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PORTRAITS OF 'PAST ACTUALITY'
THE TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH OF JAPANESE CANADIANS AS PORTRAYED IN HISTORICALLY BASED CANADIAN LITERATURE

by

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the concerns of both historiographic theorists who are skeptical of the power of narrative to present historical information reliably, and of literary critics who are suspicious of any text that lays claim to factual or truthful representation. Through the analysis of texts that blend the self-referential uncertainty of modern (or postmodern) literature with the utilitarian objectives of historiography – works of literature that strive to represent, faithfully, events from history – the thesis assesses the relative truth value of the historical project and evaluates the role of narrative in effectively imparting historical information.

I begin with an overview of the theoretical debate over the form of historical writing and the source of historical knowledge, since classical times, followed by an analysis of primary texts in the context of current trends in literary and historiographic theory. These texts, which pertain to the history of Japanese-Canadians since the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, include Joy Kogawa's novels Obasan and Itsuka, and Dorothy Livesay's documentary poem for radio entitled Call My People Home. In addition I provide an analysis of a historiographic text, Mutual Hostages, that contradicts the prevailing perception of this historical event. As revisionary history, this text provides the opportunity to examine a competing narrative and its mechanism for establishing and communicating historical information.

Through the analysis of these works, this thesis demonstrates that narrative is appropriate to historiography, and that figurative speech – as in poetic and rhetorical devices – can be more effective than literalist speech in representing historical events.

Introduction

If there is an element of the historical in all poetry, there is an element of poetry in every historical account (White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 60)

Hayden White's belief, as expressed in the epigraph above, in the relationship between History and Literature, as well as that between good writing and effective historiography, has been a kernel in intellectual debate over the role of history for centuries. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this debate through the analysis of a number of works of Canadian literature that strive to represent, faithfully, events from Canadian history. Essentially, I propose to demonstrate that narrative is appropriate to historiography, and furthermore, that figurative speech – as in poetic and rhetorical devices – can be more effective than literalist speech in representing historical events. I contend that my chosen field of inquiry offers new insight into theories proposed by eminent specialists from the fields of both historical and literary criticism. Previous studies have for the most part considered the historical and figurative aspects of writings that fall clearly within either the genre of history or of literature; this study focuses on works that overtly straddle the traditional boundaries between these two genres.

Since classical times, the relationship between good writing and effective historical representation has been a serious, sometimes problematic consideration. In the first century AD, contending that the role of the historian was "not to demonstrate or argue or persuade, but to narrate and to memorialize," Quintilian maintained that the historian was bound to "employ unfamiliar expressions and bold figures" in his work that would not be appropriate in more polemical writing (Gossman 3). Cicero before him also acknowledged the importance of "style and presentation," but his emphasis was on the need for honesty and objectivity in historical writing. Defining the historian "as the impersonal mirror of reality," he demanded that "the historian . . . say nothing false . . . [and] avoid partiality" (Gossman 3-4). Similar thought prevailed during the Renaissance, when historical representation was considered a serious undertaking, the success of which could only be achieved through stylistic prowess. For example, in his Lectures on Rhetoric of 1783, Hugh Blair maintained:

> . . . an Historian may possess these qualities of being perspicuous, distinct, and grave, and may notwithstanding be a dull Writer: in which case, we shall reap little benefit from his labours. We will read him without pleasure; or, most probably, we shall soon give over to read him at all. He must study to render his narration interesting; which is the quality that chiefly distinguishes a Writer of genius and eloquence. (274)

Given that up until the end of the eighteenth century history was considered simply "a branch of literature" (Gossman 4), it follows that good writing was considered intrinsic to effective historical representation. The historian was considered, first and foremost, a writer. The dissolution of the relationship between history and literature, which began as a quest to

separate the "real" subjects of history from the "ideal" topics of poetry, was characterized by a rising concern for "the problems of historical knowledge" over "the problems of historical writing" (Gossman 7). This shift in emphasis ultimately gave rise to the emergence of history as a discipline distinct from literature, the separation of which "was institutionalized . . . by the breakup of what had once been the republic of letters" (Gossman, 7). Prior to this schism, historians had fraternized openly with other intellectuals to share ideas. Towards the end of Romanticism, however, with their increasing alignment with universities, historians tended to distinguish themselves as teachers, rather than as poets or writers.

Despite the separation between literature and history, "a resemblance between the discourse of historians and that of novelists" has prevailed to the present time. The historian of the enlightenment, like the novelist, engaged the reader as a complicit, ironic spectator in the object of study, which in the case of the historian was "the historical scene or tableau" (Gossman 22). Then, in the nineteenth century, historiographers and novelists alike rejected the self-conscious preoccupations of their eighteenth-century counterparts, replacing the "overt . . . persona of the narrator by a covert narrator," considered to have a unique perspective and special talent for discerning and explaining the events of the past (Gossman 23). Works of literature and history were no longer considered objects of intellectual inquiry, criticism or debate, but, rather, as vessels of irrefutable knowledge. In the last century, then, while history has generally professed agreement with the modernist rejection of realism and the scepticism over the reliability of narrative, there has not been the same resultant reform in historical writing as has taken place in the literary world. As Lionel

Gossman points out: "historical texts continue to recount calmly events and situations located in the past as though the 'age of suspicion' had never dawned" (36).

