大人之歷史、文學、空間再現

Remembering Internment:
Historical, Literary, and Spatial Memories of
Japanese Canadians



王芮思

Ruey-szu Wang

指導教授：柏逸嘉 博士

Advisor: Guy Beauregard, Ph.D.

中華民國 101 年 1 月

January, 2012

國立臺灣大學碩士學位論文
口試委員會審定書

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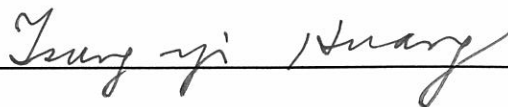
本論文係王芮思君 (R97122012) 在國立臺灣大學外國
語文學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 100 年 12 月 14 日承
下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明

口試委員：



(指導教授)





Acknowledgements

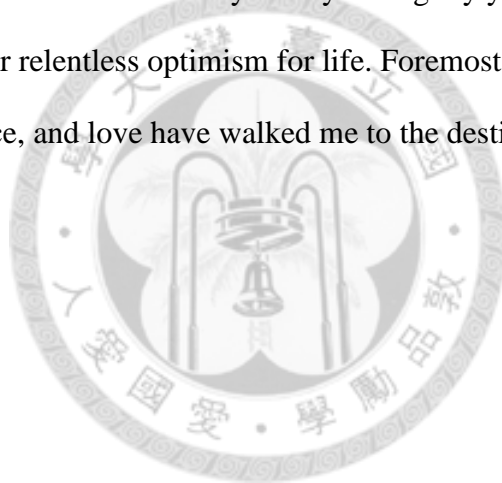
In September 2005, I first set foot on the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Back then I did not realize what a yearlong wade through learning and living in a foreign country would bring me to as a literature student in the years that followed. This MA thesis is not produced in isolation, but with the guidance, encouragement, and companionship of many through the years. And I want to thank them accordingly.

First and foremost, I want to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Guy Beauregard. My outlook on Japanese Canadian internment is greatly indebted to his critical contributions and intellectual sophistication on the topic. In the process of my research, he not only guided me through a thesis proposal, a qualifying examination, thesis revisions, a research trip to Vancouver, an academic conference to Seoul, and an oral examination, but he has also sustained me with his circumspection, a lively spirit, and tireless editing of my manuscripts. I am also thankful to my two examiners, Dr. Hsiu-chuan Lee and Dr. Tsung-yi Huang, whom I had the fortune to meet in my undergraduate years: Dr. Lee for introducing me to Asian American Studies and engaging my thesis project with great intellectual rigor and Dr. Huang for nurturing my creativity and analytic thinking in Cultural Studies and advising how I have carried, could confront, and should continue to push forward my thesis project.

This thesis project has received support from the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), without whose Graduate Student Scholarship my research trip to Vancouver in May 2011 would not have been possible. I also wish to thank the staff of the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society, Ann-Marie Metten and Todd Wong, and the staff of the Land Conservancy of British Columbia, Bill Turner, Tamsin Baker, and Briony Penn, for assisting my research of the Historic Joy Kogawa House. In Vancouver, I had the tremendous honor of meeting two key scholars whose studies of

Japanese Canadian internment have figured large in my thesis: Dr. Roy Miki and Dr. Kirsten McAllister. I want to thank them for generously sharing with me their observations on questions concerning Japanese Canadian history. In addition, my gratitude goes to Dr. Glenn Deer for hosting my stay in UBC and providing thoughtful advice on how to fine-tune my research.

Finally, I want to express my utmost appreciation and to dedicate this thesis to my parents. Luke Wang, my father, gave me discipline, strength, and unconditional support while Undine Chang, my mother, inspired my affection for literary study and helped me through many difficult times in life. Thanks also to my best friends, Kate Hsu and Michelle Wei, who have been my family during my years in Taipei and have motivated me with their relentless optimism for life. Foremost thanks to William Sie, whose stability, patience, and love have walked me to the destination of my MA study.



Abstract

The 1988 Japanese Canadian redress settlement marked a moment when collective memories of the expulsion, detention, dispossession, deportation, and dispersal of Japanese Canadians in Canada during and after World War II—in short, what I would call memories of Japanese Canadian internment—became recognized by and integrated into an official history of Canada. Despite such an apparently coherent account of a lost-and-found Japanese Canadian memory in Canadian national history, Roy Miki, a key Japanese Canadian scholar and activist, cautions that Japanese Canadian redress is not to be understood as simply a logical resolution of a conscientiously regretful government, and that it instead should be viewed as “an unusual achievement by a small group of citizens who, because of a nation’s violation of their citizenship rights, launched a movement to negotiate an acceptable settlement with the federal government.” Here, Miki’s reminder highlights the 1988 redress settlement as an intricately engineered official sanctioning of memories of Japanese Canadian internment, which takes as its price and prerogative the re/coding and the de/limiting of those memories.

This thesis investigates memories of Japanese Canadian internment mediated through specific historical, literary, and spatial representations produced before, during, and after redress. In doing so, it not only analyzes *what* is remembered about internment, but also asks *how* these memories are constructed through disparate frames of representation. Chapter Two of this thesis focuses on the historiography of internment with specific attention paid to Ken Adachi’s *The Enemy That Never Was* (1976) and Ann Sunahara’s *The Politics of Racism* (1981). I argue that these texts have foregrounded Japanese Canadians’ identity shift from race in itself to class for itself during the redress movement. Chapter Three turns to literary representations of internment in Joy Kogawa’s novel *Obasan* (1981) and its critical reception. While

Kogawa's text has generated diverse, and sometimes conflicting, theorizations of Japanese Canadian textual politics in the arena of Asian Canadian Studies, I argue that these theorizations have yet to adequately account for the miscellaneous ways internment is being remembered by Japanese Canadians today. Chapter Four draws attention to spatial representations of internment in a commemorative site, Historic Joy Kogawa House (established in Vancouver in 2006). While the monumentalization of Joy Kogawa's childhood house was deemed ethical by some and offensive by others, I argue that a simple ethical dichotomy would not sufficiently valorize both cultural activists' and dissident Japanese Canadians' vexed investments in the Kogawa House memoryscape. Through an analysis of these historical, literary, and spatial memories, this thesis underlines how representations of Japanese Canadian internment have culminated in power as well as crisis and have continued to be in process well past 1988.

Keywords: Japanese Canadian internment, Japanese Canadian redress settlement, historical memory, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, Asian Canadian Studies, Historic Joy Kogawa House, politics of representation

摘要

西元 1988 年日加補償協議是日裔加拿大人的拘禁營記憶—亦即其對於日裔加拿大人在二戰期間及其後所經歷的強制驅逐、集中拘禁、財產剝奪、遣送出境，以及境內驅散的共同記憶—獲得加拿大官方歷史承認及容納的重要里程碑。然而，日裔加籍學者及運動人士洛伊米基認為，若僅將日加補償協議理解為加拿大政府誠懇且具悔意的舉動，將過於簡化日裔加拿大人爭取國家補償的複雜過程。他認為日加補償協議應該被更精確的理解為：「一小部份公民的非凡成就，這些公民，因國家對於他們公民權的侵犯而發起求償運動，旨在透過協商和聯邦政府取得雙方均可接受的補償協議」。在此，米基提醒我們，日加補償協議其實是加拿大政府對於日裔加拿大人的拘禁營記憶考慮縝密且有策劃性的承認；值得注意的是，加拿大政府在認錯的同時，也得到(重新)定義拘禁營記憶的權力。

本篇論文探究在日加補償協議達成前、中、後，透過歷史、文學、空間再現所產生的日加拘禁營記憶，主旨不只在於分析拘禁營記憶的內容，更在於理解此記憶如何透過迥異的再現方式被建構。本文第二章探討拘禁營的歷史，尤其著眼於肯安達所著的《不曾是敵人》(1976) 以及安砂原所著的《種族主義的政治》(1981)。我主張這兩個文本凸顯出日裔加拿大人在爭取補償運動中，從強調日裔加拿大種族認同轉而訴求類似階級認同的過程。本文第三章探討拘禁營的文學再現，特別以小川樂的小說《歐巴桑》和其文學評論為討論重點。雖然環繞著《歐巴桑》已經發展出多樣且常互相抵觸的文本政治，我主張這些文本政治仍不足以涵蓋當今日裔加拿大人記憶拘禁營紛雜多元的形式。本文第四章探討拘禁營的空間再現，以西元 2006 年在溫哥華設置的歷史遺跡「小川樂屋」為主要研究對象。各界對於將小川樂的童年住所列為史跡的反應不一，有人認為符合道德邏輯，但亦有人受到冒犯。我認為簡單的道德二分法無法幫助我們釐清文化運動者和日裔加籍異議人士各自對於「小川樂屋」記憶地景的複雜情感投入。透過對於歷史、文學、空間記憶的分析，本篇論文強調日加拘禁營的再現在 1988 年之後持續進行，並成為權力運作和危機發生的場域。

關鍵字：日加拘禁營、日加補償協議、歷史記憶、小川樂的《歐巴桑》、亞加文化研究、小川樂屋、再現政治



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Chapter One | Introduction

Remembering Internment

On 22 September 1988, an official announcement was made by Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in the House of Commons noting that “a ‘redress agreement’ had been reached with the NAJC [the National Association of Japanese Canadians], the representative body for those ‘Canadians of Japanese ancestry’ whose citizenship rights had been abrogated between 1942 and 1949 and who, as a consequence, had endured mass uprooting, dispossession, dispersal and deportation” (Miki, *Redress* 1-2).¹ The redress settlement marked a moment when collective memories of the wartime expulsion, detention, dispossession, and the after-war deportation and dispersal of Japanese Canadians in Canada—in short, what I would call memories of Japanese Canadian internment²—underwent historical transformation and revision. According to Mulroney, the redress settlement showed the Canadian federal government’s effort to correct “the treatment inflicted on Japanese Canadians during the War [which was] both morally and legally unjustified, [and which] went against the very nature of our country, of Canada” (144). And in the view of Roy Miki, a key Japanese Canadian scholar and

¹ The 1988 redress settlement provided compensation of CAN\$21,000 for each individual directly wronged; a community fund to rebuild the infrastructure of the destroyed community; pardons for those wrongfully convicted of disobeying orders under the War Measures Act; Canadian citizenship for those wrongfully deported to Japan and their descendants; and CAN\$24 million in funding for a Canadian Race Relations Foundation. By 1993, 17,948 survivors had received individual compensation and a CAN\$12 million community fund had been used to build community centres in most major centres between Montreal and Victoria and to fund a variety of cultural and educational and civil rights projects, programs and conferences (Miki and Kobayashi 138-39).

² In *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (2009), Greg Robinson opts for the term “confinement” over “internment” to denote the experience of “those of Japanese ancestry who were summarily uprooted, moved, and held by the U.S. government during World War II, [the vast majority of whom] were American citizens” because “‘Internment’ properly refers to the detention of enemy nationals by a government during wartime” (vii). In my thesis, however, I keep “internment” as an inclusive term for the injustice experienced by Japanese Canadians to underline the fact that, as noted by Robinson, “the legal status of aliens and citizens was more *fluid* [in Canada],” and it was based on this fluidity that the Canadian government was able to justify its treatment of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II (vii; emphasis added). For a more detailed discussion of the terminology used in describing Japanese confinement in North America, see Robinson (vii-viii).

activist, memories of Japanese Canadian internment, in the wake of redress, became recognized by and integrated into an official history of Canada (Beauregard, “After Redress” 73). Despite such an apparently coherent account of a lost-and-found Japanese Canadian memory in Canadian national history, Miki cautions that Japanese Canadian redress is not to be understood as simply a logical resolution of a conscientiously regretful government, and that it instead should be viewed as “an unusual achievement by a small group of citizens who, because of a nation’s violation of their citizenship rights, launched a movement to negotiate an acceptable settlement with the federal government” (*Redress* 326). Here, Miki’s reminder highlights the 1988 redress settlement as an intricately engineered official sanctioning of memories of Japanese Canadian internment, which takes as its price and prerogative the re/coding and the de/limiting of those memories.

This thesis explores how collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment have undergone transformation and revision before and after the redress settlement, against the backdrop of mutating yet persistent tensions between the Canadian federal government and an ethnicized group called Japanese Canadians. Through a careful examination of various historiographical accounts of Japanese Canadian internment and its aftermath; critical discussions of Joy Kogawa’s celebrated novel *Obasan* (1981) and its mediations and modifications of the collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment; and Historic Joy Kogawa House, a commemorative site of Japanese Canadian internment established in Vancouver after the 1988 redress settlement, this thesis aims to examine memories of Japanese Canadian internment constructed through specific historical, literary, and spatial representations. How is Japanese Canadian internment being remembered? To “re-member,” in the sense of putting together or providing a new member, means to look ahead in time for something new to be

integrated into the old parts. To “re-member internment” thus recognizes that collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment in fact register the intervention of *something else*, which, in the words of Roger Simon in “Collective Memory,” “[instantiates] the transformation of relations so as to forge new public identities and their associated political frameworks, attitudes, and behaviors” (2). This intervention points toward a space where new possibilities for an academic study of collective memory can be considered. In this sense, to “remember internment” is thus to provide a familiar question—what does it mean to remember Japanese Canadian internment today?—with new, and potentially different, answers.

Enacting an Asian Canadian Project

The year 1993 marked a moment when Asian American Studies, wittingly or not, spotted its Canadian residents. During the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies held in Cornell University in 1993, Asian Canadian Studies scholars including Roy Miki and Scott McFarlane presented papers that aimed “to investigate the critical reception of Kogawa’s *Obasan* and to challenge the various modalities of [. . .] the pervasive power of ‘English-Canadian’ centrality” (Beauregard, “Asian Canadian Questions” xxv). Their accentuation of a specific locus, Canada, as one target of Asian American Studies inquiry echoed Mona Oikawa’s call at the same conference to “create spaces that support our *different sites of home*, and where all of us can be interacting subjects in our resistant and relational histories” (qtd. in Beauregard, “Asian Canadian Questions” xxvi; emphasis added). While the subsequent publication of *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* (1995) was, in Guy Beauregard’s estimation, “either unable or unwilling to recognize the full implications of these [Asian Canadian Studies scholars’] interventions,” an Asian Canadian agenda was resumed in

2007 in a special issue of *Amerasia* entitled *Pacific Canada: Beyond the 49th Parallel* (“Asian Canadian Questions” xxvi). In an introductory article entitled “Asian American Studies, Asian Canadian Questions,” Beaugregard affirms the issue’s commitment to “sites of Asian Canadian community organizing, activism, and commemoration” (xxvii-xxviii). Building on this collective work, my thesis will, in turn, enquire into memories of Japanese Canadian internment as one key site to think through the discursive conditions of Asian Canadian Studies and the challenges and possibilities these conditions incur.

In 2008, a special issue of *Canadian Literature* entitled *Asian Canadian Studies* extended *Amerasia*’s project by attempting to discursively locate Asian Canadian Studies in Canada’s specific political, historical, and cultural climate. A brief review of two critical contributions in this issue will give a sense of the challenges and possibilities of enacting an Asian Canadian project. In one of the essays collected in this issue, “Enacting the Asian Canadian,” Christopher Lee notes that the past impetus of Asian Canadian Studies was predicated scrupulously upon the affirmation of presence and voice, and the necessary negation of absence and silence. According to Lee, such an impetus can be traced back to the publication of *Inalienable Rice: A Chinese and Japanese Canadian Anthology* (1979), arguably the first anthology of Asian Canadian literature. Drawing on Lien Chao’s celebration of *Inalienable Rice* as an example,³ Lee notes the tendency among Asian Canadian Studies scholars to valorize a “commitment to speech and writing [which] considers the emergence of a literary corpus by Asian Canadian writers on Asian Canadian topics to be a sign of ‘social advancement and cultural development’” (“Enacting” 33-34). Notwithstanding the possibility that this

³ Chao’s essay “Anthologizing the Collective: The Epic Struggles to Establish Chinese Canadian Literature in English” first appeared in *Essays on Canadian Writing* (1995); a modified version was included in her ground breaking critical study *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (1997).

tendency has fostered Asian Canadian cultural representations, this tendency has also uncritically accepted “the conditions under which Asian Canadian subjects have always been made *present*” (36; emphasis added).⁴ Lee points out that the problem of Asian Canadian Studies in fact “lies not so much in whether such subjects are indeed present as in whether their presence can be mobilized into critical interventions against exploitation and injustice” (36). With this forceful critical intervention, Lee refocuses Asian Canadian Studies “from making texts available in order to establish the existence of Asian Canadian literature as such to sustaining a critical interrogation of the conditions of that presence” (36).

Echoing the work of Christopher Lee, Guy Beauregard in the same issue invests this moment of refocusing with a sense of urgency. In “Asian Canadian Studies: Unfinished Projects,” Beauregard specifies what the current critical moment should mean to scholars undertaking “Asian Canadian studies projects.”⁵ On the one hand, Beauregard argues that this moment should not be deemed as “one in which Asian Canadian cultural criticism has finally *caught up*” because such understanding underestimates the past achievement of “Asian Canadian studies projects,” upon whose “challenges and complexities” scholars in the current moment have extended their work (11; emphasis original). On the other hand, this moment should not be deemed as “a point of *arrival*” (11; emphasis original) either because such an understanding

⁴ The conditions to which Lee is referring here are the ones enabled by Canadian multiculturalism. According to Smaro Kamboureli, “The Multiculturalism Act [in Canada; enacted in 1988] (also known as Bill C-93) recognizes the cultural diversity that constitutes Canada, but it does so by practicing a sedative politics, a politics that attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them”; subsequently, “the discussions of multiculturalism in Canada often reveal an obsession with establishing the *presence* of racially marked (‘visible minority’) bodies” (82; qtd. in Lee 34; emphasis added).

⁵ In “Asian Canadian Studies: Unfinished Projects,” Beauregard distinguishes between “scholarship on Asian Canadian topics,” which “may be characterized as ‘academic business as usual—but this time it’s about Asian Canadians’” (7), and “Asian Canadian studies projects,” which in Beauregard’s account “are not content with simply considering Asian Canadians as objects of knowledge—but instead attempt, in distinct and sometimes conflicting ways, to understand and possibly transform various discipline based sites of knowledge production” (8).

overestimates the current institutional and discursive groundings of “Asian Canadian studies projects,” which in Beauregard’s account “have not moved to a critically generative phase by setting up and nestling into a single, stable institutional location” (12). Foregrounding the “unsettled terrain” upon which “Asian Canadian studies projects have been developed and continue to operate” (12), Beauregard observes that “we may productively view the present moment as an opportunity to critically address and transform social and institutional conditions that are not of our choosing” (13). Explicit in both Lee’s and Beauregard’s critical contributions is the need to push forward a cultural discourse geared toward social mobilization while not taking any given discursive dichotomies and institutional settings for granted. Undertaking this thesis project at such a moment thus means moving beyond asking “What does it mean to remember Japanese Canadian internment today?” to examining the discursive context out of which this question emerges, at the same time as recognizing the question’s potential to “inaugurate social movements and determine the path of future actions, even if such moments are ephemeral in and of themselves” (Lee, “Enacting” 40).

Narrating a History

In the landscape of Asian Canadian Studies, Japanese Canadian experiences have generated critical and aesthetic attention to, among other topics, the history of internment in the 1940s. Narrated below is a typical account of the “official” history of internment. I recount it here with the intent to set an anchor point for my meta-discursive analysis of collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment in the following chapters as I set out to interrupt and unsettle it. After Japan’s assault on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the Canadian government undertook, in W. Peter Ward’s account, to make Japanese Canadians “scapegoats of Japan’s militarism” (143). As a

result, twenty-two thousand Japanese Canadians, in Mona Oikawa's account (2002), "were forced to leave their homes on the Canadian West Coast and were imprisoned, dispossessed, detained, pressed into low-waged labour, and displaced" ("Cartographies of Violence" 73). Among these forms of state-directed violence, I want to call attention to the dispossession of Japanese Canadian properties for it was a policy derived specifically out of an attempt to discourage the return of uprooted Japanese Canadians back to their homes in British Columbia after the war. At that time, the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property was the office established by the Canadian federal government under the War Measures Act to oversee the confiscated property of the uprooted Japanese Canadians. Yet instead of keeping the properties intact in anticipation of Japanese Canadians' later return, the Custodian auctioned off the internees' lands, houses, and belongings without their consent, as "the government's policy of making the dispossessed pay for their own [internment]" (Miki, *Redress* 99).

While World War II ended in 1945, "The movements of all Japanese Canadians were controlled, monitored and policed until well after the war ended—in fact until April 1, 1949" (Miki, *Redress* 3). And during 1945 to 1949, in spite of the shutting-down of the Japanese Canadian internment camps, restrictions on the movement of Japanese Canadians persisted in the forms of dispersal "east of the Rockies" or deportation back to Japan. The time spent in physical incarceration and under racist hostility left Japanese Canadians vulnerable to "the unspoken constraints in the post-war years, the 1950s and 1960s, the social and familial pressures to assimilate, to remain invisible, to be model citizens" (Miki, *Broken Entries* 31). In Kirsten McAllister's recapitulation of this history, "[post-war] Japanese Canadians were caught in a 'stillness' that novelist Joy Kogawa describes as a 'silence that cannot speak [. . .] a silence that will not speak'" ("Captivating Debris" 99). While this narrative presents

what has come to be known as the “official” history of Japanese Canadian internment, McAllister cautions against the fixity it exerts:

[Repeating an official history] has the power to impose stasis, halting the impulse to extend outwards towards the fleeting, tumbling motion of the ongoing world and thus to incorporate new experiences. Within its grasp, all stories are reduced to the same story. It is as if there is no other experience of what happened or different way to explain the impossibilities of what has past. (“Captivating Debris” 99-100)

In response to McAllister’s intervention, this thesis will enact a critical study of memories of Japanese Canadian internment in a way that takes into account both the significance and limitations of Japanese Canadians’ established official history.

Remembering after Redress

This thesis attempts to discuss collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment through various representations in history, literature, and space. Marking the 1988 redress settlement as a watershed moment, I suggest that the pre-redress period and the post-redress period of Japanese Canadian history comprise two windows through which an academic survey of these representations can be viewed. By “window,” however, I do not mean that these two periods are in any way exclusive or closed. On the contrary, with these two “windows,” I aim to contrast the brevity of the moment of redress with its extensive influence, both back to the past and into the future, on representations of internment. Roy Miki makes this clear in *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (2004) where he revisits the moment of the redress settlement:

The “official acknowledgement” lasted only minutes, and its *brevity* was, for

me, quite disproportionate to its significance for Japanese Canadians. Except for the short passage from *Obasan*, in this hallowed chamber of the House of Commons there was the manifest absence of a “Japanese Canadian” voice. (7-8; emphasis added)

In Miki’s perceptive account, the Japanese Canadian redress settlement articulates a contemporary form of politics of remembrance whereby the state undercuts the political agency of ethnic minority subjects by paradoxically granting them a form of historical justice. The brevity of the moment of redress underscores how easily a government can impose new constraints on minorities’ political struggles at the expense of ridding old constraints in the name of justice. To investigate collective memories of Japanese Canadian internment today is thus to take into account the new constraints imposed upon representations of internment following redress.

Representations centering on Japanese Canadian internment following redress are informed by a double consciousness. On the one hand, there is the consciousness of the Japanese Canadian community that they are “no longer lacking redress but were now ‘redressed’” (Miki, *Redress* 8). To these redressed Japanese Canadians, two things are lost. First, they lost the thrust that had been conjoining them as a group and pushing them into the future, the thrust to justify themselves against a past wrong. Roy Miki articulates this loss in an interview conducted by Guy Beauregard about what happened “After Redress”:

[The 1988 redress settlement was] both a loss and a gain. When you’re dealing with this notion of a wounded identity, as long as you’re in the state of the wound, you’re always moving toward a future where you imagine the pain to be resolved. The paradox is that, if you ever get to that future, you can no longer occupy that condition of consciousness.

(qtd. in Beauregard, “After Redress” 73)

The second thing Japanese Canadians lost is their distance from, if not their resistance to, a unifying and engulfing Canadian national history. Miki goes on to observe how an official history would represent Japanese Canadians upon the moment they were redressed:

[R]edress, from that moment [of the 1988 redress settlement], is born as a discourse. We [i.e. Japanese Canadians] may no longer have control over where that discourse is going to go or how we are going to be framed in it.

And we will no longer be able to complain that we are unredressed. [. . .]

[Once] we—that is, the Japanese Canadians who were interned—gave up our history, we were placed at the heart of the nation, but then we also

disappeared in our unredressed state. (qtd. in Beauregard, “After Redress” 74)

To Japanese Canadians then, a resolution of their memories might have come at the expense of these memories’ management by, and possible incorporation into, Canadian national history.

On the other hand, there is the consciousness of many Asian Canadian Studies scholars and cultural activists that they should continue to revise and valorize cultural representations of Japanese Canadian internment as an effort to counteract the hegemonic ideologies of forgetting. In 2002, Mona Oikawa, whose research forcefully examines the relationship of Japanese Canadians to colonialism in Canada, condemns evasive nomenclatures as vestiges of the state’s monopoly over representations of internment. In “Cartographies of Violence” (2002), Oikawa pinpoints the adoption of euphemistic labels such as “interior housing centres, self-support communities” as the Canadian federal government’s invention to “[affect] Japanese Canadian’s abilities to remember and name the violence they experienced” (88). In 2007, Glenn Deer extended

these insights by documenting a founding moment of a commemorative site of Japanese Canadian internment in Vancouver—Historic Joy Kogawa House—in which the materiality of Joy Kogawa’s childhood home comes to assume symbolic importance as the character Naomi Nakane’s lost homestead in Kogawa’s novel *Obasan*. As an attempt to counter the erasure of internment, Deer’s article raises public awareness of a specific locus where memories of Japanese Canadian internment continues to “[galvanize] activist energies and future organizing” (129). In 2008, Kirsten Emiko McAllister, after visiting the site of the internment camp in New Denver, notes that “while [Japanese Canadians’] rights have been recognized, [they] are still searching for a language that can bear the pain and humiliation and anger that ripples across the generations” (“Between Generations” 129). These scholars and activists exemplify contemporary intellectual efforts to devise new ways to represent Japanese Canadian internment, and to prevent it from settling into the past and from being possibly obliterated in the present.

In Roy Miki’s formation, representations of Japanese Canadian internment have thereby evolved into a “double-edge site”: “where relations of dominance threaten to be remobilized (more of the same), *or* where critiques of the nation can posit future methodologies of resistance and collective formation” (“Altered States” 53). In light of this problematic, Guy Beauregard explores, as a specific “double-edge site,” representations of Japanese Canadian internment in the Canadian literary criticism surrounding Joy Kogawa’s novel *Obasan*. In “After *Obasan*: Kogawa Criticism and Its Futures,” Beauregard points out that “by remembering the events of the 1940s as an ‘error,’” Kogawa criticism has been symptomatic of the “[attempt] to manage the implications of a particular moment in Canadian history *by remembering it in a particular way*” (14; emphasis original). This tendency of Kogawa criticism can be

viewed as Canadian literary studies' urge to "come to terms with the past," which, in the words of Theodor Adorno, "does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness [but rather] wishing to turn the page and if possible, wiping it from memory" (Yoneyama, "Memory Matters" 504-05; qtd. in Beauregard, "After *Obasan*" 14). In the words of Scott McFarlane, by choosing a "tone of regret" over "silence" in representing Canadian government's past atrocities, Canadian literary studies has been "implicated in a form of white guilt that may work to situate Japanese Canadian culture as a sign for a violated *Canadian culture and past*, and situate Canada in a narrative of an already fallen yet redeemable nation" (407; qtd. in Beauregard, "After *Obasan*" 16; emphasis original). While representations of Japanese Canadian internment produced so far bear witness to the double consciousness explicated in the previous paragraphs, my thesis will examine these representations as a "double-edge site" theorized by Miki, with specific attention to the potential remobilization of relations of dominance.

After "After *Obasan*"

In "After *Obasan*: Kogawa Criticism and Its Futures," Guy Beauregard draws attention to a question that still confounds the *interdisciplinarity* of Asian Canadian Studies: "whether [. . .] forms of transdisciplinary cultural criticism would or could be generated in a genuinely interdisciplinary Asian Canadian Studies that incorporates research in history, the social sciences, cultural geography, legal studies, and literary and other forms of cultural criticism" ("After *Obasan*" 18). While this question was raised in 2001, now in 2011, I offer up my thesis as one attempt to answer it. Locating my work within Asian Canadian Studies, I aim to explore "what it means to remember Japanese Canadian internment *after* 'After *Obasan*'" with a transdisciplinary edge.

Focusing on memories of internment, this thesis emphasizes the importance of transdisciplinary research insofar as it allows me to look into different forms of representation which include literature while straddling historiography and commemorative sites. In doing so, I wish to avoid preempting an understanding of representations of internment as already and exclusively literary in form and instead address the complex inter-relationships amongst different narratives of internment. I will consequently divide my thesis into three main chapters, with each one engaging the topic of “remembering internment” with distinct, yet closely interrelated, discursive frameworks.

The next chapter of my thesis will focus on the historiography of Japanese Canadian internment. It will first examine W. Peter Ward’s *White Canada Forever* (1978) and the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project’s *A Dream of Riches* (1978) to give a sense of the historiography of Japanese Canadian internment prior to redress. It will then analyze two key historical texts—Ken Adachi’s *The Enemy That Never Was* (1976) and Ann Sunahara’s *The Politics of Racism* (1981)—to see how their interrelated yet distinct constructions of narratives of internment have affected the identity formation of Japanese Canadians during the redress movement. In doing so, this chapter aims to foreground a particular Japanese Canadian identity which was fostered in Sunahara’s text and which facilitated the NAJC’s successful negotiation for redress. At the end of this chapter, I will turn to historical texts that address other sites of what Greg Robinson (2009) has called “Japanese confinement” in and outside of North America—texts that include Masumi Izumi’s essays, which identify Japanese Canadians’ role as transnational agents negotiating amongst three empires, and Iyko Day’s comparative study of Japanese internment across three different continents. While this chapter focuses mainly on how the history of Japanese Canadian internment is

narrated into presence in Canadian national history, Izumi's and Day's texts point to some of the discursive possibilities and problems afforded to the historiography of internment after 1988.

The third chapter of my thesis will focus on literary representations of Japanese Canadian internment centered upon a key literary text—Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* (1981)—and the literary criticism that surrounds this canonical book. Building on the previous chapter, this chapter will examine literary criticism of *Obasan* as one discursive site where Canadian literary critics have attempted to come to terms with Canada's racist past. While Kyo Maclear suggests in her discussion of the cultural aftermath of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki atomic bombings in *Beclouded Visions* (1996) that “dominant strategies of remembrance may seek to incorporate rather than openly suppress surplus memories of loss and trauma” (143), I will discuss how literary critics have engaged with such “dominant strategies of remembrance” in the aftermath of Japanese Canadian internment. The critical perspectives provided by Roy Miki, Scott McFarlane, and Iyko Day will be of special importance in this chapter because these scholars work in updated modes of Asian Canadian Studies which “are not content with simply considering Asian Canadians as objects of knowledge—but instead attempt [. . .] to understand and possibly transform various discipline based sites of knowledge production” (Beauregard, “Asian Canadian Studies” 8). In engaging with the work of these critics, I aim to identify the strengths as well as the limitations of their carefully rendered, and sometimes conflicting, textual politics. At the end of this chapter, a short excursion to a documentary film, *One Big Hapa Family* (2010) directed by Jeff Chiba Stearns, will help to specify some critical challenges that remain.

The fourth chapter of my thesis will turn to spatial representations of Japanese Canadian internment at a commemorative site—Historic Joy Kogawa House in

Vancouver, British Columbia—with special attention paid to the cultural controversies that surround the setting-up and maintenance of this site. Historic Joy Kogawa House was retrieved from the hands of a private owner through the efforts of the Save Joy Kogawa House Committee and the Land Conservancy of British Columbia in 2006. While this retrieval was deemed by some to be symbolic of a restored Japanese Canadian property, others critiqued the internal logic of such a commemorative site for its definitive way of remembering. Against this backdrop, this chapter will discuss how “doing justice,” as the leading motif of the Kogawa House memorial project, has given rise to complex and sometimes infuriated responses from the Japanese Canadian community. In doing so, I aim to look for possibilities of negotiation amongst different attempts to remember internment ethically. To push forward my critical investigation of spatial representations of internment at the end of this chapter, I will turn to the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in New Denver, British Columbia, which is the subject locus of Kirsten Emiko McAllister’s *Terrain of Memory* (2010), to show how collectively excavating painful memories can cultivate relations across social and intergenerational divides.

Finally, the conclusion to this thesis will tackle the question of the potential significance of “remembering Japanese Canadian internment” today. As Taiwan has also entered a postmemorialization period following the 228 Incident (1947) and state-directed White Terror (1949-1987), “remembering Japanese Canadian internment” in Taiwan is potentially inspirational as an attempt to investigate institutional and discursive framings that have previously made *impossible* the remembrance of state-imposed injustices in history, literature, and commemorative sites, but easily, if deliberately, *accessible* now. While in his speech following the 1988 redress settlement, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney stated that “Most of us in our own lives have

had occasion to regret certain things that we have done. Error is an ingredient of humanity, so too is apology and forgiveness” (144), the goal of my thesis is to put such a “discourse of apology” on the defensive, and to ask persistently, “what does it mean to remember Japanese Canadian internment today?” both for Japanese Canadians in Canada and for contemporary literary and critical studies in Taiwan and beyond.



Chapter Two | Historical Memories

A Paradox of Repetition

According to Kirsten McAllister in “Captivating Debris: Unearthing a World War Two Internment Camp,” the received history of Japanese Canadians is a powerful narrative which “was developed during the 1980s when activists mobilized Japanese Canadians in a movement to seek redress from the Canadian government for what they claimed was a violation of their rights” (98). In fact, some of the key historical texts produced to this end appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁶ These historical representations of the governmental mistreatment of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II and the consequent physical and emotional ordeal they have undergone bear witness to the Japanese Canadian community’s efforts during the redress movement to verbalize an unspeakable trauma in the political arena.⁷ By shaping their experiences into historical terms that could be recognized by the Canadian federal government, Japanese Canadians were thus able to endow the memories of internment with political valence, a process that eventually materialized as the redress settlement announced on 22 September 1988.

This chapter examines the historiography of Japanese Canadian internment narrated during the Japanese Canadian redress movement and beyond. Extant historical accounts of Japanese Canadian internment have served various and distinct agendas. Yet due to the scope of this chapter, the historical accounts produced during the redress

⁶ These texts include: Ken Adachi’s *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (1976), the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project’s *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977* (1978), Ann Sunahara’s *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (1981), Toyo Takata’s *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (1983), and the redress campaign’s pamphlet, *Democracy Betrayed: The Case for Redress* (1984) (McAllister, “Narrating Japanese Canadians” 7).

⁷ I use “community” cautiously here to designate heterogeneous Japanese Canadians who may or may not have participated in the political movement for redress, but who had nevertheless lent a silent or active support to the movement.

period are foregrounded here insofar as they epitomize and typify what is generally conceived as the “story of Japanese Canadians”; they are also foregrounded for their intimate relation to the social and political mobilization which eventually won Japanese Canadians a negotiated settlement. Any discursive engagement with history of an “official” nature must admit to the profound ambivalence of such a project. It must be constantly subject to the contestation of a “paradox of repetition” while trying to break free (McAllister, “Captivating Debris” 99). On the one hand, to repeat a history “exerts a force that *exceeds* whatever is required to guard against dissipation: that slide of the self into entropy”; on the other hand, the repetition can “impose stasis, halting the impulse to extend outwards towards the fleeting, tumbling motion of the ongoing world and thus to incorporate new experiences” (McAllister, “Captivating Debris” 99; emphasis original). In this sense, while an inscribed history creates new space for previously unspoken events, people, and places at the same time as it confines them, to critically engage with this inscribed history requires repetition as well as resistance.

Historical Memories: Revisiting 1978

In the introduction to *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (1999), Lisa Yoneyama provides a lucid definition of “historical memory.” According to Yoneyama, the study of “historical memory” should avoid setting “history” and “memory” in opposition. Such opposition usually takes two different forms. In the first form, “memory” refers to “genuine and authentic knowledge about ordinary people’s past experiences,” in contrast to “official History, which is considered to be a product of power, written from the perspectives of cultural elites, colonists, and other members of the ruling classes” (27). In this formation, “memory” is conferred with a higher truth value than “history,” and is often used to “foreground anonymous

actors and to reveal the ways in which institutionalized History has misrepresented their experiences” (27). The second form of opposition sees “memory” as “associated with myth or fiction” whereas “history” as “written by professionals” (27). In this formation, “history” instead of “memory” comes to assume a higher validity because it “tends to stand for rational and scientific knowledge, while Memory is associated with the ‘subjective’” (27). In either case, the discursive hierarchy between “memory” and “history” seems problematic for it presupposes and essentializes a distinction between the two. Instead of yielding to this “false dichotomy,” Yoneyama points out that “history” and “memory” are in fact both “the *production of knowledge about the past,*” which “is always enmeshed in the exercise of power and is always accompanied by elements of repression” (emphasis added). In light of Yoneyama’s elucidation, my investigation of “historical memory” thus registers not so much the truth struggle between “history” and “memory” but takes both together as knowledge of the past consciously produced in specific contexts, necessarily mediated by processes of representation, and culminating in moments of power.

While this chapter focuses on historical memories of internment produced during the redress movement, a short detour is required here to give a sense of Japanese Canadian historiography prior to redress. As a point of departure, I want to single out two highly distinct historical texts—W. Peter Ward’s *White Canada Forever* (1978) and the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project’s *A Dream of Riches* (1978)—for their influence in setting the course for historical accounts of internment which later came forward in the redress movement. The first text, *White Canada Forever*, typifies some of the evasive rhetoric used in Canadian national history to represent Japanese Canadian internment—a rhetoric soon to be offset by Ann Sunahara who “brought to light incriminating cabinet documents that had been previously inaccessible to the public”

(Miki, *Redress* 233). *A Dream of Riches*, on the other hand, exemplifies one of the earliest collective efforts on the part of Japanese Canadians to compile their own narratives about internment—a collective effort that helped to groom some of the individuals who later became active in the redress movement. It is to these two texts that I would like to turn now.

In Canadian national history, Japanese Canadian internment has been addressed on either “polite” terms or no terms at all. W. Peter Ward’s *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (1978) is in this respect a valuable example. Published at the tail-end of the thirty-year rule which had restricted public access to government documents on the internment of Japanese Canadians,⁸ Ward’s study is still characterized by the euphemisms used in Canadian national history to depict the government’s wartime and after-war treatment of Japanese Canadians. In the section titled “Evacuation,” the displacement of Japanese Canadians is portrayed as a necessary and conscientious decision on the part of the Canadian federal government to secure them from an already hostile racist climate of “white British Columbia” (142). In the meantime, blame is placed on particular racist politicians such as Ian Mackenzie for urging the removal of “all enemy aliens, regardless of age, sex, or nationality, from protected areas,” to which the government, “touched with a lingering sense of justice and humanity, [. . .] refused to make [any other] further concessions” (151). At the end of the section, to resolve what has been presented as a disheartening yet dignified history, Ward assures readers that “Finally, acculturation had greatly reduced the social distance between whites and Asians”; for Ward, “[the] unassimilable Oriental was becoming assimilated” (166).