Despite the relative stasis in historical writing, theoretical debate over the form of historical writing and the source of historical knowledge has been raging for decades within both historiographic and literary disciplines. Ironically, the issues that have been driving these theoretical discussions in the historiographic domain throughout the last several decades are very similar to the diverging interests that led to the institutionalized separation from literature over two hundred years ago: the quest to define history as a distinct discipline, and to delineate a historical method that transcends the characteristics of artistic creation and approximates those of scientific exploration, discovery and documentation. Inevitably, every discussion over the methods and responsibilities of historiography turns to a consideration of the relationship between history and literature, both as particular textual projects and as distinct academic disciplines. Recent discussions among historical theorists, however, do not dwell on the issue of dissolving or maintaining a separation between the disciplines. Rather, they tend to point to the mutual interests of history and literature and argue for a more respectful and receptive cooperation that might resolve, or dissolve, the professional contempt that prohibits a productive assessment of the way events from the past are communicated in the present. David Levin pointedly describes this inter-disciplinary contempt as

> . . . the disdain with which many novelists, poets, and dramatists have regarded the obligation [or the ability] to represent the literal truth "objectively," and the persistent desire of historians to make history into a profession, if not a

> social science. Both these attitudes tend to divorce the conception and the writing of a given work of history from the research, from the accumulation of evidence, even from the development of the argument. (2)

In the absence of a viable alternative for communicating acquired information, historical theorists have grudgingly come to accept narrative as the medium for reporting and explaining history, but the quest to assert the serious business of history over the fantasy realm of fiction prevails. A crucial step in this quest has been to distinguish the process of creating a fictional or "imaginary" narrative from that of producing a historical or "real" narrative. Until recently the historical practitioner has viewed the profession of history as principally analytic and considered "the construction of narrative accounts a literary art quite independent of professional skill in actual research" (Mink 131). The historical project in this view is vastly different from that of literary creation:

> [History] . . . is an untold story. The historian's job is to discover that untold story, or part of it, and to retell it even though in abridged or edited form. The novelist can make up his story any way he wishes, subject only to the requirements of art. The historian, on the other hand, finds the story already hidden in what his data are evidence for. He is creative in the invention of research techniques to expose it, not in the art of construction. Properly understood, the story of the past needs only to be communicated, not constructed. (Mink 134-5)

As Hayden White points out, however, the implication that the historian exposes an already existing story "obscures the extent to which 'invention' plays a part in the historian's

operations" (Metahistory 6-7). In the first place, as White explains, the historian's task involves a distinct element of personal selection:

> . . . the historian confronts a veritable chaos of events *already constituted*, out of which he must choose the elements of the story he would tell. He makes his story by including some events and excluding others, by stressing some and subordinating others. This process of exclusion, stress, and subordination is carried out in the interest of constituting *a story of a particular kind.* (Metahistory 6n.)

As well, in arranging these events into a story, the historian often makes very subjective decisions about the relationships between or among events that are not necessarily substantiated by the evidence. Furthermore, in adapting events into a plot structure, the historian entertains, and provides answers to, questions that give meaning to the story. In effect, the historian describes not only what happened, but explains, why, in his opinion, things unfolded as they did. As White contends, it is the process that takes place "between [the] research phase . . . and the completion of a written history" that blurs the line between history and fiction:

> The kind of interpretation typically produced by the historical discourse is that which endows what would otherwise remain only a chronologically ordered series of events with the formal coherence of the kind of plot structures met with in narrative fiction. This endowment of a chronicle of events with a plot structure, which I call the operation of emplotment, is carried out by discursive techniques that are more tropological than logical in nature. . . .

> Indeed, it is only by troping, rather than by logical deduction, that any given set of the kinds of past event we would wish to call historical can be (first) *represented* as having the order of a chronicle; (second) *transformed* by emplotment into a story with identifiable beginning, middle, and end phases; and (third) *constituted* as the subject of whatever formal arguments may be adduced to establish their "meaning" – cognitive, ethical, or aesthetic, as the case may be. (Figural Realism 8)

While insisting that these "tropological abductions occur in the composition of every historical discourse," Hayden White also maintains that "this does not imply that traditional historiography is inherently untruthful, but only that its truths are of two kinds: factual and figurative" (Figural Realism 10). It is his position, furthermore, that "figurative language can . . . refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do" (Figural Realism ix).

Hayden White's argument counters the position of both historiographic theorists who are skeptical of the power of narrative to present historical information reliably and of literary critics who are suspicious of any text that lays claim to factual or truthful representation. To some theorists, notably Linda Hutcheon, history and literature once again appear, in this regard, to be proceeding along parallel paths:

> In both historiographic theory and postmodern fiction, there is an intense self-consciousness (both theoretical and textual) about the act of narrating in the present the events of the past, about the conjunction of present action and the past absent object of that agency. In both historical and literary postmodern

> representation, the doubleness remains; there is no sense of either the historian or novelist reducing the strange past to verisimilar present. (The Politics of Postmodernism 71)

Historical theorists intent upon resolving the crisis within historiography would uphold the notion that "an intense self-consciousness" should characterize historiography, but they do not support Hutcheon's denial of the ability of historiography to represent the past with some degree of reliability. Louis Mink, for example, expressed an opinion much like Hayden White's when he said, "narrative form in history, as in fiction, is an artifice, the product of an individual imagination. Yet at the same time it is accepted as claiming truth – that is, as representing a real ensemble of interrelationships in past actuality" (Mink, 145). I suggest that such a contradiction between the stance of literary post-modernism and historical theory can be attributed more to a difference in field of inquiry than in any inherent difference in attitudes toward narrative. The issues addressed by White and other historical theorists are essentially similar to those that interest Hutcheon and her colleagues: "the processes involved . . . in the entire context of the production and reception of the text" (Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism 228), but the nature of the texts they study differs. Linda Hutcheon's observations pertain to a particular type of "metafiction," which she calls "historiographic metafiction." In the case of the critics of historiography, their interests lie in what could be called "metahistory." There is a profound difference between these two categories of texts.