The linear progression and white-centric nationalism—however critical—

⁸ Ann Sunahara explains in *The Politics of Racism* (1981) that “[federal] government documents [in Canada] are normally closed for thirty years. Access to some is restricted to serious researchers” (177).

cultivated in forms of national history such as Ward's text characterize the discursive context into which Japanese Canadian activists in the late 1970s and early 1980s needed to narrate their past. For instance, Toyo Takata's *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (1983), which appeared five years after the first edition of Ward's book, "epitomizes the linear narrative of Western progress which [. . .] identifies men as the key agents of history and [. . .] [underlines] the important role Japanese immigrants played in constructing British Columbia's economic infrastructures" (McAllister, "Narrating Japanese Canadians" 8). Given that "Studies of the past are written at a particular moment and in a particular context," Ward concedes in his preface to the third edition of *White Canada Forever* (2002) that the book "had evolved at a time when nation building was the leading motif in Canadian historical writing" (xxi; xxii). In this sense, if Takata were to conceive his book today—a moment, according to Ward, characterized by "the Canadian state's growing commitment to pluralism in politics and public policy"—he would have resorted to a different narrative construction of Japanese Canadian history (xxiv).

A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977 (1978), on the other hand, provides Japanese Canadian perspectives on the story of internment. In 1977, a group of Japanese Canadians in Vancouver organized themselves under the banner of "The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project" to mount a photographic exhibit on the history of Japanese Canadians from the first arrival of Japanese Canadian immigrants at Canada in 1877 to its centennial in 1977. The project is monumental because it marks its Japanese Canadian contributors' difficult yet resolute break from social invisibility in the name of reclaiming their own history. These contributors were "an odd assortment" which included post-war Japanese Canadian immigrants (i.e. the Shin Issei) and a smattering of Nisei and Sansei. Their first group meeting was held two years before the

exhibit, which notably ended up lending the participants a “feeling of unease in the presence of so many Japanese” (*A Dream of Riches* 4). Yet despite such tension, the precarious Nisei were inspired by the Shin Issei who “with their unassuming pride and quiet sense of themselves as Japanese, were a bridge that led [Nisei] from that nagging sense of [themselves] as the other, the Jap, the lesser being, to the awareness [they] share” (*A Dream of Riches* 4). The 1977 exhibit was the result of two years’ research of one hundred years of Japanese Canadian history, interviews with people across Canada, and a collection of over 4,000 photographs. As it appears in print, *A Dream of Riches* is a powerful textual record of the exhibit that travelled throughout Japan and Canada as part of the Centennial celebrations in 1977.

The Centennial Project was viewed by the redress activists as both an affirmation of Japanese Canadian heritage and a call for redress. According to Roy Miki, who was on the board of the Centennial Project, the exhibit had prepared the stage for the redress campaign for it attempted to “break the silence of our history, release the stories of internment, and seek acknowledgement of the unjust treatment of Japanese Canadians through a settlement with the federal government” (*Redress* 146). Highlighting the preparatory role *A Dream of Riches* had played in the redress movement, Miki states: “What drew us together was the possibility of creating a renewed sense of community for Japanese Canadians, and we sought to build on the reclamation of history in the 1977 centennial project” (*Redress* 146). While the political agenda of the redress movement was still indefinite in 1977, the title of the exhibit had interestingly anticipated the later discursive trajectory of the movement. As *A Dream of Riches* tells the story of Japanese who came to Canada in the dream of “[returning] to a life of ease in Japan,” the shattering of that dream through the federal government’s dispossession of their property during World War II became the focal point for Japanese Canadians’

demand for redress. But before we can investigate this discursive turn, we first need to theorize a “crisis of representation” that took place at that time.

The Redress Movement and Its Crisis of Representation

Toward the latter half of *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (2004), Roy Miki identifies a “crisis of representation” that had been seething through and alienating the redress activists during the redress movement (241). The National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), which had been responsible for the negotiation of the redress settlement with the federal government at the time, was having a hard time winning the support of another major Japanese Canadian community association, the Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens’ Association (JCCA). According to Miki, “the passivity of the Vancouver JCCA reflected [the majority of Japanese Canadians’] continued victimization. In other words, their reaction to redress was interpreted as evidence of their fear of backlash and racialized visibility” (*Redress* 244). “Race” was the category utilized by the Canadian federal government to frame Japanese Canadians—or “all persons of Japanese racial origin”—into “enemy aliens” to be removed from British Columbia in the 1940s. This traumatic memory, in effect, left Japanese Canadians, who by the time of the redress movement had been scattered by the government all over Canada as well as to Japan, unable or unwilling to rise up to the call of an already racialized identity. Such a representational crisis led the NAJC to acknowledge that “an ambiguous concept of redress would not have unified [Japanese Canadians]” (Miki, *Redress* 265), but a “*common horizon*, articulated on the basis of a common cause, can be powerful focal point for action” (Miki, *Redress* 264; emphasis added). And since “race” had become a stigmatized identity for Japanese Canadians, “class,” perhaps counter-intuitively, in turn became a potential alternative identity that

would consolidate Japanese Canadians around the cause for redress.

In “‘Race,’ Class and Agency,” Paul Gilroy points out that, when faced with a crisis of representation where an underprivileged population can no longer be comprehended through either “race” or “class,” a Marxist formulation of either term must be inverted: “‘race’ can no longer be reduced to an effect of economic antagonisms arising from production,” and “class” must be re-understood “in terms qualified by the vitality of struggles articulated through race” (“Agency” 28). Here, the insufficiency of both “race” and “class” as discursive categories to signify the material exploitation and social degradation undergone by blacks and the unemployed in the British context informs my understanding of Japanese Canadians’ irresolute social formation during the redress movement. For Japanese Canadians, “race” as a category for social formation, besides invoking fear, failed to articulate substantially the violence they had suffered through internment; yet the state-directed dispossession of their properties during internment was also unable to be qualified as “class exploitation” under traditional terms. Against this conceptual dilemma and in light of Gilroy’s proposition of a redefined “class” to make sense of the social struggle undertaken by the “unnamable” social subjects, I argue that Japanese Canadians’ eventual constitution into a “redress identity” during the redress movement can be understood in terms of their re-conceptualization of a “class” identity.

Drawing from Adam Prezworski’s broader definition, Gilroy reformulates the question of class formation to encompass “struggles which bring classes into being,” and urges a “break with the economistic definitions of class” (“Agency” 30). Accordingly, as “class” identity originally can only be assumed by “the individuals who occupy positions in the immediate processes of production,” in other words by workers, Gilroy states that “an acknowledgement of the political potential of groups *banished*

from the world of work and wages” is also necessary (“Agency” 32; emphasis added). To use J. K. Gibson-Graham’s redefinition of “class” in “Class and the Politics of ‘Identity’” to illustrate Gilroy’s point here, “class” consciousness, once removed out of the context of economic relations, can occur in any “social process of [. . .] exploitation,” not just in the strictly-defined economic ones (52). Following Gilroy and Gibson-Graham, the dispossession experienced by Japanese Canadians during internment, though it occurred not within a strict process of economic production, can still qualify them into “class.” In this sense, from the point at which the dispossession took place to the moment at which Japanese Canadians organized around a dispossessed identity, their process of struggle has managed to bring a class consciousness into being. And this class consciousness, I argue, is what made possible their collective actions to demand redress, financially and juridically, from the Canadian federal government.⁹

My intention to underline Japanese Canadians’ social formation from race *in* itself to class *for* itself does not imply that dispossession was the only violence that could claim negotiatory validity during the redress movement; nor is it my intention to discredit other forms of Japanese Canadian mobilization and consolidation during the redress movement. Instead, my aim here is to make intelligible the NAJC’s strategic turn of identity formation in its mobilization for redress. While Roy Miki claims that the refocused “redress identity” was based on “citizenship and human rights,” I emphasize that it is exactly because of Japanese Canadians’ experiences of dispossession—or their class position—that they could be framed into a state of “lacking redress” within a broader narrative of citizenship and human rights.

⁹ It is important to note here that, to help their case, the NAJC hired the accounting firm Price Waterhouse to examine records to estimate the economic losses to Japanese Canadians resulting from property confiscations and loss of wages due to internment. The 1986 report titled *Economic Losses of Japanese Canadians After 1941* shows that the total loss to Japanese Canadians was an estimated CAN\$443 million (in 1986 dollars) (*Economic Losses of Japanese Canadians After 1941*).

From Race in Itself to Class for Itself

In this section, I want to investigate the emergence of Japanese Canadians' class identity during the course of redress through a comparison of Ken Adachi's *The Enemy that Never Was* (1976) and Ann Gomer Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism* (1981). The publication of these two key texts marked major changes in the Japanese Canadian historiographical landscape. They marked a period when Canadians in general and those Japanese Canadians who were not aware of internment became publicly and structurally acquainted with the history of Japanese Canadian internment. In fact, Adachi's *The Enemy that Never Was* (1976) was "the first published book on the history of Japanese Canadians, including the Internment years," and it was "a project that resulted from members of the Japanese Canadian community wanting documentation of their history" (Oikawa, "Cartographies of Violence" 15). Moreover, these two texts, "still most cited in the literature, stand out for their unrivalled accomplishment of writing against an enormous *silence* in Canadian historical texts" (Oikawa, "Cartographies of Violence" 15; emphasis added). As previously pointed out, in the face of official obliteration and apologia, Adachi and Sunahara had had to write Japanese Canadian internment into presence within Canadian national history.

As pivotal Japanese Canadian historical texts, Adachi's and Sunahara's studies have held different relations to the redress movement. Adachi was contracted to write an official history of Japanese Canadians, a project that became *The Enemy That Never Was*, following the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association's (NJCCA) "sponsorship of a history writing contest in 1958" (Miki, *Redress* 218).¹⁰ In Sunahara's case, she was "the first independent researcher to have brought to light incriminating

¹⁰ According to Roy Miki, the NJCCA, which had formed in 1947 and was the predecessor of the NAJC, had been "more virtual than real." After Japanese Canadians received the franchise in 1949 and lost their battle in negotiation for compensation for internment, the NJCCA "entered a long dormant period [and] did not meet again for over a decade [after 1961]" (Miki, *Redress* 218).

cabinet documents that had been previously inaccessible to the public” (Miki, *Redress* 233).¹¹ In Miki’s account, Sunahara’s text figured large in the redress movement for “the historical ‘case for redress’ had drawn on the research undertaken by Ann Sunahara in the 1970s” (*Redress* 233). Besides historically and juridically grounding Japanese Canadians’ plea for redress, Sunahara herself was on the NAJC negotiation team as one of the “legal advisors” (Miki and Kobayashi 156).

Given their distinct authorial contexts, these two texts do not present a monolithic discourse on internment. Two differences between these texts have often been singled out. First, while Adachi’s book came out in 1976 before the end of the thirty-year rule, Sunahara’s book was based entirely on a meticulous research of materials housed in the Public Archives of Canada (now known as Library and Archives Canada)—to which Adachi had been denied access.¹² As Sunahara stresses in the introduction to *The Politics of Racism*:

Adachi could only draw upon published memoirs, the proceedings of inquiries and royal commissions, and other documents in the public domain. [. . .] Adachi does not so readily accept the view of the government of the day, but he *cannot prove* that the public statements of that government do not match their private actions. (2; emphasis added)

Overcoming Adachi’s disadvantage, Sunahara’s study thus sought “to strip away the mask of wartime rhetoric and examine from the perspective of federal government

¹¹ In the late 1970s, Sunahara was able to gain access to the governmental records of internment. Through her research, which eventually became *The Politics of Racism* in 1981, Sunahara “brought to light previously secret documents to demonstrate that government officials, politicians and other authorities knew that Japanese Canadians did not pose a threat to national security. [. . .] The documents showed that the decision regarding mass uprooting was a political move to appease ‘anti-Japanese’ British Columbians rather than a security measure to project them” (Miki, *Redress* 89).

¹² Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has gone through several stages of renaming. The Public Archives of Canada was established in 1872 and became the National Archives of Canada in 1987. It was later combined, by order of the Governor in Council, with the National Library of Canada to become Library and Archives of Canada in 2004.

policy the seven years in which Japanese Canadians were exiled in their own country” (Sunahara 3).

Adachi’s and Sunahara’s ethnicities are a second key difference. While Adachi states in his preface that he intends to demonstrate “what it was like [. . .] to have been born in this country as a member of an unpopular minority group,” and thus identifies himself as Japanese Canadian, Sunahara identifies herself as one of “those Canadians [. . .] who have known only a tolerant Canada,” and reveals that she is in fact white (Adachi iv; Sunahara xi). Here, by pointing out the ethnicities of these writers, I do not wish to suggest that there is any essentialist difference between their writings, or that one is better than the other. Rather, as Mona Oikawa (1999) suggests:

[The] relationship of the authors to the communities about which and to whom they are writing [reveals] the investments that different historians [and, by extension, other writers] have in the subjects of their work. [. . .] Their constructions of history, nation, and the subjects of their research are also always about the processes of self-narration and situatedness in the Canadian nation. (“Cartographies of Violence” 16)

While researched with access to disparate resources and written from distinct subject positions, both *The Enemy that Never Was* and *The Politics of Racism* have loomed large in the redress movement as two of the few available public historical accounts of Japanese Canadian internment circulating at the time.

The formations of race identity in Adachi’s *The Enemy that Never Was* and Sunahara’s *The Politics of Racism* have complementary effects. While Adachi’s text displays an acute realization that “race” was the category used to frame Japanese Canadians into a long history of discrimination and persecution, Sunahara’s text substantiates Adachi’s claim with evidence drawn from the government archive. Adachi

makes clear from the outset of his study that his book is dedicated to exposing the racialization and racist exclusion of Japanese Canadians since they first set foot on Canada: “having been the victim since childhood of a particularly virulent strain of *racism*, I wished to reveal the demon in all its scaly ugliness and perhaps exorcise it” (iv; emphasis added). Accordingly, the chapters of Adachi’s book are arranged according to different stages of hardship incurred by Japanese Canadians in a racist society, as well as Japanese Canadians’ ways of coping; chapter titles ranging from “First Contacts” and “The Riot of 1907” to “Becoming A Foreigner,” “Scapegoats and Victims,” and “Still A Yellow Peril” exemplify Adachi’s attempt to compose a *narrative of racialization* from the time of the first generation Japanese Canadians (or Issei) until the so-called “post-evacuation” period (Adachi 355). The deep sense of being part of a racialized group—a race consciousness—is nurtured in Adachi’s treatment of Japanese Canadians’ history of racial victimization and political-social othering. Likewise, *The Politics of Racism*, as specified by the title itself, is a verification of “the politics of racism” deployed against Japanese Canadians during the internment period from 1942 to 1949. Endorsing Adachi’s basic thesis with archival research, however, Sunahara’s text aimed to produce a narrative distinct from Adachi’s. And I argue, in the passages that follow, that the difference between Adachi’s and Sunahara’s narratives makes explicit the point when class consciousness comes into being in the historical memories of Japanese Canadian internment.

While Adachi’s *The Enemy that Never Was* scrupulously documents Japanese Canadian history spanning from its inception to the early 1970s centering on a narrative of racialization, Sunahara focuses her investigation entirely and intensively on Japanese Canadian internment. Her access to the government archive demanded that she code into being not a Japanese Canadian history in a broad sense, but a history of Japanese

Canadian internment *per se*—and make a legally viable “case” for the NAJC to demand government redress. Sunahara thus deployed a set of very specific terminologies to name the injustices inflicted on Japanese Canadians by the government during and after World War II: “expulsion” for the removal of all Japanese Canadians out of the protected area; “internment” for their physical confinement in concentration camps; “dispossession” for the confiscation and trading of their properties without their consent; “deportation” for expatriating them to Japan; and finally “dispersal” for forcing them to resettle east of the Rockies in a sporadic manner. While these are deemed today as common terms for describing Japanese Canadians’ wartime and after-war experiences, a comparison with Adachi’s text shows that they are in fact Sunahara’s conscientious points of intervention. In *The Enemy that Never Was*, Adachi appears to concern himself less with arranging the internment experiences into a sequence of singular events than with compiling an inventory of a mass of maltreatments done by the government—which necessarily includes the five charges made by Sunahara, *but not sufficiently*. Among Adachi’s list of indictments, he preserves the government’s evasive term “evacuation” in place of “expulsion”; descriptive tags such as “concentration camps” and “interior camps” instead of “internment camp”; *no term at all*, and this is the crucial part, for “dispossession” except for a relentless condemnation of the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property’s exorbitant actions; and finally “repatriation” and “resettlement” in place of “deportation” and “dispersal.”

The absence of a term or terms in Adachi’s text to directly identify what is labeled as “dispossession” in Sunahara’s study makes it clear that Sunahara is opting for a different historical narrative. While Adachi aims to make the case that Japanese Canadians had never deserved what was levied against them by both cataloging the wrongs of the government and ensuring the successful assimilation of Japanese

Canadians, Sunahara relies on the presentation of specified and definite incidents inflicted upon Japanese Canadians to lay charges against the government. As the government's wartime and after-war treatments of Japanese Canadians were in fact *legally justifiable* under the War Measures Act, the immediate challenge for Sunahara to build her case was to underline those treatments which she could *prove to be juridically wrong*. At this point, I argue, the demonstrable and sizable nature of Japanese Canadians' material losses during the war became recognized by Sunahara as an efficient, and also necessary, way to find fault with the government. Accordingly, while in the 1940s, the dispossession of Japanese Canadians was sanctioned by an order-in-council passed "under the War Measures Act that granted the Custodian of Enemy Property the right to dispose of Japanese Canadian Property" (105), Sunahara demonstrates through her research that the decision was in fact based on illegitimate concerns to "[minimize] the cost of running the detention camps" and to "[discourage] the return of the uprooted Japanese after the war" (104). Clarifying the private interest behind the official decision to liquidate Japanese Canadian property, Sunahara quotes a statement from Alderman George Buscombe of Vancouver that appeared in the *New Canadian* on 2 September 1942: "We don't want the Japanese to return here after the war. They are going to outbreed the whites and eventually outnumber us" (qtd. in Sunahara 104-05).¹³ At the end of her book, Sunahara has enclosed three tables which diagrammatically account for Japanese Canadians' economic losses to reinforce her point. By identifying Japanese Canadians as a group of dispossessed Canadian citizens, Sunahara managed to pin down the guilt of the Canadian federal government, whose

¹³ During the prewar years, to mediate the growing antagonism toward the Japanese Canadian community, a group of Japanese Canadians made a concerted effort to educate the public about Japanese Canadians' loyalty to their country and belief in democratic values by founding a newspaper, appropriately titled *The New Canadian: Voice of the Nisei*, in November 1938. The publication became a major vehicle in the formation of a "nisei voice" and the medium through which young writers such as Muriel Kitagawa began to articulate their Canadian perspectives (Miki, *Redress* 36).

offenses would have seemed more evasive and equivocal examined under the terms of racism alone.

In *Justice in Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (1991), Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi enumerate the exact terms of the negotiated redress settlement reached between the NAJC and the Canadian federal government in 1988 (for details, see note 1 on page 1). In this settlement, the government acknowledged its “policies of disenfranchisement, detention, confiscation and sale of private and community property, expulsion, deportation and restriction of movement, which continued after the war, were influenced by discriminatory attitudes” (Miki and Kobayashi 138). As “symbolic redress for those injustices,” the government thus agreed to provide, among other forms of compensation, “[CAN]\$21,000 [for] individual redress, subject to application by eligible persons of Japanese ancestry who, during this period, were subjected to internment, relocation, deportation, loss of property” (Miki and Kobayashi 138-39). The government compensation for Japanese Canadian internment, which was largely delivered in monetary terms, underscores Ann Sunahara’s discursive attempt to foster an instrumental class identity for Japanese Canadians. As pointed out by Kirsten McAllister in “Narrating Japanese Canadians In and Out of the Canadian Nation: A Critique of Realist Forms of Representations,” in order to be “recognized as a legitimate depiction of ‘the truth’ by the government and the media,” the historical accounts produced by activists during the redress movement needed to *quantify* “the economic and social effects in terms that the government and public could recognize” (8). The 1988 redress settlement in effect testifies to an effect of a form of political agency generated by historically remembering Japanese Canadians not only as a race but as a class.