Hayden White's term, "metahistory," is a multi-faceted concept. In the first place, it is the "deep structural content [that occurs in every historical narrative] which is generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature, and which serves as the precritically accepted

paradigm of . . . a distinctively 'historical' explanation" (Metahistory ix). In other words, "metahistory" is the subliminal, linguistic strategy that is used in processing historical data into a comprehensive explanation of historical events. As well, "metahistory" is the theoretical or critical method that seeks to illuminate the principles of the historical discipline.[1] Finally, given the theoretical propositions and conclusions that have evolved from White's "metahistorical" studies, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the term "metahistory" refers also to all historiography. Actual history exists only as a pre-consciousness or even extra-conscious element. The very instant that historical data is considered for exploration, interpretation or representation – that is, at the moment it enters the realm of consciousness – it becomes "metahistory." Or, as the following quote from White's latest study suggests, it becomes a "metaphor" for history:

> Like poetic discourse . . . historical discourse is intentional, that is, is systemically intra- as well as extrareferential. . . . [Any] attempt to comprehend how historical discourse works to produce a knowledge-effect must be based . . . on a scientific study of the relation of the things produced by and in language to the other kinds of things that comprise reality. In short, historical discourse should be considered . . . as a special kind of language use which, like metaphoric speech, symbolic language, and allegorical representation, always means more than it literally says, says something other than what it seems to mean, and reveals something about the world only at the cost of concealing something else. (Figural Realism 7)

Summarizing "metafiction" as "fiction which is, in some dominant and constitutive way, self-referential and autorepresentational," Hutcheon describes "historiographic metafiction" as the "kind of metafiction [that] thematizes its own interaction both with the historical past and with the historically conditioned expectations of its reader ("Canadian Historiographic Metafiction" 228, 231). On the surface, this definition would seem consistent with Hayden White's comparison of historical discourse to poetic discourse, but Hutcheon's explanation of "historiographic metafiction," as presented in her essay entitled "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction," distinguishes this category of text quite sharply from "metahistory":

> this kind of metafiction represents something beyond a . . . need to reclaim the past, because it is not necessarily [the] past that is always sought out. Instead, [these works] . . . appear to signal another need, one shared by writers everywhere today: a need to investigate both the ontological nature and function of their literary products and of the processes that created them and keep them alive. (236)

In "metahistory," on the other hand, the interest in reclaiming "the past" is paramount. In her essay, Hutcheon refers to White's acknowledgement of the "shared 'emplotting' strategies" used by both novelist and historian, but when she compares the results of "historiographic metafiction" to history (or metahistory), she overlooks the historian's essential responsibility to evidentiary accuracy. In the words of David Levin:

> For if history is a literary art, the artistry deserves our attention only as it accepts the fundamental purpose of the *genre*, which is not . . . to tell stories

> and legends without significance or purpose but to communicate a just understanding of the past in relation to the present and the future. We must begin by recognizing that the historian's first obligation is to be as accurate and as just as possible. (5-6)

In the works Linda Hutcheon discusses, historical accuracy is viewed not only as inaccessible, but unnecessary. Historical theorists acknowledge the discursive and ideological nature of historiography, but they still avow the need to recuperate history formally and they object to the literary postmodernist tendencies to undermine the informational or knowledge value of historical representation. As David Hodge explains:

> The currently fashionable slogan of 'post-modernism' has been used by some to justify an indifference to history that is as old as pre-history itself. . . . The new object is no longer the meaning(s) of literary texts as such, but the processes by which meaning is produced and renegotiated and circulated around literary and other texts which perform analogous functions in contemporary culture. (18)

A corollary to the postmodern contempt for historical representation is the notion that "writers of historical fiction have . . . [the right to transform] documentary evidence for their own purposes" (Levin 77). David Levin maintains that "authors and critics alike have too often allowed this principle to close their minds to the value of historical fidelity" (77). Although Levin presented this position in 1967, his observations remain relevant today. In an article in The Ottawa Citizen, July 24, 1999, entitled "Weaving Fact and Fiction," Paul Gessell includes statements from members of the English departments of both Ottawa area

universities claiming that it is the quality of the writing that is important in assessing the value of a work of historical fiction. The accuracy of historical information is essentially immaterial as long as the text is well written.[2] Such a position would be unacceptable to historiographic theorists. Altering historical evidence, Levin contends, compromises the social value, and by extension, the artistic merit of the literary work: "in all literature the author's artistry pervades the entire work, from the conception of the subject through the research and the selection and organization to the detailed writing. Judging the quality of statement must include concern for the substance as well as the manner or form of statement" (5). That is not to say that responsible speculation and invention does not play an important role in historiography, but the objective of this and every element of the metahistorical text is to attempt to reduce "the strange past to verisimilar present" (Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism 71), not, as in the case of historiographic metafiction, to emphasize the inaccessibility of such an ambition, or, as seems to be the tendency in "literary non-fiction" (Gessell E2), to sacrifice historical evidence to aesthetics.

Given the bond between literature and narrative and the irrelevance of historical integrity to the literary text, it is small wonder, then, that professional historians have been leery of the use of narrative for historical representation. On the other hand, considering the prevailing "realist" tendency in historical writing, the literary critic's scepticism over the reliability of the historical text is also understandable. What is needed for a productive assessment of the relative truth value of the historical project and an evaluation of the role of narrative in effectively imparting historical information is an analysis of texts that blend the self-referential uncertainty of modern (or postmodern) literature with the utilitarian

objectives of historiography. A profitable object of such analysis exists in works of literature that strive to represent, faithfully, events from history. I have proposed the generic label "historically based literature" to describe such works because existing terms like "historical fiction" or "literary non-fiction" are, in my opinion, inadequate and inaccurate. While they acknowledge the imaginative and figurative aspects of the texts, they do not reflect their overtly historical purpose. Also, I have used the phrase "past actuality" for the title of my thesis, because I feel it adeptly captures the idea of the representation of truth or reality in historical narrative without bringing up the difficulties that words such as truth or reality raise. The phrase "Past Actuality" comes from an essay by Louis O. Mink in a collection by Canary and Kozicki, entitled The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding. As Mink explains: "narrative form in history, as in fiction, is an artifice, the product of an individual imagination. Yet at the same time it is accepted as claiming truth -- that is, as representing a real ensemble of interrelationships in past actuality" (145).