Crossing National Borders

Composing this chapter in 2011, I am aware that I am writing in a post-redress context. And the three decades between my writing and the publication of Adachi's and Sunahara's texts have seen vigorous and diverse critical responses to their historical formation of Japanese Canadian internment in the aftermath of the 1988 redress settlement. These critical responses have generally taken two directions. On the one hand, some scholars underline how these two texts have reframed Japanese Canadians into social and political others. In "Narrating Japanese Canadians" (1999), for example, Kirsten McAllister maintains that "while realism helped [Japanese Canadians] win their case [. . .] [and] made it possible to narrate Japanese Canadians into the history of the Canadian nation as fully assimilated citizens, this implicitly accepted the nation's hostile construction of racial others" (1). Similarly, in "Cartographies of Violence" (1999), Mona Oikawa argues that "the reconstruction of the Internment through a liberal historical framework produces homogenized subject, [who is] denied multiple subjectivities, and seeks to essentialize social difference while reifying a particular 'Canadian' identity" (9).

On the other hand, other scholars have put forward diverse and nuanced analyses of how historical representations of internment have enabled the emergence of new collectivities. For instance, in "Reclaiming and Reinventing 'Powell Street': Reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian Community in Post-World War II Vancouver" (2005), Masumi Izumi provides an account of how a government-sponsored community reconstruction program—out of which matter-of-factly thrived the 1977 Japanese Canadian Centennial Project—had affected the commemoration of Japanese Canadian internment, seeing the representation of history in the reconstructed landscape as "a double-edged sword":

On the one hand, by inducing a historical imagination of the continuity of Chinatown and Japantown, it whitewashed the memory of the various assaults by past governments on these ethnic communities. On the other hand, urban projects based on multiculturalism contributed to the reconstruction of the collective memory in Vancouver of the existence of a once-thriving Japanese Canadian community in the city [. . .] which eventually inspired the general public to support the redress settlement. (326)

Izumi's acknowledgement of the positive effects of multiculturalism, however, does not indicate Japanese Canadians' uncritical submission to the dominant culture. On the contrary, Izumi argues elsewhere that the integration of a dominant subjectivity into one's own can be an act of resistance. In "Constructing Ethnicity through Social Critique: Cultural Expressions of Japanese Canadians in Post-Internment Canada," Izumi points out that the sources of cultural expression for Japanese Canadians are never simply limited to "ethnicized cultural elements" (84); modern dance pieces, for example, can be created to "[commemorate] [. . .] resistance against the internment" (88).¹⁴

Noting the positive effects of historical representations of internment, Izumi nevertheless finds fault with their tendency to only foreground Japanese Canadians' negotiation with the nation-state, while overlooking their equally crucial role as transnational migrants operating on the borders of three empires (Japanese, American,

¹⁴ In another essay, "Reconsidering Ethnic Culture and Community: A Case Study on Japanese Canadian Taiko Drumming," Izumi demonstrates how a cultural space prescribed and monitored by the dominant power can still be turned into a site of resistance. Drawing examples from Japanese Canadians who take part in the reproduction of ethnic culture by joining community Taiko drumming, Izumi encourages ethnic minorities to recognize their own "agency" in the construction of ethnic identity. According to Izumi, although multiculturalism has notoriously become a process of racialization which assigns certain meanings to differences among racialized group, "the creation of 'difference' is not a one-way process, monopolized by the dominant power, [but can be] utilized by the minorities as a site of resistance to cultural homogenization, or as a stage for alternative cultural representations" (50).

and British).¹⁵ In “The Japanese Canadian Movement: Migration and Activism Before and After World War II” (2007), Izumi thus calls for a “transnational intervention” of Japanese Canadian historical representations:

Migrants’ interstitial lives should not be seen only in the light of alienation and exclusion from a nation-state, for through such lives migrants in different historical periods have administered creative and innovative political and/or economic agency. (51)

In doing so, Izumi has managed to bring into light the “in-between” spaces where Japanese Canadians’ political, economic, and cultural vitality has largely resided. In Izumi’s study, instead of being subject to the monolithic dictates of the Canadian federal government, Japanese Canadians have at times mobilized their Japanese imperial ties against Canada’s racist policies. Moreover, their relations with their American counterparts have also been more intertwined than had been previously assumed.¹⁶

In line with Izumi’s transnational intervention, attempts to reconsider Japanese Canadian internment and to produce new historical representations of the same period have taken a distinct “transnational turn” following the 1988 redress settlement.

Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans, in this approach, have been examined in tandem for their geopolitical similarities with ethnic minorities living in North America

¹⁵ Izumi’s perceptive identification of Japanese Canadians as social subjects “amidst three empires” in fact draws from and extends Eiichiro Azuma’s identification of Japanese Americans’ transnational role “between two empires.” In *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (2005), Azuma probes the complexities of prewar Japanese America to show how Japanese immigrants in America held an in-between space between the United States and the empire of Japan, between American nationality and Japanese racial identity.

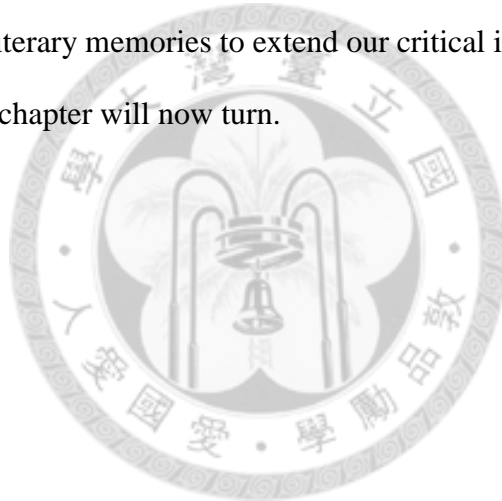
¹⁶ According to Izumi, Japanese migrants in the United States and Canada have used their connections with the Japanese state to improve their lives in North America. For instance, Yuji Ichioka documented that the Issei struggled to better their lives by requesting the Japanese government to use diplomatic channels so that the American government would alleviate the legal, social and economic oppression of Asians on the West Coast (“Japanese Canadian Movement” 55). As for Japanese migrants’ relations amongst each other, the post-war reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian community was, in Izumi’s account, a product of intergenerational and international encounters between activists migrating across Asian Canada, Asian America and Asia (“Japanese Canadian Movement” 61-62). For further discussion of the Asian Canadian movement, see Xiaoping Li.

and scapegoated for Japanese imperial militancy. Representative texts following this approach include *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (2001), *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (2005), and *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (2009) by Greg Robinson. In 2010, Iyko Day expanded this comparative scope to also include the Australian continent. In “Alien Intimacies: The Coloniality of Japanese Internment in Australia, Canada, and the US,” Day traces the driving force behind the three governments’ concordant decisions during World War II to intern their Japanese residents to be “part of a broader settler colonial inheritance that is embedded in western liberal democracy” (108).¹⁷ According to Day, the three governments’ expropriation of Japanese property during internment suggests “whiteness [to be] a precondition for property ownership, [. . .] and became, as Cheryl Harris theorizes in a more general sense, a form of property itself—‘a quintessential property for personhood’” (118).

Examining the tri-continental dimensions of Japanese internment in postcolonial terms, Day asserts the kindred link between Japanese dispossession during the war and indigenous dispossession that goes back several decades across the three settler states. Here, while this linkage features material dispossession as again a key in understanding the history of internment, Day has managed to extend her evaluation of internment-induced property losses outside monetary terms. Pointing out the “mutual constitution of affective and material dimensions of property—of owning property and of being in possession of oneself” (116), Day sees property dispossession as necessarily enacted in the domestic sphere of kinship relations. At this point, the turbulent kinship

¹⁷ According to Day, evidence points to the remarkable single-mindedness with which Canada, the U.S., and Australia carried out their internment policies to achieve similar ends. Despite the uncanny similarity of internment policies in Canada and the U.S, for instance, Roger Daniels emphasizes that the two nations arrived mostly independently at strikingly parallel decisions. Additionally, given Australia’s distance from North America and vulnerability to Japanese Imperial forces, Day contends that “it is also unlikely that government actions taken in North America played a substantive role in its own policy-making” (110).

relations of a post-war Japanese Canadian family presented in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* becomes a useful index for Day's historical research on Japanese internment in Canada. By drawing from contemporary internment narratives including *Obasan*, Day accentuates "the features that *exceed* the empirical 'truths' of Japanese internment in white Pacific nations [in an attempt to] magnify a white settler colonial framework of Japanese internment in the U.S., Canada, and Australia"¹⁸ Here, Day's turn to a Japanese Canadian cultural text for her research on transnational Japanese internment underlines the discursive reciprocity between historical and literary representations in generating meanings around internment. Day's study thus urges us to move from historical memories to literary memories to extend our critical investigation. It is to this topic that the following chapter will now turn.



¹⁸ According to Day, "contrasting structures of immigration and naturalization, as well as divergent constitutional protections are only some of the features that thwart an empirically-driven account of the transnational coloniality of internment" (110). Accordingly, Japanese internees' symbolic attachments to the native other/alien other as part of the complex affective dimensions of interracial encounters can only be explored in cultural production such as *Obasan* rather than in empirical data alone (111).

Chapter Three | Literary Memories

After 1988

If historical representations of Japanese Canadian internment produced during the redress movement—namely, Ken Adachi’s *The Enemy That Never Was* (1976) and Ann Sunahara’s *The Politics of Racism* (1981)—epitomize and typify what is generally conceived as the “story of Japanese Canadians,” traces of this story have also found figurative expression in Joy Kogawa’s influential novel *Obasan* (1981). In fact, alongside the historical texts I have discussed, *Obasan* has according to some accounts “played a key role in mobilizing support for the 1988 Redress Settlement” with its literary representation of Japanese Canadian internment presented partially through the affectionate narration of a fictional character Naomi Nakane (Beauregard, “After *Obasan*” 5). Besides being interlinked with the redress movement, *Obasan* has also been met with considerable critical attention within Canadian literary studies and beyond. Being the winner of numerous book awards and appearing frequently on university course syllabi,¹⁹ *Obasan* has not only been studied for its literary merits but has also become a key text through which critics could consider the canonization of ethnic literature and the implications of this canonization process for the disciplinarity and institutionality of Canadian literary studies. As critics reflect upon the place of Japanese Canadian writers within Canadian literary studies through studying *Obasan* and its critical reception, their criticism (which I refer to as *Obasan* criticism in the arguments that follow) forms an important discursive site where questions about

¹⁹ *Obasan* has won numerous prizes, including the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award, the Canadian Authors’ Association Book of the Year Award, and the Before Columbus American Book Award; it has also been widely taught in universities, not only in specialized upper-level courses but also frequently in first-year courses taken by a wide range of students (Beauregard, “After *Obasan*” 5). Since its publication in 1981, *Obasan* has garnered great critical interest and has become, in my latest count in 2011, the subject of more than a hundred and eleven articles or book chapters written by scholars in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Japanese Canadian identity are debated and thought through. In a sense, Japanese Canadians' identity struggles from race in itself to class for itself discussed in Chapter Two appear to be carried on in the post-redress years in the arena of *textual politics*, in a manner similar to the post-1968 period of Asian American Studies when there was “a shift of Marxist-inspired political struggle from the ‘community’ to the academy and from ‘real’ politics to textual politics” (Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* 4).²⁰

This chapter examines literary memories of Japanese Canadian internment generated in the specific context of *Obasan* criticism. While historical representations of internment contributed to the formation of a Japanese Canadian identity as being *materially* dispossessed, Kogawa's literary representation of internment in *Obasan* draw attention to the *cultural and social* aspects of that dispossession. In response to *Obasan*, literary critics have thus translated Japanese Canadians' loss of property as the outcome of internment—through the central metaphor in *Obasan* in which “There is a silence that cannot speak” (n.pag.)—into a loss of voice, or representation, in the cultural realm. Accordingly, the objectives of Japanese Canadian antiracist struggles in the post-redress years turned from a demand for a restoration of property to a restoration of representation in Canadian culture. This demand for representation, however, was rendered all the more intricate under the influence of the Canadian federal government's multicultural policy, initiated in 1971 and enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988—where representation is given, in distinctly circumscribed ways, to minority ethnic groups in Canada. At the same time, 1988 is also the year when

²⁰ Viet Thanh Nguyen writes that “the year 1968 [significant in Asian American social history as the start of the student strikes at San Francisco State College, now San Francisco State University, and subsequently at the University of California, Berkeley] is historically convenient and memorable but not quite adequate in encompassing previous or subsequent efforts to unify diverse Asian ethnicities into one political and cultural bloc. Nevertheless, [. . .] 1968 forms a clear moment of *self-articulation* on the part of Asian American intellectuals that concerns the constitution of an Asian American body politic as a diverse but unified group engaged in a struggle for racial equality” (*Race and Resistance* 7; emphasis original). For further discussion of the Asian American Student movement, see Umemoto.

Canada's political and cultural sovereignty became increasingly vulnerable to "multinational economic forces" through the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States (Miki, *Redress* 10). Following this "remarkable convergence of events" in 1988 (Beauregard, "After Redress" 74), *Obasan* criticism from the 1990s to the early 2000s thus became characterized by diverse attempts on the part of literary critics to formulate a viable politics of representation in the context of, and in response to, Canada's specific racist, multicultural, and globalized climate.

The Limits of Aunt Emily's Discourse

In *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (2002), Viet Thanh Nguyen points out a particular politics of representation—namely, the discourse of the bad subject—that he claims permeates Asian American literary criticism:

[Asian American literary] criticism tends to read for signs of resistance or accommodation because critics are reacting to the demands of American racism, which have historically treated Asian Americans as the bad subject to be punished or expelled or as the model minority to be included or exploited for complicity. (6)

In Nguyen's account, both model minority discourse and the discourse of the bad subject are methods of creating political meanings that concern the place of Asian Americans in American society. For Asian American scholars especially, "racism's compulsion to represent Asian Americans as either dangerous (the bad subject) or docile (the model minority) has compelled an equal and opposite reaction on the part of critics, who vociferously reject the model minority stereotype but end up prioritizing and idealizing Asian America as a bad subject" (Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* 23). By "both [appropriating] the dominant representation of Asian Americans as a dangerous

and subversive population and [idealizing] Asian America as a site of political opposition and resistance” (29), the discourse of the bad subject enables Asian American scholars to be opposed to the hegemony of pluralism and capitalism in American society. Accordingly, this Asian American politics of representation has historically denigrated literary representations of model minorities as indicative of accommodation to racism while promoting literary representations of bad subjects in order to foreground acts of resistance.

Despite discursive tensions with Asian American Studies on the one hand and Canadian literary studies on the other, literary critics working under the rubric of Asian Canadian Studies have also arguably developed a similar politics of representation.²¹ In the context of the critical reception of *Obasan*, for example, critics of Asian Canadian literature have tended to read Kogawa’s text for its display of a dialectical relationship between model minority discourse and the discourse of the bad subject. The character Aya Nakane, or the protagonist Naomi’s Obasan, is typically discussed by critics as a model minority who does not “respond to the racist’s slur” and who “remains in a silent territory, defined by her serving hands” (Kogawa, *Obasan* 226); whereas Emily Kato, Naomi’s other Aunt, is by contrast deemed to be a representative of the bad subject who is “not very Japanese-like” and who “toiled to [. . .] make familiar, to make knowable, the treacherous yellow peril that lived in the minds of the racially prejudiced” (Kogawa, *Obasan* 40). The polarizing temperaments that distinguish Aunt Emily from Obasan are in fact specified early in the novel through the protagonist Naomi’s point of view:

How different my two aunts are. One lives in sound, the other in stone.

²¹ According to Iyko Day, due to the fact that an Asian Canadian critical category has only recently emerged, Asian American scholars “have previously been unrestrained in claiming an American jurisdiction over Kogawa’s Canadian novel” (“Beyond *Obasan*?” 20). In contrast, Canadian literary studies has tended to read *Obasan* as a national bildungsroman and emphasize themes of nationalism, survival, and salvation in the novel. To establish itself as an integral critical category, “Asian Canadian Studies” has, in Day’s account, discursively distinguished itself from both Asian American Studies and Canadian literary studies.

Obasan's language remains deeply underground but Aunt Emily, BA, MA, is a word warrior. She's a crusader, a little old grey-haired Mighty Mouse, a Bachelor of Advanced Activists and General Practitioner of Just Causes. (32)

By discussing which of the two characters claims a dialectical upper hand in the novel, critics are able to derive from their interpretations forms of textual resistance against, or accommodation of, racism in Canada.

Asian Canadian Studies scholars' investment in the discourse of the bad subject for its political validity is directly tied to a specific politics of representation adopted by Japanese Canadian activists during the redress movement in the 1980s. Since the publication of *Obasan* in 1981, the character Aunt Emily has become a public symbol of Japanese Canadians' resistance against government-endorsed racism due to the novel's representation of her robust demands for redress for the internment of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II. The validity of Aunt Emily's politics and the discourse of the bad subject that this fictional character stands for were explicitly recognized and deployed by Japanese Canadian activists when the writings of Muriel Kitagawa (1912-1974)—a Nisei upon whom Joy Kogawa based the character Aunt Emily—were published in 1985. In a note near the beginning of *Obasan*, Joy Kogawa points out that the novel has drawn from “documents and letters from the files of Muriel Kitagawa” found in the Public Archives of Canada (now known as Library and Archives of Canada) in the late 1970s (n.pag.).²² In fact, Aunt Emily's letters addressed to Naomi's mother were reproduced almost word-for-word from the writings of Kitagawa. While the character Aunt Emily became known as the “word warrior” in the novel, the

²² When sharing the stories behind the creation of *Obasan* at an event called “Words On the Move” in the Historic Joy Kogawa House in May 2011, Joy Kogawa recalled that sometime during 1978 or 1979, she went to work in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa and “somebody handed [her] a sheetful of letters; those were the letters of Muriel Kitagawa. [She] read those and thought they have to be a book. [. . .] And then Muriel Kitagawa took on a persona. [. . .] [Kitagawa] became the Aunt Emily character” (Kogawa “Words On the Move”).

textual legacy of her real-life counterpart, Kitagawa, also came to assume symbolic importance during the Japanese Canadian redress movement. In the midst of the redress movement, Roy Miki edited a collection of Kitagawa's private letters and newspaper articles in a text that became *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes & Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-1948* (1985). In his introduction to the book, "The Life and Times of Muriel Kitagawa," Miki specified the empirical value of Kitagawa's text:

In contrast to [. . .] historical studies [such as Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was* and Ann Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism*], the "Letters to Wes" and the other writings of Muriel Kitagawa included in this volume are unique and rare. They are dramatic, impassioned documents from the time in which the living words, the descriptions and statements, were set down—sometimes frantically—in the heat of the turmoil. (33)

Miki's introduction to *This Is My Own* ended with a "Call for Redress," which underlined the political agenda behind the publication of this text. But it is clear at this point that this political agenda at the time was not only bolstered by the empirical value of Kitagawa's reflections but also by Kogawa's appropriation of Kitagawa's writings.

While the redress activists' deployment of the discourse of the bad subject as a politics of representation culminated in the 1988 redress settlement, this specific discursive position nevertheless underwent a moment of crisis in the years immediately following redress. As the redress settlement brought a tentative conclusion to Japanese Canadians' antiracist struggle, I contend that the discourse of the bad subject as a singularly antiracist politics of representation became *less answerable* to Japanese Canadians' multiple, diverse, and not necessarily antiracist demands for political and cultural representation that proliferated after redress. For Japanese Canadians, while the discourse of the bad subject enables them to be *defensive* to racism in their unredressed

state—as Japanese Canadians, in Roy Miki’s account, “disappeared in [their] unredressed state” after 1988 (qtd. in Beauregard, “After Redress” 74)—the ability of this antiracist discursive position to articulate a viable identity for Japanese Canadians who do not concern themselves with antiracist struggle is undermined. In a sense, while the discourse of the bad subject is derived from a dialectic of racism and antiracism, it is of limited use in “addressing issues beyond racial discrimination” (Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* 9). Accordingly, the discourse of the bad subject has not been entirely helpful in providing an *offensive* political posture for Japanese Canadians, a group that is becoming demographically and ideologically fractured.