For my study, I have selected texts that pertain to a particular topic of Canadian history that has raised controversy, that continues to sustain interest over time, and that has social relevance to the present day. The subject is the history of Japanese Canadians since the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Considered a threat to the nation, people of Japanese origin, the vast majority of whom were Canadian citizens, were removed from their homes, divested of their property, placed in resettlement camps and eventually dispersed across the country or forced to "repatriate" to Japan. These actions were conducted under the authority of the government with the general sanction of the Canadian public. The story of the Japanese Canadians has attracted both dissenters who perceive that justice has not

prevailed, and supporters, who uphold the verdict of the past. As narrative reconsideration of events such as this tends to elicit strong personal and emotional responses from both reporters and readers, it provides an excellent opportunity for examining the role or effect of individual and social perspective on the transmission and reception of historical information.

I have limited my study to a particular subject of Canadian history in order to examine closely the effect of figurative devices on the various representations of a historical event. The works I consider comprise a variety of "genres of literary figuration" (White, The Content of Form 47), providing the opportunity for a comparative analysis of the effects and the effectiveness of different genre types – prose narrative, poetry or drama – in representing history. The timing of the appearance of the various works spans a period of over fifty years, allowing for an analysis of the influence of the social conditions of the time on the interpretation, representation and reception of historical evidence. Since the authors of these texts represent a combination of individuals who were participants or witnesses to the events in question and who conducted documentary research, there was the added opportunity to assess the effect of personal orientation on the historical product. Finally, one of the texts under study has been adapted to alternate media, radio. A comparison of the original text to the subsequent adaptation provides an illustration of the process that takes place in the recuperation of historical figures and events for new genres and audiences. As Hayden White explains:

> [History is] accessible to study "only by way of prior (re)textualization,"[3] whether this be in the form of the documentary records or in the form of accounts of what happened in the past written up by historians themselves on

> the basis of their research into the record. . . . The analysis or explanation which is subsequently provided . . . is always an analysis or explanation of the events as previously described. (Figural Realism 58-9)

An examination of the choices that were made during the adaptation process illustrates the way in which history is continually being altered as a result of selection and interpretation of pre-existing texts.

It was never my intent to do an exhaustive consideration of literary texts that relate to this historical topic, because it is not the elucidation of the evidence that is foremost to my dissertation. Rather, my primary focus is the effect of figurative devices on the representation of historical information. Consequently, I have selected texts that have received critical acclaim as literary art, for which the author has articulated and demonstrated a desire to represent history faithfully, and which have been received by both readers and critics as being historically relevant and informative. The primary texts that relate to the history of Japanese Canadians during and since the Second World War include Joy Kogawa's novels Obasan and Itsuka, and Dorothy Livesay's documentary poem for radio entitled, Call My People Home. Both authors were living during the evacuation and dispersal of Japanese Canadians, but the works are presented from very different perspectives, each with its own particular objective. Livesay was an adult living in British Columbia during this historical moment, and was involved in protests against the Canadian government's orders for evacuation. Following the war Dorothy and her husband "offered to take a Japanese high school student into their home in order to obtain further education in Vancouver. Through this youth and her brother, Livesay obtained first hand description of

their experience" during the war (Documentaries 32), which is depicted in her documentary poem. In a letter to B.K. Sandwell (dated, February 28, 1949), Livesay posits Call My People Home as an overtly political project when she says that it was written "with a view to helping the Japanese case when the Federal ban [for return to British Columbia] is lifted March 31."[4] Kogawa was a child during the war and experienced the evacuation and dispersal first hand, but she admits that she never really considered writing about the Japanese Canadian experience until she encountered the letters and papers of Muriel Kitagawa at the Public Archives in Ottawa in the late 1970s. Kogawa admits in an interview with Magdalene Redekop in 1988 that: "a lot of what happened [to her own family] is in Obasan," but evidence shows that the novel is the result of extensive historical research and is as much about the official, documented Japanese Canadian experience as it is about Kogawa herself. Itsuka is a continuation of Obasan, picking up the story in the 1950s and proceeding through the redress movement in the 1980s. Kogawa, who was heavily involved in this movement, admits that Itsuka was influenced by her political activities, a fact that she felt, and that critics later confirmed, compromised the artistic quality of the work. Kogawa was so devastated by the reviews of Itsuka that she extensively revised her novel ("Heart of the Matter" 30). Kogawa believes that the second version of Itsuka "is somewhat different from the hardcover" ("Heart of the Matter" 30). I contend, as well, that it is a better work of literature, and more effective historiography than the first edition of Itsuka. As this study will demonstrate, Kogawa had both historical and literary aspirations for her works and she employed a conscious strategy to accomplish these aspirations. As the analysis of these works will illustrate, figurative representation played a primary role not

only in creating laudable works of literature but also in effectively imparting historical information.

The works of Kogawa and Livesay, while symbiotic in terms of their sympathies, arrived at very different times in Canada's social and historical development. Call My People Home was written shortly after the war, when, as George Woodcock explains, and as an audio tape of a 1954 radio broadcast by CBC Winnipeg confirms, "Canadians were still not prepared to view [the events] with the shame that Livesay stirs through her treatment of the episode" (56). Kogawa's Obasan, in contrast, was received by an audience that was not only sympathetic to the Japanese Canadians' cause but even incredulous and horrified that such an event could ever have taken place in modern Canada. A comparison of the audience reception of Livesay's text, yesterday and today, as well as the comparison between the initial reception of Livesay's work and those of Kogawa reveal much about the influence of setting on the transmission and reception of historical information.