In his discussion of the discourse of the bad subject in the Asian American context, Viet Thanh Nguyen draws attention to another limitation for critics assuming the discursive position of the bad subject. Despite the political promise this discourse has seemingly made to antiracist politics, Nguyen cautions against essentializing this discursive position:

The result [. . .] is the failure of Asian American intellectuals to confront the inevitable idealization of Asian American identity in late capitalism, the gradual slide from a politically necessary strategic essentialism to a co-opted and commodified essentialism as the dominant, if not sole, form of Asian American identity, which in the end limits the degree of opposition to pluralism and capitalism that the discourse of the bad subject wishes to promote. (150)

Here, Nguyen aims to problematize Asian American scholars’ adoption of the discourse of the bad subject as a necessary antithesis to the sophistication of global capitalism and American pluralism. It is Nguyen’s contention that this discourse’s inherent binary division between resistance as positive and accommodation as negative overlooks the

creative tactics utilized by Asian Americans or the scholars themselves against racism—even without acting resistantly. Adding Nguyen’s insights to the Canadian context discussed above, we could observe that the discourse of the bad subject delimits Asian Canadian Studies scholars’ textual politics in at least two ways. On the one hand, for scholars who distance themselves from antiracist politics, the discourse of the bad subject is *unanswerable* to their particular cultural and theoretical concerns; on the other hand, for scholars who continue to work in an antiracist paradigm after redress, the discourse of the bad subject is *unaccountable* for their creative antiracist tactics, which often straddle resistance and accommodation and are integral to the professional and institutional survival of Asian Canadian writers and literary critics.

In the following sections of this chapter, I argue that *Obasan* criticism is symptomatic of these limitations of the discourse of the bad subject. To put forward this argument, I would like to focus on a vehement debate that has taken place between two forms of *Obasan* criticism: one exemplified by Roy Miki’s “Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing” (1995) and Scott McFarlane’s “Covering *Obasan* and the Narrative of Internment” (1995), and another exemplified by Iyko Day’s “Beyond *Obasan*?: Ethnic Idealism, Victimization, and the Problem of Canonizing Japanese Canadian Literature” (2000). While to Miki and McFarlane, the experience of internment renders antiracism central to Japanese Canadian writers’ thematic concerns, to Day, the lack (of interest) of that experience should thus release other Japanese Canadian writers from the burden of antiracist textual politics. As “whether Japanese Canadian literature should represent internment to raise antiracist awareness or not” appears to be the kernel of their debate, Day’s discontent thus points toward the limitation of the discourse of bad subject as being *unanswerable*. To present the other limitation of the discourse of the bad subject as being *unaccountable*, I will at the end of

this chapter turn to a recent feature documentary film, *One Big Hapa Family* (2010), to demonstrate the flexible strategies of representation deployed by a Japanese Canadian filmmaker, Jeff Chiba Stearns. By drawing comparisons between Stearns' and *Obasan* critics' distinct politics of representation, I argue, following Nguyen, that existing forms of *Obasan* criticism have not yet adequately accounted for the creative tactics utilized by Japanese Canadians against racism in the changing scenes of Canadian multiculturalism.

***Obasan* Criticism and Its Politics of Representation**

According to Guy Beauregard in "After *Obasan*: Kogawa Criticism and Its Futures" (2001), "*Obasan* has become a key text [in Canada] for critics discussing the broad contours of contemporary Canadian literature written in English" (5). In effect, *Obasan* criticism has evolved into a major index of the status of Asian Canadian literature and writers within the fraught scene of Canadian literary studies. To explain what this means, I have selected Roy Miki's "Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing" (1995), Scott McFarlane's "Covering *Obasan* and the Narrative of Internment" (1995), and Iyko Day's "Beyond *Obasan*?: Ethnic Idealism, Victimization, and the Problem of Canonizing Japanese Canadian Literature" (2000) as key to my investigation of *Obasan* criticism' politics of representation. I have selected these texts because they attempt to examine not only the novel *Obasan* per se but also the broader contours of *Obasan* criticism understood as a discursive field. Throughout my discussion, I aim to demonstrate that while all three critical interpretations of *Obasan* are structured by the critics' specific politics of representation, "Japanese Canadian internment" becomes a free floating sign as these critics draw distinct and even contradictory meanings from it.

First presented at the Association for Asian American Studies conference in 1993 and later collected in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* in 1995, Roy Miki's "Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing" and Scott McFarlane's "Covering *Obasan* and the Narrative of Internment" exemplify a form of *Obasan* criticism that adopts a politics of representation derived specifically from the discourse of the bad subject, and hence forcefully targets the process of antiracist struggle. To Miki and McFarlane, taking part or even assuming authority in the discursive formation of Japanese Canadian internment is a crucial way for Japanese Canadian writers to contribute to an antiracist politics. As a matter of fact, Miki's and McFarlane's essays grew out of an evidently deep discontent toward the general critical trend in the 1980s and 1990s to read *Obasan* "resolutionarily"—that is, as if racism is resolved at the end of the novel—rather than "revolutionarily." According to Miki, in the "resolutionary" reading, "the agreement seems to be that the character Naomi resolves her silenced past, so establishes peace with the human rights violations that caused such havoc and grief to her, to her family, and to her community" ("Asiancy" 143). In partial disagreement with this reading, McFarlane argues that a "resolutionary" reading is symptomatic of the Canadian nation trying to shed its guilt by framing *Obasan* into a national bildungsroman in which the Canadian protagonist has learned from and hence resolved a Canadian racist past.

In their essays, Miki and McFarlane have both raised (extra)textual evidence in *Obasan* to re-problematize its assumed "resolutionary" end. In Miki's case, he argues that *Obasan* in fact does not end with Naomi's celebrated return to the coulee, where she puts her quest to rest, but with "a matter-of-fact document asking the government not to deport Japanese Canadians, signed by three white men" ("Asiancy" 144).²³

²³ An excerpt from the memorandum sent on April 1946 by the Co-operative Committee on Japanese

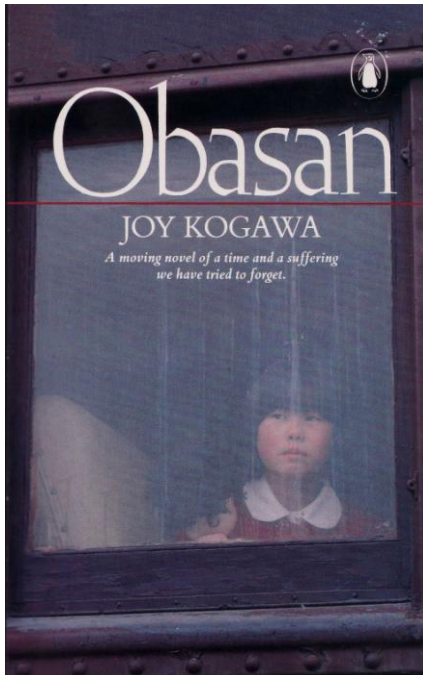


Figure 1: The cover of the 1983 Penguin edition of *Obasan*
Source: Penguin Books Canada

According to Miki, the asymmetric relationship between the opening proem of *Obasan*, where the writer struggles to break silence into speech,²⁴ and the concluding memorandum, where Japanese Canadians are still *spoken for*, reveals that “nothing has happened to change the social and political contexts of Naomi’s experiences”—and thus the Japanese Canadian case opened up and represented in *Obasan* is far from closed (“Asiancy” 144). In McFarlane’s case, he argues that the 1983 Penguin edition cover of *Obasan* shows that Japanese Canadians have not stopped being racialized (see Figure 1). According to McFarlane, the little girl sitting alone and clutching her doll in this cover, framed by the train window and a caption that reads “A moving novel of a time and a suffering we have tried to forget,” indicates the persistence of racialization of an ethnic minority in Canada on the one hand, and the imposition of institutional framing on the other. In light of this, McFarlane suggests that Naomi’s, and hence Japanese Canadians’, fight with racism remains an unfinished project.

Canadians to the House and the Senate of Canada is included at the end of *Obasan* as an appendix to the fictional narrative. In this document, the chairman of the committee, James Finlay, and two other members, Andrew Brewin and Hugh MacMillan, expressed their disapproval of the Orders-in-Council for the deportation of Canadians of Japanese racial origin to Japan. They suggested that the Orders were “wrong and indefensible and [constituted] a grave threat to the rights and liberties of Canadian citizens” and assured that “there is no need for fear of concentration [of Japanese Canadians] on the Pacific Coast as in the past” (*Obasan* 248-49). Some 4,000 Japanese Canadians had been exiled to Japan before the Orders were called off by the then Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1946 due to severe public challenge.

²⁴ The opening proem of *Obasan* stands independently from the main narrative of the novel and opens with two oft-quoted sentences: “There is a silence that cannot speak. There is a silence that will not speak” (n.pag.).

Reading *Obasan* “revolutionarily,” however, Miki and McFarlane attempt to map out a similar, yet not quite identical, antiracist politics of representation for Japanese Canadian writers. While both take issue with how the discourse of Japanese Canadian internment is constructed through *Obasan* and its criticism, and how specific constructions have affected the identity formation of Japanese Canadians in general, and Japanese Canadian writers in particular, their arguments differ in subtlety. McFarlane, who sees Japanese Canadian internment as a linguistic process, disparages Kogawa’s use of recurring imagery of yellow chicks in *Obasan* insofar as this image represents Japanese Canadians as already victimized and continually victimizable. Denouncing Kogawa for compromising Japanese Canadian agency, McFarlane thus urges Japanese Canadian writers to recognize their power in the discursive formation of internment and to start deploying it in the right way. At the same time, McFarlane also admits to the danger of such discursive power, as evidenced in the discourse of redress, where this Japanese Canadian success has been “re-inscribed by institutional ‘readers’ in the Canadian Ministry of Multiculturalism and critics in general who celebrate *Obasan* in ways which doubly displace Japanese Canadians from Japanese Canadian cultural production” (409).²⁵ Here, the implication of McFarlane’s argument is that Japanese Canadian writers should display resistance against institutional framings and eliminate ideological accommodation of all kinds—or else their works will end up like *Obasan*, which “shortly after the signing of the [redress] agreement, was invoked to sing the settlement’s praises” (410).²⁶

²⁵ In McFarlane’s view, *Obasan* has doubly displaced Japanese Canadians and the internment. On the one hand, Japanese Canadians’ suffering due to internment is displaced as a distant thing in the past that has been overcome in the present; on the other hand, a Japanese Canadian subjectivity has been displaced by a Canadian cultural identity which relentlessly recodes the former to stand for a violated and violable Canadian spirituality and culture (407-08).

²⁶ During the official announcement of the Japanese Canadian redress settlement on 22 September 1988 in the House of Commons, Edward Broadbent, then leader of the New Democratic Party, followed then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s speech with an affectionate reading of *Obasan*, intending to make

Miki's argument, however, appears to be more nuanced than McFarlane's. As pronounced in the subtitle of his essay, "Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing," Miki also approaches *Obasan* and its criticism in an effort to tease out the potential and challenges of an antiracist textual politics for Asian Canadian, especially Japanese Canadian, writers. But whereas McFarlane places the control, if not the burden, of the discursive formation of internment almost entirely on Japanese Canadian writers, Miki draws attention to the discursive reciprocity of readers, too. Using the often overlooked memorandum in *Obasan* as a point of anchor, Miki proposes that Japanese Canadian writing not only requires a specialized textual practice from the writers but also calls for informed theoretical principles from readers. In this way, Japanese Canadian writers might negotiate a way out of their own internalized racialization and the phenomenon of "English-Canadian centrality." Here, although Miki's propositions are far from concrete, he nevertheless distinguishes his arguments from McFarlane's in a significant way. Whereas McFarlane extracts textual complicity of racialization from *Obasan* and blames Kogawa for it, Miki explicates such complicity to be a necessary compromise in Kogawa's given context. To Miki, the power flow from a text to its reception is never unidirectional and less stable than what has been conceived by McFarlane.

In an important MA thesis entitled "Beyond *Obasan*?: Ethnic Idealism, Victimization, and the Problem of Canonizing Japanese Canadian Literature," Iyko Day criticizes Asian Canadian Studies scholars such as Roy Miki and Scott McFarlane for basing their politics of representation upon antiracist struggle. Although Day also disputes a "revolutionary" reading, she is equally unsatisfied with Miki's and McFarlane's "revolutionary" readings. To Day, both forms of *Obasan* criticism—by

palpable the hardship Japanese Canadians have undergone with the character Naomi's own words: "The fact is I never got used to it and I cannot, I cannot bear the memory. There are some nightmares from which there is no waking, only deeper and deeper sleep" (Broadbent 148). According to Roy Miki, Broadbent "was brought to tears" through his reading (*Redress* 7).

constantly subjecting a Japanese Canadian novel to antiracist interpretations— have circumscribed the agency of ethnic, especially Japanese Canadian, writers in particular ways. Day gathers scholars working within diverse and sometimes contradictory theoretical frames under the rubric of “resolutionary” for their shared investment in what Rey Chow has termed “ethnic idealism” in *Ethics After Idealism* (1998):

[Ethnic] idealism functions as a form of mentalism—a turning-into-an-idea—that valorizes ethnicity as an inherently positive idea that exists beyond the material contradictions and historical influences that constitute the world as we know it. (Day, “Beyond *Obasan*?” 29)

Day names Rachelle Kanefsky and her essay “Debunking a Postmodern Conception of History: A Defence of Humanist Values in the Novels of Joy Kogawa” (1996) as representative of a critical bent toward reading *Obasan* as a resolutionary Canadian national bildungsroman. According to Day, given Kanefsky’s critique that Naomi’s moral and historical relativism impedes her ability to act politically, this type of criticism prioritizes historical informativity and political significance over thematic liberty for ethnic writers. Treating ethnic writers as only “native informants,” literary critics thus risk excluding from institutional canonization Japanese Canadian writers who do not want to talk about internment or have not experienced it (Day, “Beyond *Obasan*?” 65).

Another tendency in the “resolutionary” camp is to read *Obasan* for its traces of poststructuralist theories. A representative critic here is Donald Goellnicht and his 1989 essay “Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*,” toward whose postmodern indeterminacy Kanefsky in fact targeted her unapologetically humanist attack in 1996. According to Day, while Goellnicht attempts to uncover theories indigenous to ethnic texts rather than imposing existing Western theories on them, the

presumption of their essential theoretical productivity nevertheless exacerbates their critical stigmatization as “cultural crap” (“Beyond *Obasan?*” 78). Overshadowed by texts preapproved simply because they are “ethnic,” Japanese Canadian writers’ literary merits might find a hard time receiving institutional recognition.

Turning to the “revolutionary” camp, Day tags Miki and McFarlane as “The School of Resentment” (“Beyond *Obasan?*” 73). Addressing Miki and his essay “Sliding the Scale of Elision: ‘Race’ Constructs / Cultural Praxis” (1998), where Miki critiques the relativizing effects of the representation of the bombing of Nagasaki in *Obasan*, Day criticizes Miki for basing his arguments on revenge and the production of guilt:

[Roy Miki’s] critical logic encompasses a system where the more suffering is communicated in a novel the more guilt it will produce in its mainstream readership. In other words, a Japanese Canadian novel’s resistant potential hinges on the amount of guilt it can produce. (“Beyond *Obasan?*” 73)

According to Day, Miki sees victimization as an integral part of Japanese Canadian identity and charges Kogawa with displacing the textual impact of internment. In opposition to Miki, Day thus asserts that “The only way that Japanese Canadians’ history of internment can be redeemed is if Japanese Canadian identity ceases to be invested in it” (“Beyond *Obasan?*” 76).²⁷ At this point, Day goes so far as to propose a “forgetting of internment” which is expected to take the burden of representing historical oppression off the shoulders of Japanese Canadian writers (“Beyond *Obasan?*” 76). Inherent in Day’s indignant accusation is this question: If “remembering

²⁷ Iyko Day’s attack on Miki and McFarlane in fact corresponds to many critics’ similar discontent with ethnic minorities’ exploitation of the identity of the victim. As James Baldwin, a black American novelist and writer, reflects on the issue, the identity of the victim, however politically effective it might be, can be problematic: “I refuse, absolutely to speak from the point of view of the victim. The victim can have no point of view for precisely so long as he thinks of himself as a victim. The testimony of the victim, corroborates, simply the reality of the chains that bind him—confirms, and, as it were consoles the jailer” (78; qtd. in Gilroy, “Diaspora” 319).

internment” is crucial to Japanese Canadian writers’ antiracist struggle, would “forgetting internment” necessary mean an accommodation of racism? Here, Day’s argument is noteworthy in the sense that it draws attention to the fact that Miki’s politics of representation seems to be *unanswerable* to Japanese Canadian writers’ need for artistic freedom, especially for writers who do not see internment as central to their identities. And in this way, Day is able to exempt these writers from the ubiquitous question of cultural complicity. Yet while Day makes a valid critique of what is missing from an antiracist politics of representation instantiated by Miki and McFarlane, some clarification must be made about Miki’s argument. In a way, Miki’s identification of Kogawa’s textual complicity is less a charge than a reflective diagnosis of Kogawa’s creative context. And what Miki has prescribed as preferable tactics for Japanese Canadian writers evoking a similar context is not necessarily relevant to Japanese Canadian writers with a different agenda in mind.

Considering Roy Miki’s and Iyko Day’s arguments in tandem, I argue that their mutually exclusive politics of representation have yet to fully *account for* the discursive ambiguity that might take place as Japanese Canadian writers set out to perform their cultural agency—or, in Miki’s term, their “Asiancy.” In Miki’s case, his antiracist orientation obliges him to base Japanese Canadian writers’ identities upon a dichotomous split between “*the inside*, or what in a familial realm of childhood may have assumed the shape of an interiority” and “*the outside*—the white Canadian public, the government, the media, and all the ethnocentric forces that together constituted the body politic of this country” (Miki, “Asiancy” 140; emphasis added). According to Miki, although “the inside can be so subordinated to the outside that it cannot recognize its specificity at all,” it is imperative for Japanese Canadian writers to revitalize this pristine *inside* with their politics of representation (Miki, “Asiancy” 142). Here, while

this distinction enables Japanese Canadian writers to become aware of the danger of internalized racialization, Miki nevertheless appears to take for granted the assumption that such a distinction can be made and appears to deny critical recognition to those whose politics of representation might harbor any cultural ambiguity, such as those pointed out by Day.

In Day's case, while she is proposing a Japanese Canadian textual politics which would seemingly rise above the tumult of antiracist politics, the fact that Day sees institutional canonization as a necessary end to Japanese Canadian writings nevertheless lands her argument right in the middle of Miki's critique of internalized racialization. In "Asiancy," Miki points out that canonization is exactly derived from writers' negotiation with the racial boundary set forth by the national institution:

For writers of color, then, the new form of becoming invisible may be less visible as an ideology, because of the official rhetoric of multiculturalism, but it still requires conformity to dominant representations [. . .]. Only the most vigilant can escape the temptations of power relations that govern what gets to be judged of "national significance" and of "consequence"—reinforced as they are by an elaborate system of awards, rewards, media privileges, canonization, and ultimately, institutionalization. (139)

Accordingly, while Day attempts to deliver Japanese Canadian writers who do not wish to write about internment *beyond* a racial boundary, she nevertheless overlooks the necessary evasiveness and ambivalence of that boundary, and has ironically endorsed a form of institutional racialization that Japanese Canadian writers are constantly subject to.