My original intent was to focus on works of literature related to the history of Japanese Canadians. Early in my research, however, I became aware of work by a Canadian historian that contradicted not only the portrayal of history by these literary artists, participants in history and other historians, but the official position adopted by the federal government when it granted redress to Japanese Canadians in 1988. In 1986, at the height of the battle for redress, historian Jack Granatstein wrote an article for Saturday Night in which he questioned the case for redress and suggested that the loyalty of Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals before and during the war was questionable. Despite the fact that an agreement was reached with the federal government in 1988 that compensated Japanese

Canadians for their losses and that declared the injustice of government's actions in the 1940s, a book co-authored by Granatstein was published in 1990, sustaining, and elaborating on, the allegations in his Saturday Night article. I decided to include an analysis of this text in my study of the role of narrative in historical representation as it provides an excellent opportunity to compare how one work of 'traditional history' compares to 'literature' in producing a "knowledge-effect" (White, Figural Realism 7).

In the final analysis, though, it is not my intention either to laud historiography as an unquestionable source of information or to condemn it as a potential tool of propaganda. Nor is it my intention to suggest that literary criticism has nothing to offer the analysis of historiography as a discursive practice. Instead, by drawing on the critical arguments that emphasize the role of language and ideology in discursive practices, I examine the mechanisms by which narratives "work . . . to produce the variegated entity we call history" (Howard 26). At the same time, by analyzing the narrative process that is specifically historiographic, I attempt to illustrate that there is a difference between history and literature that is not characterized by an interest in real versus imaginary subjects or by style or quality of writing. Rather, the distinctive element is the unquestionable intent and responsibility of history to render a just representation of the events of the past in the context of an ever evolving present. As this study illustrates, this just rendering of history requires "interpretative and explanatory strategies [which are] . . . explicit, self-conscious, and subject to criticism" (LaCapra 75). In effect, history must engage not only in the attempt to represent and explain historical evidence accurately, but, in the style of modern literature,

must always be conscious of the subjective and variable nature of the interpretative process. As Dominick LaCapra explains:

> Interpretation is not a necessary evil in the face of a historical record that is always too full (hence the need for selection) and too empty (hence the need for auxiliary hypotheses to stop gaps). Interpretation is at the heart of historiography, for it relates to the way in which language prefigures and informs the historical field. Historians should not attempt to escape the need for interpretation through an illusory "positivistic" purity or experience this need as an exile from objective truth. On the contrary, they should inquire into its nature, implications, and "positive" possibilities in the reconstruction of the past. (LaCapra 75)

In doing so, the historiographer can not only avoid the pitfalls of the interpretative process, but capitalize on its powers of illumination.

A Question of Genre: Literature or History

Situating the Primary Works: A Brief Critical Discussion

The works by Kogawa and Livesay considered in this study deal extensively with historical material. They have, however, been categorized and critiqued primarily as works of literature, the historical element usually acknowledged by refining the classification of the texts as "historical" or "documentary" fiction or poetry. The flaw in such categorizations is

that they overlook or undermine the powerful and pervasive historical content and motivation of these works. One plausible reason the historical value has consistently been considered secondary to the literary aspects of these texts is that they have been written by acclaimed literary artists within the context of "genres of literary figuration" (White, Content 47). But, as Hayden White suggests, these factors may not be appropriate parameters for distinguishing history from literature:

> In its origins historical discourse differentiates itself from literary discourse by virtue of its subject matter ("real" rather than "imaginary" events) rather than its form. But form here is ambiguous, for it refers not only to the manifest appearance of the historical discourses (their appearance as stories) but also to the systems of meaning production (the modes of emplotment) that historiography [shares] with literature and myth. (Content 44)

The works by Kogawa and Livesay, then, would seem to cross the genre boundaries between literature and history. The authors' purpose to represent history coupled with the extensive research and meticulous attention to accuracy suggest that the texts fall within the domain of history. At the same time, the artistic intention and accomplishments support the inclusion of these works within the Canadian literary canon. Presumably the dual nature of these texts would make them irresistible to literary and historical theorists interested in examining the mechanisms by which information from the past is interpreted for present consideration, but the mutual contempt that exists between history and literature has precluded such consideration. The tendency of historians to view works of literature as products of imagination with little or no historical relevance, and the literary world's general scepticism

over the possibility of reliable historical representation results in a mutual disregard for the efficacy of the historical exposition in works of literature, even when they are admittedly based on historical events.

An intriguing solution to this stalemate, according to a number of critics from both sides of the fence, is to draw "historiography back to an intimate connection with its literary basis" (White, Tropics 99). Essentially, the historian must acknowledge the fictional element in historical accounts, and literary critics should attend more to "the achievement of historical accuracy" (Levin 10). In no way, however, do these directives promote the dissolution of the distinction between history and literature. Nor do they suggest either that the literary world tolerate the prevailing realist nature of historiography, or that history relinquish its aim to provide reliable and legitimate "access to the past" (Hutcheon, Politics 80). Rather, they profess that, by recognizing and capitalizing on "the strengths as well as the duplicities of their competitor" (Hodge 201), valuable professional and social achievements are to be made by both disciplines.

Hayden White, for example, insists that bringing "historiography nearer to . . . literary sensibility" will result in the renewal of history as a distinct discipline:

> . . . if historians were to recognize the fictive element in their narrative, this would not mean the degradation of historiography to the status of ideology or propaganda. In fact, this recognition would serve as a potent antidote to the tendency of historians to become captive of ideological preconceptions which they do not recognize as such but honor as the "correct" perception "of the ways things *really* are. . . . [If] we recognized the literary or fictive element in

> every historical account, we would be able to move the teaching of historiography onto a higher level of self-consciousness than it currently occupies. . . . [We] would find in the theory of language and narrative itself the basis for a more subtle presentation of what historiography consists of than that which simply [says] . . . "find out the facts" and write them up in such a way as to tell "what really happened." (Tropics 99)

David Levin also promotes reading historiography in the context of linguistic and narrative theory, but he insists that the appropriate analysis of any text that purports to be historical representation must consider the historian's obligation to historical accuracy and fair representation and interpretation (5-6). The analysis of historiography can only contribute to the ongoing evolution of theory if the critic attends as closely to the historical achievement as to the literary effects of the text. In the first place, the assessment of the relative historical value of the text will determine the legitimacy of its claim to be considered historically informative. More importantly, the investigation of the relationship between the linguistic performance and the development of the historical exposition should provide valuable insight into the role of narrative figuration in effective historical representation. While he insists that the historian must strive for accuracy and fairness in historical accounts, Levin also acknowledges that historiography is fraught with bias and misinterpretation. Still, he promotes a more productive application of criticism where less attention is given to isolating and emphasizing the ambiguous or questionable aspects of a text and "more [devoted] . . . to the historian's problems as a writer, and to various ways of facing [these problems]" (23).