The body of *Obasan* criticism discussed in this section can be read as an interesting response to the "Kogawa Criticism" discussed in Guy Beauregard's "After

Obasan: Kogawa Criticism and Its Future” (2001).²⁸ In this article, Beauregard examines critical discussions of *Obasan* that appeared in Canada in an attempt to “[bring] into focus particular coherent patterns of how critics in Canadian literary studies have read and continue to read racialized texts and representations of histories of racism in Canada” (9). Through his analysis, Beauregard argues that the shape of Kogawa criticism can be understood as “a symptom of the cultural politics of contemporary Canadian literary studies, in which literary critics attempt to [. . .] manage the implications of a particular moment in Canadian history by *remembering it in a particular way*” (14). This critical tendency, according to Beauregard, is informed by what Smaro Kamboureli has identified as the *sedative politics* of Canadian multiculturalism, which “attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them” (qtd. in Beauregard, “After *Obasan*” 17). While Canadian literary critics, in Beauregard’s account, have attempted to manage, if not draw to a close, a history of racism in Canada, the body of *Obasan* criticism discussed in this section appears to have been dedicated to opening up to question forms of racism that still persist in contemporary Canada. Foregrounding a specifically antiracist politics, however, such forms of *Obasan* criticism have, in my estimation, not been entirely to-the-point in addressing the racism inherent in Canadian literary critics’ *sedative politics*. In Miki’s and McFarlane’s reliance on representations of internment as part of a forceful antiracist strategy, for example, they overlook how such representations could become, at the current moment, an alibi for racism. Here the work of Kyo Maclear is helpful to draw attention to such a “politics of remembrance”:

²⁸ Beauregard uses “Kogawa criticism” to designate critical discussions of Kogawa’s writings which focus on, but are not limited to, *Obasan*. This includes critical discussions of Kogawa’s poetry, her children’s book *Naomi’s Road*, her subsequent novels *Itsuka* and *The Rain Ascends*, and her non-fiction prose (“After *Obasan*” 19). Here I distinguish my use of *Obasan* criticism from Beauregard’s use of the wider category of Kogawa criticism for the former targets specifically at critical discussions of *Obasan* and its receptions and marks the discursive site in which Asian Canadian studies scholars, as distinct from other Canadian literary critics, have endeavored specific textual politics.

[I]t may be time to move with and beyond reductive dualisms which take as their focus organized forms of social remembering and forgetting [. . .] and begin to look as well at how dominant strategies of remembrance may seek to incorporate rather than openly suppress surplus memories of loss and trauma. (qtd. in Beauregard, “After *Obasan*” 15; 143)

It is possible to argue that the *Obasan* criticism exemplified by Miki, McFarlane, as well as Day is characterized by an ideological rigidity which is either unwilling or unable to account for the ambivalent “politics of remembrance” that have often characterized literary representations of Japanese Canadian internment. Such a state of *Obasan* criticism, and here I agree with Beauregard, in fact reflects “the genuine difficulties involved in analyzing literary representations of racialization and racism in Canada” (17).

Hapa, Interrupts

At this point, I wish to present an interruption to the ideological rigidity of the *Obasan* criticism discussed above. I wish to ask whether there is the possibility of representing Japanese Canadian internment in ways that recognize the ambivalence of a politics of remembrance while not being bounded by antiracist concerns. Hiromi Goto’s novel *Chorus of Mushroom* (1994) and Kerri Sakamoto’s novel *The Electrical Field* (1998) are amongst the few Japanese Canadian literary texts that have lent artistic considerations to the legacy of internment, whereas Japanese Canadian writings have generally moved into other thematic directions after *Obasan*. To explore a relatively flexible politics of representation for Japanese Canadians, then, I wish to turn to *One Big Hapa Family* (2010), a feature-length documentary film featuring the director Jeff

Chiba Stearns's Japanese Canadian side of the family.²⁹ In drawing attention to a filmic text, however, I do not suggest that it is in any way a necessarily truer or more transparent form of representation than a literary text, but that it can serve as a potentially valuable example to extend our discussion of an alternative textual politics. Providing an unusual narrative of internment, *One Big Hapa Family* ambiguously caters to its audience's antiracist sentiments at the same time as it toes the line in terms of Canadian multiculturalism's visible minority policy. While the previous section of this chapter examined literary memories of internment at their most active and formative period, this section turns to a different form of memory of internment in a heuristic attempt to open up new possibilities for Japanese Canadian textual politics.

The idea of making *One Big Hapa Family* dawned upon Stearns one day during a 2006 Koga family reunion with his Japanese Canadian side of the family. In that reunion, surrounded by children of mixed Japanese ancestry, Stearns suddenly realized that "everyone in that family, after [his] grand parents' generation, has married someone that is not Japanese" (Wong and Tsang). As curious as that seemed to Stearns, he set out to find out the reasons behind such phenomena, at the same time as he tackled questions such as "why almost 100% of all Japanese Canadians are marrying interracially, the highest out of any other ethnicity in Canada" and "how their mixed children perceive their unique multiracial identities" (Stearns).³⁰ Beginning with a joyous family reunion and returning to that same "one big happy family" in the end, the film's narrative predisposes viewers to share the point of view of a happy hapa, Jeff Chiba Stearns, and

²⁹ "Hapa" is a Hawaiian language term used to describe a person of mixed Asian or Pacific Islander racial or ethnic heritage. In *One Big Hapa Family*, Stearns tries to reinvent the term to designate his mixed Japanese Canadian family by adding Japanese connotations to the term. In Stearns's usage, "hapa" comes to carry meanings such as "starting and destroying the old" (発破) and "leaves" (葉), which connects the term to Stearns because his Japanese last name "Chiba" means "thousand leaves" in Japanese (千葉).

³⁰ According to the National Association of Japanese Canadians, there is currently a 95% intermarriage rate amongst Canadians of Japanese ancestry, the highest of all the ethnic groups in Canada ("Composition").

invites them to follow him on his quest to answer the proposed question. The film's initiating question and its viewer positioning in effect regulate its viewers' understanding of the subsequent narrative development into two possible categories: "the things that have been paving the way for Japanese Canadian mixed unions" and "the things that have been preventing them." It should be underlined that an inherent disagreement with the traditional idea of "keeping the blood line" is at work in the film, as evidenced by Stearns's farcical dramatization of South Asians' alleged antagonism against intermarriages. With this narrative stance, then, the film seems to encourage its viewers to invest "the things that have been paving the way for Japanese Canadian mixed unions" with the value of positive liberation.

Interestingly, at this point, the history of Japanese Canadian internment is interjected into the film's narrative as one of those things that have brought about the Japanese Canadian community's assumed open mindedness to mixed unions. Viewers at this particular point of the film appear to have been placed at the intersection between two ideological discourses: a liberation discourse that positions internment as one factor that led to the social acceptance of Japanese Canadian mixed unions, and an antiracist discourse that sees internment as one manifestation of a long history of racism against Japanese Canadians in Canada. As an effect of this double framing, as will be discussed below, the history of Japanese Canadian internment is represented in the film in a way less to attribute blame than as a means to foreground the primary narrative of a hapa genealogical quest.

As soon as the double framing of the history of Japanese Canadian internment is set, three different memories of internment are told. First, Roy Inouye, a former president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), relates his own experience with internment in a manner that is closely in line with the "official history":

We could have put on a minstrel show [when we were riding the train to internment] because the coal dust was on our face but you can see the tear lines. (Stearns)

Following Inouye, Stearns's Uncle Suey then describes an entirely different memoryscape of the years when most Japanese Canadians were interned. Living in Kelowna in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, outside the hundred-mile restricted zone adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, Uncle Suey and in fact Stearns's grandparents' generation were among those few Japanese Canadians who were *not* interned during World War II.³¹ What Uncle Suey remembers from those years, then, is the severe racial climate that turned local Japanese Canadians (who lived in Kelowna) against the "coastal Japs" (who were expelled by the government from the restricted zone) in order to protect their own extant social and economic establishments. Despite the coastal/local division amongst Japanese Canadians, however, Stearns observes that Uncle Suey mentions the fact that "if it weren't for some coast Japanese coming into Kelowna, he would've never met his wife Mary" (Stearns). Uncle Suey's story, then, diverges from a typical account of Japanese Canadian internment as we know it. At last, Stearns offers his own memory of Japanese Canadian internment. This memory, as a form of what Marianne Hirsch would call a *postmemory*, differs in mnemonic level from Inouye's and Uncle Suey's narrative accounts.³² While Stearns's own memory about Japanese Canadian internment is derived from his grade twelve history and deeply entrenched in national pedagogy, in his postmemory of internment, he can only

³¹ In January 1942, the Canadian government passed Order in Council PC 365 which designated an area 100-mile inland from the west coast as a "protected area." In effect of the order, all male Japanese nationals living within the "protected area" along the British Columbia coast were to be removed from this zone and taken to road camps. Later in March 1942, the order extended to sanction the expulsion of "all persons of Japanese racial origin" from the "protected area" (Miki and Kobayashi 22-24).

³² In "The Generation of Postmemory," Marianne Hirsch explains "postmemory" to be powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded subjects' birth but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.

recall that “the elders in my family never talk about the internment” and now he knows why (Stearns).

Framing these three related yet distinct memories of Japanese Canadian internment back to the film’s thematic concern with mixed unions, Stearns presents Roy Inouye’s apparently sensible reasoning:

With the war Japanese Canadians got scattered across Canada. And within the community there were very few Japanese groups. And so of course [Japanese Canadians] would eventually become closer to the Caucasian people, and would also date them. Therefore when they decided to get married, they married Caucasians. (Stearns)

Yet when applying this reasoning to Uncle Suey’s story, Stearns detects incoherence. He asks: “So even though my family wasn’t interned [and hence not dispersed], why do we still have such a high intermarriage rate?” (Stearns). To this point Uncle Suey answers: “Maybe it’s because of the war that we had to break our ties with Japan. And so we really went overboard doing it” (Stearns). At this point, Stearns could have positioned both Inouye’s and Uncle Suey’s memories within an antiracist discourse that draws its potential political impact from pinpointing the proliferation of mixed marriages within the Japanese Canadian community as one effect of internment. Yet instead of opting for the identity of an antiracist Japanese Canadian, Stearns identifies himself and the younger generation of his mixed family as the carefree hapas—subjects who may or may not exactly be trying to make sense of Japanese Canadian internment, yet who are nevertheless constantly wondering about their own identities.³³ In this way, memories of Japanese Canadian internment—represented through Roy Inouye’s, Uncle Suey’s,

³³ When confronted with Jeff Chiba Stearns’s question “What are you?” Stearns’s young relatives offer a motley of responses ranging from “a child of God, a person, a fire fighter” to “Canadian, half-Chinese and half-Koga, half-Japanese half-Canadian.”

and Stearns's narrative accounts—are defamiliarized through the diegetic frame of a private family history, in a way that simultaneously foregrounds and mitigates the film's possible antiracist political undertones.

In *One Big Hapa Family*, Stearns's ability to flexibly switch the tone of the film from a potentially antiracist one to a culturally celebratory one derives from his reluctance to disavow a necessary identity ambiguity that matter-of-factly enables his institutional survival as a minority filmmaker. As delineated in the film, the identity ambiguity of an ethnic minority is most obvious when s/he has to negotiate a social existence in Canada through the prescribed identity marker of “visible minority.”³⁴ When Stearns's mixed-race relatives are asked the question “do you see yourself being a visible minority?” anxiety about the given identity underwrites some of the responses such as: “I . . . don't think so. No because I think I'm still very normal. Ok not normal but” Others, however, see a certain degree of social agency afforded by this identity: “For what it's worth, it may have helped me get into the fire department for all I know. I didn't purposely play that card but it may have helped me along the way because I know they look for visible minorities in that profession” (Stearns). When reflecting upon his own identity as a visible minority in Canada, Stearns acknowledges that “as long as Canadians continue to divide themselves by visible minority ethnic groups, people will always wonder where you are from unless you're white”; yet, at the same time, Stearns also admits to the fact that “this film is funded because I am seen as a visible minority” (Stearns).³⁵ Here, Stearns's recognition of his own and his relatives'

³⁴ The term *visible minorities*, as defined in Canada by the Employment Equity Act, refers to “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color”; see Canada. According to Marie Lo, within a visual economy, visible minority discourse “does not simply circumscribe the terms of oppression as well as the terms of emancipation; the condition of oppression—that is, one's visibility—returns and is proffered as the term of emancipation” (106).

³⁵ *One Big Hapa Family* is sponsored both by government-funded organizations including the Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, the National Association of Japanese Canadians Endowment Fund for Cultural Development, the Canadian Independent Film & Video Fund (CIFVF), and the National Film

necessary identity ambiguity, if institutional complicity, as racialized subjects is what distinguishes his politics of representation from the ones informing the Asian Canadian literary criticism discussed above. Instead of confining himself within a rigid discourse of antiracism, Stearns deploys a flexible strategy of representation that does not require him to bypass the question of institutional complicity but instead allows him to further examine toward what ends such complicity could be directed and what those ends could mean for antiracist resistance in the Japanese Canadian community.

In his attempt to represent Japanese Canadian internment, Stearns draws not only from narrative accounts from an older generation, but also from images and material objects of the past—photographs, video footage, artifacts, and crucially, a visit to the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre (NIMC) located in New Denver, British Columbia. Stearns characteristically presents the NIMC through an equivocal double frame—highlighting its historical value as “one of ten Canadian internment camp sites where Japanese Canadians were sent during World War II [and] the only place in Canada where the internment buildings still exist” while immediately downplaying such value by stating that “[his] family had also made this journey years before [him], though was as a vacation not because they were interned” (Stearns).

Stearns’s thematic excursion to the NIMC recalls Monika Kim Gagnon’s reflections in “Tender Research: Filed Notes from the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, New Denver, BC” (2006). Characterizing heritage sites as capable of producing representational registers of cultural meaning different from other expressions of memory, Gagnon researched the NIMC and its surroundings “as a living site, and speculatively as a *living archive*” (217; emphasis original). On the one hand, the NIMC

Board through a Filmmaker Assistance Program grant, and by other organizations such as the Rogers Documentary Fund and the Knowledge Network. According to Stearns, the grant program that he is referring to here is the NAJC Endowment Fund; see “Endowment Fund.”

is an *archive* in the sense that it compiles Japanese Canadians' memories of material and affective loss with the preservation of internment shacks, paper archives, the Peace Garden, and so on, forming, in Gagnon's vocabulary, an idiom of remembrance. Underlining the significance of archiving especially for dispossessed Japanese Canadians, Gagnon states that the NIMC's "complex undertaking of self-archiving may be in part symptomatic of the legacy of dispossession by the government during the mass expulsion" (220). On the other hand, the NIMC is *living* in the sense that its shifting spatiality points toward a fluid temporality, through which remnants of memory such as internment shacks live on as renovated "contemporary homes following the Second Uprooting after the end of World War II" (224). Accordingly, memories of Japanese Canadian internment are generated in relation to the complex temporalities of living landscapes in ways that exceed and defy how "explicit expressive modes and narratives" such as history and other forms of explanation, chronology, interpretation, and display would represent these memories (222). Here, Stearns's and Gagnon's research on, and representations of, a heritage site as a living archive urges us to move from literary representations to spatial representations to extend our investigation. It is to this topic of spatial memories that the following chapter will now turn.

Chapter Four | Spatial Memories

From the House of Commons to the House of Joy Kogawa

In 1942, a modest bungalow of a Japanese Canadian family at 1450 West 64th Avenue in Vancouver, British Columbia—the house of the Nakayamas—was seized by the Canadian federal government as one part of its consecutive procedure to displace Japanese Canadians from the B.C. coastal area and to relocate them into various internment camps in the interior. The house of the Nakayamas, along with the lands, houses, and belongings of 22,000 Japanese Canadians, was then auctioned by the Custodian of Enemy Property to willing buyers, as part of “the government’s policy of making the dispossessed pay for their own uprooting and dispossession” (Miki, *Redress* 99). Although this house remained indistinct from all the other houses confiscated by the Canadian federal government and lost by Japanese Canadians during World War II, it became known as the house of Joy Kogawa, the daughter of the Nakayamas, as Kogawa’s literary portrayals of it in *Obasan* reached the Canadian public in 1981. It was not until more than two decades later that the house was symbolically returned to Joy Kogawa. In 2006, through a series of fund raising campaigns that had spanned three years, the house was purchased by the Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC),³⁶ with the help of the Save Joy Kogawa House Committee,³⁷ with a view to transforming it into a site to remember Japanese Canadians’ experiences with wartime dispossession.

³⁶ The purpose of the Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) is to protect plants, animals, natural communities and landscape features that represent diversity of life on earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive, and to protect areas of scientific, historical, cultural, scenic or compatible recreation value. This is accomplished by acquiring protective control of these lands and waters through ownership of the land, long-term leases or conservation covenants; see blog.conservancy.bc.ca.

³⁷ The Save Joy Kogawa House Committee included Anton Wagner, Kathy Chung, Ann-Marie Metten, Harry Aoki, and Todd Wong, among whom Metten and Wong were the major contributors to the blog documenting the save Kogawa House campaign activities on www.kogawahouse.com. This committee was renamed the “Historic Joy Kogawa House Society” after TLC’s successful preservation of the Marpole house in 2006.

The site is now known as “Historic Joy Kogawa House.”

This chapter discusses the save Joy Kogawa House campaign that took place from 2003 to 2006, and the cultural controversies that have surrounded this site of memory since that time. While the previous two chapters have examined the power and limitations of remembering Japanese Canadian internment in certain ways, this chapter considers the ethics of that memory. Accordingly, I will enquire into the question of ethical remembrance in the context of the Historic Joy Kogawa House memorial project, and examine how this project has reinforced a memoryscape of the house while also masking its incoherence.³⁸ While both the Kogawa House activists and those who oppose them have attempted to perform acts of remembrance that they perceived as ethical, their efforts led toward seemingly irresolvable conflicts. In the midst of their conflicts, what potential, and what restraints, reside in a story that begins with “a silence that cannot speak”—a story that arguably should have ended with the announcement of the redress settlement in the House of Commons in 1988, yet continues on?

Campaigning toward a Happy Ending

According to Gregory Gibson in “Moving Forward: The ‘Save the Kogawa House’ Campaign and Reconciliatory Politics in Canada,” the save Kogawa House campaign “spanned nearly three years, defined by two peak periods of campaign activity—fall 2003, and September 2005 to May 2006—with an interim span of relative latency” (30).³⁹ The first period of the campaign began after Joy Kogawa found, at the end of

³⁸ In “Archive and Myth: The Changing Memoryscape of Japanese Canadian Internment Camps,” Kirsten McAllister has used the term “memoryscape” to describe the collective memory of internment formed through photographic images, serving as “a repository for the material of memory haunted by the myths of places and people who have long since disappeared” (215). Applying McAllister’s usage to a commemorative site, I use “memoryscape” to foreground a mnemonic landscape designed and staged to present a particular scene of memory.

³⁹ “Moving Forward: The ‘Save the Kogawa House’ Campaign and Reconciliatory Politics in Canada” is an MA thesis by Gregory Dean Gibson in 2009. Gibson’s thesis was kindly sent to me by the current

August 2003 as she drove through the Marpole neighborhood of Vancouver, that her childhood home was up for sale. In response to Kogawa's long yearning for a homecoming, the "Kogawa Homestead Committee" was formed by "an ad hoc group of the author's friends and colleagues" to save her house (Gibson 31).⁴⁰ The committee's attempt to raise funds and public awareness so as to eventually afford the house, however, was thwarted when the house was sold off to a Taiwanese buyer, Su Shen, on 15 November 2003. While in the following years the Kogawa Homestead Committee attempted to secure heritage safeguards for the Marpole house from the city of Vancouver—which "did not materialize [because] city planners determined that since the owner was evidently appreciative of the home's heritage value, [. . .] they would not recommend assigning official heritage status to the site at this time"—the second wave of the save Kogawa House campaign kicked off when the committee was "notified of impending demolition and development applications" for the house in September 2005 (Gibson 33).