> It is time to *begin* literary discussion of any work of history with the assumption that the author is a man with some convictions. The critic . . . ought to be especially prepared to see what [these convictions] do to help the reader achieve a just understanding of the past and its relationship to the present.
>
> Criticism . . . should frankly welcome contrivance that is not irresponsible manipulation, inference that is not fabrication. Taking their art seriously, historians try to find a language and a technique appropriate to their perceptions and hypotheses. One function of criticism is to study and evaluate the many ways historians find to solve this problem. (Levin 25-6)

Logically, an appropriate focus of such criticism would be works by literary historians who self-consciously strive to optimize language and technique in the exposition of accurate historical representation and who not only express their personal convictions but openly implicate these convictions in the interpretative process, as do Joy Kogawa and Dorothy Livesay in their historical representation of the experiences of Japanese Canadians. While Kogawa's novels and Livesay's documentary poem share a common historical purpose, the works differ contextually and stylistically, allowing for a varied analysis of the role of figuration in historical representation. Call My People Home is the most distinct of the three works, written almost forty years before Kogawa's first novel, by a Canadian of European rather than Japanese descent. It involves the transcription of information obtained solely from external sources and is in the form of poetry rather than prose narrative. While it failed to achieve its political purpose fifty years ago it was later described as stirring and

praised for its "documentary verisimilitude" (Woodcock 57), illustrating the influence of present conditions on the assessment and interpretation of information about the past. The most significant difference between Obasan and Itsuka, while they are both based largely on the experiences and memories of the author, is that one represents a retrospective representation of history while the other essentially documents a historic event as it unfolds. The contrasting perspective between the two provides insight into the particular strategies and problems that arise in investigative and interpretative versus documentary historiography. Another interesting comparison is that Kogawa wrote two works entitled Obasan and two rather different versions of Itsuka, the motivation for the second edition markedly different in each case. The first Obasan was primarily an impressionistic representation. In the second, Kogawa strives for something more politically and historically salient. In the second version of Itsuka, she was attempting to attain more artistic "richness" than was evident in the first edition by increasing the amount of "imagery" and reducing the "political talk" ("In Writing" 155). The differences in both cases amount to variations in figurative representation. Finally, while acknowledged for its social relevance, Itsuka, often criticized as an inferior work of art, did not achieve nearly the critical acclaim of Obasan, suggesting at the very least that good writing does contribute to the effectiveness of historiography. The range of perspective, the differences in style, as well as the self-conscious intention on the part of the authors to produce both a viable historical account and a respectable work of art, make each of these works an intriguing, yet unique, object of inquiry into "the importance of the problem of language, of rhetoric, and of theoretical self-reflection in the writing of history" (LaCapra 73).

Endnotes

[1] Hayden White describes "metahistory" as this "deep structural element in all historical works" on the first page of the "Preface" to his groundbreaking book, Metahistory, published in 1973. He later summarizes his purpose in Metahistory as "an analysis of the relation between the manifest level of historical narratives, where the theoretical concepts that have been used to explain the data are deployed, and the latent level, considered as the linguistic ground on which these concepts are precritically constituted" (431). That he considers "metahistory" the principle mode of critical inquiry into the nature of historical narrative, as well as an element of historical narrative, is evident in the following explanation that appears in a paper entitled "The Historical Text as literary Artifact," included in that 1977 collection by Canary and Kozicki. White explains the elements that are necessary in order for "a scholarly field [to take] stock of itself":

> [The study] must try to get behind or beneath the presuppositions that sustain a give type of inquiry and ask the questions that can be begged in its practice in the interest of determining why this type of inquiry has been designed to solve the problems it characteristically tries to solve. *This is what metahistory seeks to do*. It addresses itself to such questions as: What is the structure of a peculiarly historical consciousness? What is the epistemological status of historical explanations as compared with other kinds of explanations that might be offered to account for the materials with which historians ordinarily

> deal? What are the possible forms of historical representation and what are their bases? By what authority can historical accounts claim to be contributions to a secured knowledge of reality in general and to the human sciences in particular? (41, emphasis added)

[2] In this article Paul Gessell, discusses the increased prevalence of literature in which "real people and events are fictionalized." He raises the question: "At what point does one stop supporting a writer's constitutional guarantee to freedom of expression and start seeking a libel lawyer?" Gessell maintains that "Canada's literary community . . . seems extremely tolerant about the mixing of fact and fiction." Referring to Paul's Case, a book about the Paul Bernardo case, which mixes facts of the case with fictional elements, including such tasteless items as the imaginary, private thoughts of Bernardo's victims or their families, Gessell quotes retired University of Ottawa professor, Glenn Clever: 'the criteria for me, as a student of literature, is it good writing? . . . Is it interesting? And the legal question of libel and so on is extraneous to its assessment as a piece of literature. . . . So, when I get a book like that I assess it the same way as I would assess . . . any other novel, and whether the characters are realistic and consistent."

Gessell adds that Barbara Gabriel, a professor of English at Carleton University "takes a similar approach." She questioned the appropriateness of fictionalizing [some aspects of the Bernardo story], but she was not about to condemn the book, admitting that "if it was wonderfully written, that wouldn't be an issue" (E2).

[3] White here is quoting Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981, 82.

[4] Queen's University Archives. Series I, Folder 25.