As the second period of the save Kogawa House campaign started, the Kogawa Homestead Committee, renamed the "Save Joy Kogawa House Committee," succeeded in soliciting support from the Vancouver City Council which "voted unanimously on November 3 to grant a 120-day demolition delay order to preserve the home and to recognize its historical and cultural heritage" (Wong, "Fundraising Drive"). On 2 December 2005, the Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) agreed to lead the campaign to acquire the house and secure its protection. The ensuing press conferences, fundraising concerts, open house reading sessions, and several other forms of publicity

Executive Director of the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society, Ann-Marie Metten, as a way to assist my research in Taiwan of a site overseas in 2010. I eventually met Metten in 2011.

⁴⁰ Ann-Marie Metten recalled during my interview with her that she had learned about Joy Kogawa's wish to save her childhood house from a local newspaper, the *Georgia Straight*, when information of the first fundraising event at the house on 27 September 2003 was announced. At the time, Metten was surprised to learn that this house was located within her own neighborhood, and thus began her long-term involvement in and commitment to the activities that would save the house.

for the committee’s cause, however, failed to reach the donation goal of CAN\$1.25 million as the demolition delay came to its end in March 2006. At this point, Shen, the owner of the house, “in a gesture of good faith, [...] offered to extend the demolition-stay thirty days beyond” to 30 April 2006 (Gibson 35). And on 25 April 2006, an anonymous donation of CAN\$500,000 enabled TLC to finally purchase the house.⁴¹

As demonstrated in the TLC information kit distributed during the second period of fundraising, the save Kogawa House campaign strategically confused the Marpole house with the childhood house of Naomi Nakane, the narrator of *Obasan*; and Joy Kogawa with the character Naomi. In the information kit—which included “the fundraising goals, an organizational overview, the history of the injustice against Japanese Canadians, a short biography of Joy Kogawa and excerpts from Brian

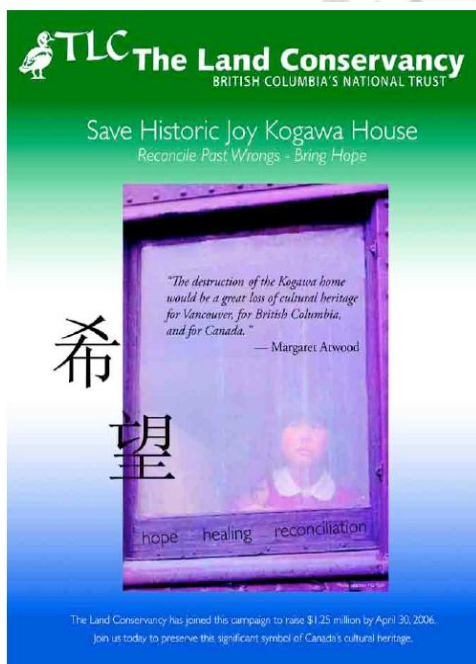


Figure 2: Cover of the TLC information kit

Source: Historic Joy Kogawa House Society Archives

Mulroney’s 1988 apology speech in Parliament”—instead of front-paging a photo of the Marpole house which was the object under the threat of demolition and in need of financial rescue, TLC opted “to use the photograph taken by Hal Roth in the Toronto CN Rail yard for the ubiquitous [1983] Penguin edition of *Obasan*” (see Figure 2), enhancing spectators’ identification with the campaign’s cause by referring them to a story they already knew well (Gibson 38, 52; for a

⁴¹ This donation was apparently provided by Senator Nancy Ruth, a member of the Conservative Party of Canada and a longtime advocate for women’s issues and human rights (Gibson 35).

reproduction of the cover of the 1983 Penguin edition, see Figure 1 on page 47). What's more, while excerpts from Mulroney's 1988 apology speech were included in the kit, the passage was attributed to "Joy Kogawa's novel *Emily Kato*, the author's redress-focused 2005 sequel to *Obasan*" (Gibson 51). The deliberate blurring of distinctions between the real world and a fictitious one licensed the campaign to conceive of the history of Japanese Canadians as a coherent narrative of Japanese Canadians seeking redress, and the save Kogawa House project as its epilogue. And it was the hope of the campaign activists that this epilogue would feature the homecoming of Naomi Nakane and all the other Japanese Canadian characters who had yet to return home at the end of the novel *Obasan*.⁴²

Responding to the call of the save Kogawa House campaign, concerned individuals including Roy Miki and Margret Atwood, social organizations such as the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) and the Writers Union of Canada, and politicians such as a Member of Parliament for Vancouver South, Ujal Dosanjh, showed support for the campaign in the forms of news articles, public speeches, or letters addressed to either the committee or the Vancouver City Council. Common in their advocacy of the save Kogawa House project was the tendency to mark the Japanese Canadian narrative as incomplete, not only because the financial compensation paid to Japanese Canadian internment survivors in the 1988 redress settlement was deemed more "arbitrary and abstract" than proportional, but also because of a popular conviction that a narrative that started with "uprooting" should rightly end in "homecoming" (Gibson 66). In a letter to the Kogawa Homestead Committee and its supporters dated 31 October 2003, Reverend Timothy Nakayama, Joy Kogawa's brother,

⁴² In an evident expression of affection, Joy Kogawa reveals the symbolic significance of such a homebound memorial project for herself and potentially for other uprooted Japanese Canadians: "All my life—that is my life from the age of six on—I'd wanted to go home" ("House of *Obasan*" 133).

provided a melancholy touch to the unfinished narrative:

With the end of the war we were not allowed to return to the West Coast of B.C. The “protected area” from which we were banished was left in place. Also because all our properties had been auctioned off by the government [. . .] none of us Japanese Canadians had places of our own where we could return. [. . .] In 1949 the governmental action that had removed us was replaced by legislation that opened up Canada to fairer immigration policies [. . .] However, most of the people were short of resources, weary of additional moving, and stayed where they had become resettled. [. . .] Can the house where we once lived now become a place to learn about freedom and human rights?

As implied by Nakayama, the Japanese Canadian narrative was incomplete in that an “unsaved” house would signify Japanese Canadians’ delayed return to their “roots,” even after they were officially redressed by the Canadian government in 1988.

Adhering to the mentality of the save Kogawa House campaign, how then can this incomplete Japanese Canadian narrative come to a happy ending? According to Roy Miki in *Redress*, the predicaments of Japanese Canadians started at the moment when the Canadian government “[supplanted] the language of ‘citizenship’ with ‘race’ terminology” (91). As understood by Miki, it was the Canadian government’s racialization of Japanese Canadians and the consequent deprivation of their citizenship rights that triggered and enabled their mass uprooting in 1942. Accordingly, since “The federal government’s seizure of the ‘[Nakayama] house’ was part of a larger, comprehensive campaign perpetrated against Japanese Canadians that stripped them of rights of citizenship,” the retrieval of the house—and thus the apparent termination of racism and the symbolic restoration of citizenship—was imperative for a truly redressed

Japanese Canadian community as it would presumably bring a “happy ending” to an incomplete Japanese Canadian narrative (Gibson 2). Thus, on 19 May 2006, responding to the successful preservation of the house, Kogawa’s affectionate letter to one of the Save Joy Kogawa House Committee members, Todd Wong, interpreted their achievement as the overcoming of racism in Canada:

What the house means to me -- these days it’s a sense of miracle that surrounds me. [. . .] Racism is a present tragedy in the world, as it has been in the past. Here is one small way that we can say in Canada, that racism can be overcome. (Kogawa, E-mail to Todd Wong)

Such a coherent and happily concluded understanding of the process and outcome of the save Kogawa House campaign was prevalent amongst the Kogawa House’s campaigners and supporters, whose tone of triumph is certainly legible in existing critical accounts such as Glenn Deer’s “Revisiting Kogawa House” (2007) and Gregory Gibson’s “Moving Forward” (2009). This tone of triumph, however, was thrown into doubt by many Japanese Canadians’ ambivalent attitude toward the establishment of Historic Joy Kogawa House. How can we learn to read such moments of ambivalence?

The Kogawa House Memoryscape and Hashimoto’s Discontent

In “Kogawa House Demolition Plea at City Hall,” Todd Wong articulated a vision of the Kogawa House memorial project in November 2005:

It is our vision to purchase the house from its current owner and transform it into a writers-in-residence centre, to give writers a taste of Vancouver’s multicultural diversity. This will give special attention to writers of conscience, who can address human rights issues like those that removed Joy and her family away from their home to internment camps for the Japanese

Canadians.

Evident in Wong's speech is an impulse to territorialize the Marpole house with two distinct discourses: first, concerning memories of Japanese Canadians, whose human rights were trampled on during and after World War II by the Canadian federal government; and secondly, concerning multicultural diversity (in Vancouver specifically—and, by implication, in Canada more generally), a discourse that would be given a locus of expression if a writers-in-residence program were to be established. Accordingly, when “Historic Joy Kogawa House” came into being in May 2006, spatial arrangements were made for the house to accommodate these overlapping yet nonidentical discourses.

To commemorate Japanese Canadians and the wartime expropriation of their properties, the house was restored “to the qualities it had before Joy and her family were forced to leave their house due to enforced internment of Japanese Canadians during WW2 [to become] a house that you could imagine a Canadian family celebrating Christmas in during the 1940's” (Wong, “Todd Visits”). Joy Kogawa reflected upon her visit to the house when it made its debut as Historic Joy Kogawa House in 2006 by noting that she saw “Tim's toy cars, the Japanese writing tablet, the 1937 calendar, the green picture that used to be in the house, etc.” (E-mail about Her Day). Specifically, the interior of Kogawa House was rendered into an anachronistic space where the fictional world of Naomi Nakane and the real world of Joy Kogawa were juxtaposed to enhance spectators' imaginative impressions of the site. For example, during my visit to this site in May 2011, the typewriter which allegedly was used by Kogawa to write the novel *Obasan* was placed within the house as if Kogawa had composed her work in this space while in fact Kogawa had not set foot inside the house since she was six (see Figure 3); an anonymous worn luggage case was placed in the vestibule of the house to



Figure 3: Joy Kogawa's typewriter

Source: Ruey-szu Wang

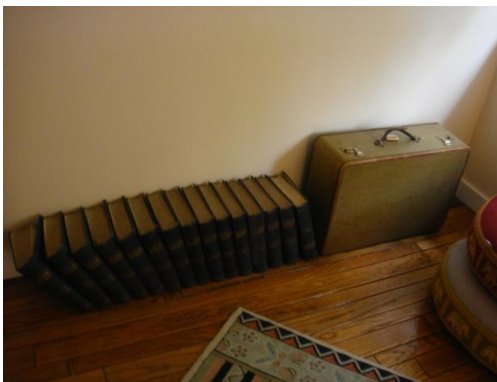


Figure 4: Getaway luggage in the vestibule

Source: Ruey-szu Wang



Figure 5: A painting of Joy Kogawa as a child, by Raymond Chow

Source: Ruey-szu Wang

simulate what it would have been like before Joy Kogawa's family left the house to be interned (see Figure 4); and a painting of Kogawa as a little girl was positioned in the dining room of the house in a way that reminds onlookers more of little Naomi than Joy (see Figure 5).

In addition, to discursively re-member (in its sense to put together or to provide with a new member) the topic of cultural diversity, the house was renovated into a spacious workshop in which, according to Brian Brett, a former chair of the Writers Union of Canada, "Canadian writers and writers from abroad could write first hand about our complex and evolving multi- and inter-cultural society and how different values and traditions can peacefully interact." In the words of John Asfour, Kogawa House's first writer-in-residence,⁴³ the house provides a base where minority writers of diverse ethnicities can connect to

⁴³ The Historic Joy Kogawa House Society has hosted three writers-in-residence to date: poet John Asfour of Montreal from March to May 2009; novelist Nancy Lee of Richmond from April to June 2010; and non-fiction writer Susan Crean of Toronto from September to December 2011. A residency usually takes the form of a three-month term, during which the writer-in-residence will join in conversations with other local writers and hold writing workshops; for more details, see Metten, "Susan Crean."

each others' experiences: "I'm here to learn how a community like Japanese Canadians would turn a part of their historical suffering into something positive by establishing a place where writers can live and work" (qtd. in Art Miki). In these accounts, the writers program is promoted with celebratory idioms of multiculturalism through which potential participants could enjoy "a taste of Vancouver's [or even Canada's] multicultural diversity" (Wong, "Kogawa House Demolition Plea"). Implied in such language is Canada's unquestioned ownership of a paradigmatic and presumably superior "multi- and inter-cultural society" free of contradictions and loose ends. In the context of this discourse, the deeper problematic of Canada's on-going forms of racism is left out of sight. Indeed, the idioms of multiculturalism are invoked here in a way less to unsettle extant racial boundaries as an effect of the Canadian federal government's multicultural policy, but instead in a way that risks re-domesticating cultural diversity into an apparently, if misleadingly, benign and even welcoming Canadian category.

The Executive Director of TLC, Bill Turner, further specifies that the writers program of Kogawa House envisioned is transnational in nature:

We haven't yet achieved the writers-of-conscience, writers-of-refuge. We have writers-in-residence, but they are just Canadian writers [. . .] compared to somebody coming from Iran or something like that. [. . .] Joy has always thought that some of the writers should be actually having a refuge from their own lands. (Turner)

In this quotation, Canada is presented as a haven safe from internal hazards, to which politically volatile countries such as Iran can serve as contrasts. Yet it could be argued that this discourse of "Canada" is derived precisely from, and not in spite of, this sort of transnational comparison. In this sense, the Kogawa House writers-in-residence program, in its current and would-be transnational guise, may in fact reinstate a form of

national consolidation of Canada discursively positioned as positive multicultural space in contrast to its external others.

Despite (or perhaps because of) such attempts to discursively stabilize the Kogawa house memoryscape, TLC and the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society (formerly the Save Joy Kogawa House Committee) received severe criticism from a Japanese Canadian elder, Lois Hashimoto—whom the *National Post* newspaper identified as “the model of the enlightened, engaged citizen, demonstrating in any given utterance more insight, intelligence and common sense than the combined outpourings of the entire chattering class” (Kay). Gregory Gibson instantiates Hashimoto’s discontent toward the Kogawa House memorial project by drawing from a letter published in *Maclean’s* magazine, entitled “The Real Internment Story.” In this enraged remark, Hashimoto maintained a counter-memory of Japanese Canadian internment against the memoryscape commemorated at the Kogawa site:

Joy Kogawa, who assuredly has visited Vancouver numerous times since the war, waited 54 years before revisiting the home where she and her fictional heroine in *Obasan* grew up. It was only after she noticed it was for sale that the house suddenly acquired a historical significance of such magnitude that a contribution toward its purchase will get you an official charitable donation receipt. It is time for someone to state, no, *shout*, the obvious truth: Japanese-Canadians were not traumatized, silenced or destroyed by the internment. We are not in need of healing. We survived the racially motivated injustice with courage and patience, a forgiving heart and a good dollop of humour. This Kogawa-initiated effort to create a totally unnecessary, unmerited museum in her own honour is nothing more than a shameless milking of the Internment Cow. (emphasis original)

Presenting Hashimoto's remark as "one dissenting voice that was vehemently opposed to the project," Gibson appropriately concludes that this text "leaves us faced with the inherent dilemmas of how to manage heritage sites that invariably contain multiple, contradictory memories" (62-63).

In addition, in an online response posted in the *Bulletin*, a journal of the Japanese Canadian community, Hashimoto took issue with the fact that Kogawa House was established without any identifiable presence of Japanese Canadians besides Joy Kogawa herself:

From the beginning, this was Mrs. Kogawa's dream. When the original "grassroots" committee's efforts to raise sufficient funds failed, The Land Conservancy took over the project, prepared to borrow money if necessary. At the last minute, Senator Nancy Ruth made a personal donation of [CAN]\$500,000, and the house was saved from demolition. I'd like to point out that The Land Conservancy is not a Japanese Canadian organization, Senator Ruth is not Japanese Canadian, Ann-Marie Metten, the passionate and tireless promoter and the executive director of Kogawa House is not Japanese Canadian. TLC's Bill Turner, one of two people who won the Vancouver's top Heritage awards for "saving" Obasan's house is not Japanese. The co-award winner was the publicity-loving gadfly Todd Wong, who is a Chinese Canadian who likes to wear kilts for special occasions and pretend he's Scottish. He is definitely not Japanese-Canadian. (Online Response to Art Miki)

In this comment, Hashimoto took up what Kirsten McAllister has called "the classic position of gatekeeper," whose task is to safeguard memories of Japanese Canadian internment from the intrusive capitalization of "outsiders"—in this case, cultural

activists who were, and are, not necessarily Japanese Canadian (*Terrain of Memory* 27). Yet it should be specified here that Hashimoto's identification of "outsiders" is not simply based upon an essentialization of ethnicity but in fact points toward those, as suggested by McAllister, who have "the institutional power to misrepresent [Hashimoto's] community" (27).

In a sense, both Hashimoto's outbursts and Gibson's attempt to examine one of them are based on ethical concerns, which echo Viet Thanh Nguyen's powerful call in "Speak of the Dead, Speak of Viet Nam." When discussing the ethics of minority discourse, especially in regard to evoking traumatic memories, Nguyen draws attention to the role of a minority as an agent and not merely as a victim or a passive subject of history:

What ethics forces us to answer is the question of the harm that we ourselves can do. Writers, artists, and critics can inflict various kinds of harm with the symbolic power they wield. *So can minorities, and those who stand up for them, do damage.* (10; emphasis added)

Here, Nguyen cautions minorities against walking the fine line between being a victim of historical injustice and being a potential victimizer that inflicts pain in the name of doing justice. Hashimoto's accusations against a victimizing memorial project seem to have demonstrated Nguyen's point. Yet clarification must be made to Nguyen's contention: in pointing out minorities' ability to do damage, Nguyen calls not for the essentialization of a victimizing subject position for minorities, but for the formation of a critical ethics that would dare to consider *otherwise* than what is presumed.

In Hashimoto's case, problematic assumptions of ethical remembrance underlie her comments. In a way, Hashimoto accentuated a dichotomy in which counter-memory is set in contrast with an established memorial, and silence is used to undermine what has

been voiced within the memoryscape. In the first quotation that I provided on page 71, Hashimoto seemed to be suggesting that the existence of a counter-memory should sufficiently challenge the ethics of a built memorial such as the Kogawa House. Yet while her argument was plausible given that “[remembrance practices] set in motion the exclusion of events from social memory that might disrupt hegemonic identities” (Simon, “Collective Memory” 3), such a belligerent stance nevertheless precluded the chance for an ethical negotiation to take place between herself and the advocates of the memorial. In the second quotation that I provided on page 72, while Hashimoto used the absence, if silence, of Japanese Canadians other than Joy Kogawa to refute the project’s ethical claims, her argument nevertheless presupposed that silence is a liability to an ethical memorial project. Here, Hashimoto’s assumption is this: if Japanese Canadians express disagreement with the Kogawa House project with silence, then their disagreement would necessarily render the project unethical. Clearly, the compulsion behind such an argument is to counter possible hegemonic memories with “a silence that will not speak.” Yet this act of “countering” inevitably set the Kogawa House memorial project in a binary frame, in which agents and events at this site of memory could only be understood through a simple ethical/unethical split. As a result, the intricate and particular ways silence is deployed by Japanese Canadians at this site of memory escaped critical notice.

The Ethics of Silence

In the spring of 2011, I received a grant from the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) to conduct a two-week research trip at Historic Joy Kogawa House in Vancouver. During my research on site, the silence of Japanese Canadians within the Kogawa House establishment was palpable. Corresponding to what

Hashimoto had suggested, the aura of a Japanese Canadian historical triumph which had permeated the successful preservation of the house in 2006 was disturbed by a significant absence of Japanese Canadian advocates. Roy Miki, who had in Glenn Deer's account instigated the site's first open house event in 2003 (130), had become distanced from the cultural activities held at the site. And David Suzuki, an academic and environmental activist who is among the few Japanese Canadian celebrities in Canada, had turned away from the Kogawa House memorial project from its inception because, as Bill Turner perceived it, "he wants to get by [the memory of Japanese Canadian internment]. He doesn't want to talk about it; [he] just wants to talk about the future" (Turner). While keeping on friendly terms with Japanese Canadians including Joy Kogawa, her brother Timothy Nakayama, her former husband David Kogawa, and musician Harry Aoki, the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society has not been able to recruit Japanese Canadians outside the generation of post-war immigrants. Such conspicuous absence of and lack of public support from Japanese Canadians at the site raises questions: What is keeping Japanese Canadians from this site of memory?

In "Remembering Obligation: Pedagogy and the Witnessing of Testimony of Historical Trauma," Roger Simon and Claudia Eppert caution against recourse to silence in the face of remembering traumatic history:

We acknowledge that bearing witness to traumatic history can be difficult and risky. This risk leads some to justify silence as a preferred ethical and pedagogical response. But such a position fails in *a necessary vigilance*—a vigilance embodying the courage to witness, to remember justly, and to recognize the impossibility of its successful completion. (189; emphasis added)

In Simon's and Eppert's account, commemorative ethics "considers how and on what

terms one can admit testimonial accounts into a contemporary moral community so that they made an active claim on one's present and future actions" (178). Accordingly, to remember ethically is to "transport and translate stories of past injustices beyond their moment of telling by taking these stories to another time and space" where these injustices might be resolved (Simon and Eppert 178). Here, Simon and Eppert accentuate a commemorative ethics that is necessarily predicated upon the reiteration of traumatic history. Thus silence, as a response to historical trauma, is likely to circumvent just remembrance. Turning back to the Kogawa House memorial project, I want to read Japanese Canadians' silence against Simon's and Eppert's theorization of commemorative ethics. Is it possible that such silence, in its particular ways, could provide a necessary form of vigilance for ethical remembrance?

In my interviews with the members of the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society and staff of the Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC), these cultural activists expressed concern about an off-the-record controversy over the naming of the house.⁴⁴ While the house was intended by the Kogawa House Society and TLC to be a space where memories of Japanese Canadian internment—especially of the material dispossession it induced—could be represented and remembered, the ownership implied in the house's namesake has been a point of contention. Apparently not everyone, not even Kogawa herself, was satisfied with the house being named "Historic Joy Kogawa House." As Ann-Marie Metten pointed out in an interview, the name that Kogawa would have selected for the house was "the House of Obasan." In other words, it was the literary house featured as an embodiment of prewar felicity for the protagonist

⁴⁴ I conducted a series of interviews during my research trip with key figures involved in the retrieval and maintenance of this house, including board members of the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society: Ann-Marie Metten (Executive Director), Deb Martin (Treasurer) and Todd Wong (an active member); and staff of TLC: Bill Turner (Executive Director and founder of TLC), Tamsin Baker (Lower Mainland Regional Manager of TLC) and Briony Penn (Vice President of the TLC Board of Directors).

Naomi Nakane and bereaved in the horror of the war in the novel *Obasan*, rather than the actual house of Joy Kogawa's family, that Kogawa wished to be commemorated. Yet if the house were to be named "the House of Obasan," such a name would have introduced confusion since the house is the real-life equivalent of neither the "beautiful house full of plants by the sea [in New Westminster, British Columbia]" where Aya Obasan lived before the war (i.e. it was not the house of the character Obasan *per se*), nor the house "in its usual clutter" in Granton, Alberta, where Obasan resided after the war (Kogawa, *Obasan* 68; 12). If to be faithful to the literature was what Kogawa had intended, the site should have been called "the Nakane House," that is, the house imagined to be where the protagonist Naomi Nakane and her family lived before being evicted; or "the house of *Obasan*," a house to fascinate readers of the novel.

Some other Japanese Canadians have expressed concern over the implied meaning of the house being Joy Kogawa's. Given the fact that the Marpole house is where Kogawa lived as the daughter of Reverend Gordon Nakayama before she was six, to name the house "Kogawa," which is the married name Joy Kogawa has kept from her former husband, is both anachronistic and incorrect.⁴⁵ To the Japanese Canadian community, the house was never Joy Kogawa's house, but her father's. And although they support the idea of commemorating a house that once belonged to dispossessed Japanese Canadians, they decline to remember the house of Reverend Nakayama as one of those houses. The fact that Kogawa's father was a minister has rendered the family's experience with internment different—real or imagined—in the mind of other former internees. Thus some of them were offended by the fact that a house named after the daughter of a "privileged" Japanese Canadian family has claimed to resemble the

⁴⁵ To render the issue more complicated, according to David Kogawa and recounted by Ann-Marie Metten, the family name "Kogawa" is a reinvention by David Kogawa himself from his inherited yet hard to pronounced family name "Kobashigawa." Seeing that the new name no longer causes confusion amongst English speaking Canadians, David also convinced his brother to make the change.

experiences of their own. Indeed, when asked about existing antagonistic attitudes toward Historic Joy Kogawa House, Todd Wong revealed that “It was mostly the Japanese Canadians” (Interview).⁴⁶

Here, Japanese Canadians’ silence cannot be reduced to simply a “preferred ethical response” to traumatic memory which, according to Simon and Eppert, “fails in a necessary vigilance” (189). Instead, Japanese Canadians’ silence in the Kogawa House context could be more adequately understood through Simon’s and Eppert’s other conception of silence in the face of traumatic history. Turning to this other conception of silence, I wish to emphasize my disagreement with some of the assumptions that inform Simon’s and Eppert’s previous denial of the possible justice silence can do. Such an intrinsic denial overlooks silence’s dubious role as an (under)statement of trauma and can lead, in certain cases, to the refusal to give silence due credit for facilitating ethical remembrance. In “Remembering Obligation,” Simon and Eppert acknowledge that silence and absence very often coincide with narratives of historical trauma, yet instead of discrediting the remembered narratives, such silences and absences can in fact provide a kind of ethical vigilance to the act of commemoration:

Narratives and images of historical trauma are commonly shot through with absences that, in their silence, solicit or ‘ask’ questions and fuel an unrest—which is the only possible way to sustain the pursuit of justice.

⁴⁶ Literary critics such as Benjamin Lefebvre have tried to track a rumor surrounding Reverend Nakayama, which might have aggravated Japanese Canadians’ antagonism toward the Kogawa House project. This rumor, according to Lefebvre, is alluded to in Joy Kogawa’s third novel, *The Rain Ascends* (1995), which tells the story of a Canadian protagonist of Anglo-Saxon origin who “discovers that her beloved father has been sexually abusing boys throughout his illustrious career as an Anglican minister” (Lefebvre 164). Although noting a number of similarities between the Shelby family featured in *The Rain Ascends* and Kogawa’s own family, Lefebvre makes clear that “to the best of [his] knowledge, Kogawa has not stated in print to what degree the story of the Shelby family is autobiographical” (164). While what happened during Reverend Nakayama’s time in internment was never substantiated, both Ann-Marie Metten and Bill Turner indicated during their interviews that serious tensions existed between Nakayama and the Japanese Canadian community. Being judicious about her words, Metten pointed out that during the internment period, “Joy’s father was bad to the community. And it was quite controversial” (Metten). Turner also stated explicitly that “some of [Kogawa’s] father’s victims were the most nasty people about saving the house because they took it as a monument to her father” (Turner).

(183-84)

In a paradoxical way, Japanese Canadians' apparent unwillingness to explicitly support the Kogawa House project may provide a "necessary vigilance" to the community of memory that is currently forming at Historic Joy Kogawa House. While TLC identifies Kogawa House as "a literary landmark and symbol of hope, healing and reconciliation for all Canadians" (The Land Conservancy), such a statement is indelibly marked by Japanese Canadians' silence on the claim. Here, such silence could be read as an absence that "asks questions." And these questions in effect form a point for the Kogawa House memorial project to refine its pursuit of justice. In Simon's and Eppert's words, the incommensurability of different commemorative narratives is an irresolvable conflict, as no rule of judgment applies to each narrative. The pursuit of ethical remembrance, in their account, should thus be on-going and invigorated by "the impossibility of its successful completion" (189).

Toward a Trespass

In this chapter, I have examined Historic Joy Kogawa House for its spatial representations of Japanese Canadian internment. Considering the Kogawa House memorial project and the cultural controversies it evoked, I have suggested that TLC, the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society, Lois Hashimoto, and silent Japanese Canadians are performing disparate, yet squarely significant, acts of ethical remembrance. In a sense, the covert and sometimes overt dispute between the Kogawa House advocates and the Japanese Canadian community is the outcome of different moral narratives they produce based upon their diverse investments in the history, literary heritage, and the geography of the Marpole house. While some Japanese Canadians deem the Kogawa House activists to be unethical outsiders who weave a celebratory discourse of

redemption out of their shame, the Kogawa House activists criticize Japanese Canadians for overlooking the greater good. At this point, I want to draw attention to my own discursive position as a potential witness to the various testimonies, or representations, of Japanese Canadian internment, and to the specific obligations this position has endowed on me. While my thesis explores memories of a historical trauma, it is ineluctably exposed to the intervention of ethics insofar as “Ethics is necessary [. . .] for justice, both for movements of social justice but also for our attempts as artists, critics, historians, and writers, or simply as survivors and descendants, to do justice to the memory of those for whom there was no justice” (Nguyen, “Speak of the Dead” 11). As a researcher of a memorial project and of a larger history of forced relocation, dispossession, and dispersal, I am compelled to ask: How can negotiation be found—in a way that does justice—amongst different attempts to shape an ethical memoryscape out of Joy Kogawa’s childhood house?

In *Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (2010), a critical reflection of the memorial project that took place at the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre (NIMC) in New Denver, British Columbia (a commemorative site that I have briefly discussed at the end of Chapter Three; see pages 59-60), Kirsten McAllister considers similar questions. When observing how the Japanese Canadian elders living in New Denver negotiated their memories with the site contractors, McAllister, as a Sansei, could not help but “dogmatically [adopt] a defensive insider position [in her writing] and was critical of what [she] concluded was the appropriation of the elders’ memorial as a tourist site” (*Terrain of Memory* 28). After spending months at the site, however, McAllister discovered that despite having different interests from the contractors, these Japanese Canadian elders were able to locate the NIMC “in a field of activity different from (*while still articulated with but not reducible to*) the discourses that constituted it

as a public place of mourning, a museum, or tourist site” (*Terrain of Memory* 43; emphasis added). During the process of her research, McAllister concedes that her emotional investment in the project had impeded her ability to see “how the elders found ways to work with the contractors and also turn the memorial into a site for their own memory projects”—memory projects that had escaped her view at first because she did not “recognize the complex intersubjective and discursive constitution of communities” (*Terrain of Memory* 28). Here, McAllister accentuates the communal aspects of a memorial inasmuch as the space of the NIMC reifies a contested “terrain of memory” where not only “Japanese Canadians but also everyone affected by the removal of all people of Japanese racial origin from British Columbia have a place to grieve, recall, and question the past” (*Terrain of Memory* 6).

As suggested by Robert Sack in *Homo Geographicus: Framework for Action, Awareness and Moral Concern* (1997), a subjective way of remembering must become porous in order to mature in ethical profundity. Here Sack describes a moral perspective geographically:

[The] local and contextual should be thin and porous enough not to interfere with our ability to attain an expanded view, and the local can be understood and accorded respect only if people attain a more objective perspective, enabling them to see beyond their own partiality and to be held responsible for this larger domain. [. . .] [T]hick places create differences, but when they are too thick and their boundaries impermeable they prevent us from transcending them and seeing clearly. (Sack 248, 257; qtd. in Smith 9)

The contested states of both the Kogawa House memorial project and the NIMC memorial project draw attention to the fact that Japanese Canadian internment is being remembered by subjects of complex geohistorical backgrounds. And negotiation

amongst different attempts to remember ethically can only be possible without denying such subjective complexities. Here I emphasize that negotiation matters exactly because a commemorative ethics is sustained by one's ability to negotiate with different moral narratives. Re-membering Japanese Canadian internment, in effect, requires scholars to re-think their complex relationships toward, and investments in, its multiplying discourses.



Chapter Five | Conclusion

This thesis has examined memories of Japanese Canadian internment mediated through specific historical, literary, and spatial representations. In doing so, it has not only analyzed *what* is remembered about internment, but has also asked *how* these memories are constructed through disparate frames of representation. As I have discussed, shifts in the historiography of Japanese Canadian internment at least partially facilitated the 1988 redress settlement between the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) and the Canadian federal government; literary memories featured in Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan*, which represents Japanese Canadians' emotional and cultural losses as an effect of dispossession, have prompted the formation of distinct and sometimes conflicting textual politics amongst Asian Canadian Studies scholars; and spatial memories of Historic Joy Kogawa House, which directly concern the lost homes of Japanese Canadian families during World War II, have mobilized cultural activities that have ultimately contributed to the contested monumentalization of that house. What should also be remembered beyond these disparate frames include the fact that internment has taken place on different continents involving overlapping histories through which we might extend our scope of study; that internment has been experienced differently by Japanese Canadians across generations and that ignoring or downplaying such differences risks reducing the complexities of their memories; and that internment continues to be commemorated by subjects with diverse ethical agendas that require careful critical attention. Accordingly, I have argued that remembering Japanese Canadian internment is important precisely because it makes explicit both the possibilities and difficulties of narrating a historical trauma which readers might assume to be self-evident.

Chapter Two has contributed to our understanding of the historiography of Japanese Canadian internment by focusing on the cultural milieu and political power of two key historical texts: Ken Adachi's *The Enemy that Never Was* (1976) and Ann Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism* (1981). While redress activists in the 1980s experienced difficulties in garnering Japanese Canadians' support partly due to an apparent reluctance to convene around an already racialized identity, I have argued that such reluctance led activists to foster forms of consolidation around a class identity—identifying Japanese Canadians as materially dispossessed. Corresponding to the political strategy of the redress movement, Sunahara's text foregrounded Japanese Canadians' class struggles that ultimately helped make the case for government redress in 1988. Insofar as the historical texts discussed in this chapter narrate Japanese Canadian internment into Canadian national history, they function as a "double-edged sword" which has the capacity to contest as well as contain memories of internment. Accordingly, historical accounts of Japanese Canadian internment produced after 1988 have sought to foreground transnational dimensions of internment in what can be read as an attempt to destabilize and push beyond established historiographical narratives.

Meanwhile, in the decade immediately following the redress settlement, Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* (1981) has directed critics' attention from seeing Japanese Canadians as the materially dispossessed to *seeing to* the rehabilitation of their dispossessed culture. Chapter Three has consequently examined representations of internment centered upon this pivotal literary text. I have focused upon how Kogawa's text has generated diverse, and sometimes delimiting, theorizations of Japanese Canadian textual politics in the arena of Asian Canadian Studies. Exemplifying one group of scholars discussed in this chapter, Roy Miki and Scott McFarlane consider literary representations of internment to be indispensable to the formation of an

antiracist textual politics for Japanese Canadian writers. In contrast, Iyko Day opposes centering internment and its attendant antiracist implications in Japanese Canadian writings because such a mandate confines them in the discursive position of victims. However forcefully these scholars have situated remembering and/or forgetting internment in Japanese Canadian textual politics, I have argued that these contentions have yet to adequately account for the miscellaneous, and at times creative, ways internment is being remembered by Japanese Canadians today. Jeff Chiba Stearns's film, *One Big Hapa Family* (2010), in effect offers insights into how different representations of internment can straddle resistance against and accommodation of racism while not being bounded by these concerns.

Debates over the cultural aftermath of Japanese Canadian dispossession have prepared the ground for the transformation of a house in Vancouver into a commemorative site. Chapter Four has consequently extended this thesis's analysis by focusing on Historic Joy Kogawa House (established in 2006) and examining the cultural controversies that have surrounded its monumentalization. While certain cultural activists identified the monumentalization of Joy Kogawa's childhood house as an obviously ethical act, others have claimed to be victimized by such a feel-good project. In light of such contentious claims, I have argued that a simple ethical dichotomy would not sufficiently valorize both cultural activists' and dissident Japanese Canadians' vexed investments in the Kogawa House memoryscape, and that the ethical remembrance of the former need not be realized at the expense of the latter. Accordingly, I have analyzed Japanese Canadians' silence toward this project to show how it could function as a conceptual passageway between seemingly antithetical moral geographies. In this way, the retrieval of Historic Joy Kogawa House has given way to a discursive space within which diverse subjects could reclaim and negotiate linked yet nonidentical

memories of dispossession.

In the Introduction, I wrote that one goal of this thesis is to put the “discourse of apology” on the defensive. This line of critique has become increasingly important given the apparent readiness of governments throughout the world to apologize for their past offenses. Here I am drawing upon the work of Jean Elshtain, who begins her essay “Politics and Forgiveness” (2003) by flatly stating:

We are awash in confession these days. [. . .] Rectitude has given way to “contrition chic,” as one wag called it, meaning a bargain-basement way to gain publicity, sympathy, and even absolution by trafficking in one’s status as victim or victimizer. This confessional mode now extends to entire nations, where separating powerful and authentic acts and expressions of regret from empty gestures becomes even more difficult than it is on the level of individuals, one to another. (45)

In this quotation, Elshtain draws attention to the complications involved in discursively addressing a traumatic history that has already been apologized for. Not only do we need to attend to the continuous problematic of doing justice; we also, in Elshtain’s account, need to discern “contrition chic” from “authentic acts of apology.” The difficulty involved in critically engaging with the canonization of sentimentality in what Roy Brooks calls the “Age of Apology” (3), however, is understated by Elshtain. The crux of this “discourse of apology,” I argue, lies not in our ability to distinguish between genuine and empty apologies, but in our ability to adequately account for their extensive and intricate effects upon the remembrance of traumatic histories. Accordingly, what requires our immediate critical attention is this: How to rethink the problematic of remembering when the history of Japanese Canadian internment has been transformed by the 1988 redress settlement to a “postmemorialization” state which marks this

history as already *past* memorialization?

In “By Turns Poetic: Redress as Transformation” (2011), Roy Miki attempts to account for such a transformation. In Miki’s account, through the process of the redress movement, memories of Japanese Canadian internment have been transformed “from a haunted past to a present with the potential to imagine a more generative future” (324). Through a series of photo collages, Miki shows in this essay how an image of Japanese Canadians’ departure for internment can be re-imag(in)ed to become a moment of arrival after redress:

I have sought to imagine the event of departures as arrivals on the shores of a post-redress phase of transformation. These are not shores where the difficulties of encountering our current commodity culture are erased but spaces in which its complex complicities are imagined beyond the reproduction of a framed history *back there*. (324; emphasis original)

For Miki, the “arrival” of the history of internment at a “post-redress phase” does not mean that it has reached an ultimate destination, but rather that it has arrived at another starting point from which new critical projects can begin. What Miki recognizes, accordingly, is as much about what has been memorialized as what has been left outside of that memorialization. In Miki’s understanding, memories of internment have been constantly and ever more forcefully *in process* past the moment of redress.

Through an analysis of historical, literary, and spatial representations of Japanese Canadian internment, this thesis has argued that remembering internment after its memorialization should be understood as a critically un/settling project. While the redress settlement may have been “a political end to a long struggle for justice” (Miki, “By Turns Poetic” 317), this thesis has set out to unsettle the politics of remembrance that have structured and continue to structure perceptions of Japanese Canadian

internment. This thesis has also recognized that studies of memories of internment must address the ambivalences and conflicts and points of incompleteness that still reside in this difficult history. Remembering internment is important precisely because it destabilizes a confident grasp of what and why to remember—pushing us to think beyond frames of representation that would consign to indifference histories that continue to be in process well past their memorialization.



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