Chapter One

A People's Tragedy; A Nation's Disgrace: The Evacuation and Dispersal of Japanese Canadians as presented in Joy Kogawa's Obasan

Sixty years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Canada and the world are well aware of the devastating and long term effects of this act of war-time aggression on the lives of Japanese Canadians. In no small measure this awareness is the result of Joy Kogawa's novel, Obasan (1981), which relives the evacuation and dispersal of Canadians of Japanese descent during and following the Second World War. Obasan is clearly the best known and most critically acclaimed of the three primary literary works considered in this thesis. It has also been declared the most politically effective, credited with spurring "Ottawa to acknowledge its wartime offences" and to issue a formal apology with financial redress to all Japanese Canadians in 1988 (Ross C1). Despite its acknowledged "power as a political speech act" (Magnusson 58), the novel is consistently considered a work of fiction, albeit with a distinctly historical flavour as the labels "historical fiction" (Rose, "Politics into Art" 215) or "documentary novel" (Harris 41) attest. It has also been categorized as "an autobiographical novel" (Milton 8), with one critic calling it "*semi*-autobiographical" (Ross C1) and another maintaining that it "seems to hover on the edge of *pure* autobiography" (Kelman 39). In addition to such traditional labels, Obasan has received some rather innovative descriptions

that illustrate the quandary that this truly dichotomous novel has inspired. Margaret Turner, for example, calls it a "quasi-historical record" (81), Rachelle Kanefsky a "fictive narrativization of . . . history" (11), and in her 1988 study Marilyn Russell Rose describes it as a "fictional account of . . . historical experience" (215). While emphasizing the fictional essence of Obasan, these labels nevertheless affirm its historically informative value. Several critics, however, have designated Obasan as "historiographic metafiction," largely discounting its historical achievement.

Donald Goellnicht, for example, maintains that any assessment of Obasan as a reliable portrayal of the experience of the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War "misses a major point of Kogawa's fictions: that her text problematizes the very act of reconstructing history by comparing it to the process of writing fiction." He goes on:

> The interpenetration of traditional source material for the writing of history (diaries, letters, news accounts) with an obvious fictional narrative produces not an organically whole, seamless, realistic novel, but a disruptive, or polyphonous, generic mixture that Linda Hutcheon has ingeniously labelled "historiographic metafiction. (287-8)

Inspired by Donald Goellnicht's thesis, Marilyn Russell Rose claims:

> . . . it is possible to see Obasan as rather uncomplicated "historiographic metafiction," a novel in which Kogawa sets up and exploits a point of view which explores the problematics of history-writing even as it writes history. Naomi's reluctance to write history, her distrust of history, dramatizes a modern historiographic position – that history is never unmuddied and never

> unbiased, and that the present shapes the past even as the past shapes the present . . . (1987, 291)

Manina Jones, also categorizing Obasan as "historiographic metafiction," argues:

> In a typically postmodern gesture, the novel invites us to consider it as a simultaneously literary, historical, and theoretical work. . . . . Kogawa's novel radically revises both the concept of "documentary history," which claims to reconstruct reliably the contents of the past, based on a body of written evidence and "documentary realism," which aims to literally enform the past by writing it. (214)

While each of these assessments aptly categorizes Obasan as a postmodern text, they do not support the classification of the novel as "historiographic metafiction." It is, as Goellnicht contends, "not an organically whole, seamless, realistic novel," but neither is it as pervasively fictional as he perceives. And, while Kogawa does problematize "the very act of reconstructing history by comparing it to the process of writing fiction," she makes much greater use of the fictional elements in Obasan to forward and strengthen the historical exposition. Obasan does "[dramatize] a modern historiographic position – that history is never unmuddied and never unbiased," but "Naomi's reluctance to write history [and] her distrust of history" (Rose 1987, 291), rather than undermining the reliability of the historical presentation, serve to confirm Kogawa's efforts "to communicate a just understanding of the past" (Levin 6) by acknowledging that "there is [never] a single story embracing . . . human events, . . . [but] many . . . different stories" (Mink 140). And, in her revision of the concepts of "documentary history" and "documentary realism," Kogawa does not deny the possibility

of viable, historical representation. Rather, she illustrates that alternative versions of history can be compatible, despite inherent dissimilarities in interpretation and representation. But, perhaps more importantly, Kogawa rejects the postmodern skepticism over the possibility of reliable historical representation and asserts the veracity of the portrayal in Obasan, positing it as a convincing contradiction to an official, alternative story. She does employ the postmodern strategy of self-consciously representing "historical data within fictive narrative design . . . as a means of directing our attention to the very processes by which we understand and interpret the past" (Hutcheon, "Politics" 83), but the complex journey of political and personal discovery that emerges in her novel serves to assert, rather than deny, "the truth of the fiction" ("Heart of the Matter" 33). In the final analysis, Obasan is not historiographic metafiction, because it is not fiction, but history, albeit with a truly modern – or postmodern – sensibility.[1]

Hayden White compares the current theoretical focus on the relationship between narrative and history to the "relation of literary modernism to literary realism . . . since what is at issue in both is the question of the adequacy of a given form of discourse, the narrative, to the representation of given content, historical reality" (Figural 22). He strongly advocates the application of literary theory to both the study of historical texts and the development of a viable historical theory, contending that

> modern literary theory provides a perspective on historical writing more comprehensive than those envisioned by participants in the debate over the nature of narrative discourse, on the one side, and those engaged in the debate over the nature of historical knowledge, on the other. Historical . . . theorists

> [must consider] the general theories of discourse that have been developed within modern literary theory, on the basis of new conceptions of language, speech, and textuality which permit reformulations of the traditional notions of literality, reference, authorship, audience and code. (Figural 24-5)

White insists that "one of the most important implications" of approaching historical writing in the context of modern literary theory is that "we will no longer be able to regard the historiographic text as an unproblematical, neutral container of a content supposedly given in its entirety by a reality that lies beyond its confines." (Figural Realism 25). Yet, this modern vision of historiography maintains the traditional distinction between history and fiction: that one is based on truth, the other on imagination:

> History and fiction are alike stories or narratives of events and action. But for history both the structure of the narrative and its details are representations of past actuality; and the claim to be a true representation is understood by both writer and reader. For fiction, there is no claim to be a true representation in any particular respect. Even though much might be true in the relevant sense, nothing in the fictional narrative marks out the difference between the true and the imaginary; and this is a convention that amounts to a contract to which the writer and reader subscribe. (Mink 130)

What is not traditional, however, is that according to modern historical theorists, there are two kinds of truth, "factual and figurative" truth (White, Figural Realism 10). Factual truth amounts to the correspondence of the elements of the presentation to documentary evidence, while figurative truth relates to the adeptness of the presentation "to communicate a just

understanding of the past in relation to the present and the future" (Levin 5). Communication, however, should not be interpreted as the power of persuasion, but rather the power of engagement. Describing "the . . . issue in historiography [as] . . . the relationship between documentary reconstruction of, and dialogue with, the past" (27), Dominick LaCapra explains factual and figurative truth as the "documentary" and the "worklike" aspects of the text:

> The documentary situates the text in terms of factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality and conveying information about it. The "worklike" supplements empirical reality by adding to and subtracting from it. It thereby involves dimensions of the text not reducible to the documentary, prominently including the roles of commitment, interpretation and imagination. The worklike is critical and transformative, for it deconstructs and reconstructs the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing into the world something that did not exist before in that significant variation, alteration or transformation. With deceptive simplicity, one might say that while the documentary marks a difference; the worklike makes a difference – one that engages the reader in recreative dialogue with the text and the problems it raises. (30)

In this context, Obasan is truly a modernist – and post-modernist – history; it self-consciously explores the problematic nature of historical knowledge, while striving and managing to be, both factually and figuratively, a reliable historical representation. Kogawa admits there is a constant struggle between being faithful to the facts and following one's

artistic impulses when writing literature that purports to be about reality, as do both Obasan and Itsuka. Her analysis of the creative process that occurs bears a striking analogy to both White's notion of "factual" and "figurative" truth and LaCapra's explanation of the "documentary" and the "worklike" aspects of the text. She contends that there are "two kinds of [reality] . . . the document and the fictionalized reality" and she maintains that "the truth of the fiction precedes the other truth" ("Heart of the Matter" 33). In order for a text to "work as art," she explains, "the real facts of the matter [may have to be] sacrificed for the fiction" ("Heart of the Matter" 33). "In writing prose," she continues, "what you are true to is the feeling and not the situation. Not the facts as such, but the facts of one's feelings" ("In Writing" 156). In Obasan, however, Kogawa is true to the facts, and while she occasionally alters situations, she does so for the purpose of recreating a "true" sense of the "feelings" of the situation.

Kogawa described the writing of Obasan as "an act of discovery" ("In Writing" 156), and it is this process that she dramatically and graphically depicts in her novel. Set within the narrative space of a few days, the protagonist, Naomi, is propelled on an emotional journey through time, fuelled by documents in a parcel from her Aunt Emily. Though reluctant, Naomi begins to examine the material, which consists of "an old scrapbook full of newspaper clippings, a brown manilla envelope, one grey cardboard folder and a three-ring-binder-size hardcover book full of [her aunt's] handwriting" (Obasan 32). She quickly becomes engrossed in the binder, which turns out to be a diary-journal of letters written by her aunt to her mother who disappeared when Naomi was only four years old. Throughout the course of the novel, Naomi relives her own experiences during and after the war, learns

some unsettling new information and finds compelling answers to a host of long unanswered questions. At each juncture along the road, something in Emily's papers sparks revelation, usually by evoking memories from Naomi's childhood. Kogawa's strategy of presenting the details as they unfold to Naomi, as opposed to providing a coherent and chronologically linear description and explanation of the events, places the reader as a participant in the discovery process. As Naomi's thoughts are often based in emotion rather than logic and her perceptions expressed in concepts that belong more to fantasy than reality, the reader experiences the historical process as a very subjective and vicarious undertaking, and recognizes historical interpretation to be the product of "the imagination or the sensibility or the insight of the individual historian" (Mink 145). Nevertheless, as critical response illustrates, Kogawa has created both a compelling and believable portrayal of the experiences of Japanese Canadians. In one review in particular, Hilda Thomas compares Obasan to a history of this wartime experience that appeared around the same time, The Politics of Racism, by Ann Gomer Sunahara. While she acknowledges the informative value of Sunahara's documentary "study of the uprooting of 20,000 Canadian Japanese," Thomas clearly favours Kogawa's treatment of the topic: "Obasan is an impressive achievement. It fulfils the highest function of art: to represent by means of affective images what critical thought attempts to convey through a recounting of the fact. The Politics of Racism adds to our knowledge of the expulsion of the Japanese Canadians. Obasan tells us the truth" (105).

Just how true Obasan is, however, seems to have been missed by most critics. While the frame story, the events revolving around the death of Isamu, is fictional, the historical journey of discovery Kogawa presents in Obasan is closely based on personal experience and

documentary evidence. Kogawa frequently acknowledged the autobiographical content in Obasan, as in an interview with Magdalene Redekop in 1988, when she admitted that "A lot of what happened [to my family] is in Obasan. We journeyed from comfort in Marpole, Vancouver, to a shack in Slocan and to an even smaller shack in Coaldale. That's one of the sugar beet centres in Southern Alberta" ("Literary Politics" 14). Prior to writing Obasan, however, Kogawa claims that she "had virtually no consciousness, except in a negative sense, of Japaneseness"; she saw herself "as white" and she "wrote as a white person" ("Heart of the Matter" 20). She had published a short story in 1978, also entitled "Obasan,"[2] but Kogawa insists it was written without any political intentions: "at that point, I was not thinking particularly of writing about Japanese Canadians, I was simply writing out of my own life and writing it in some of the way I wrote poetry. I would dredge things out of dreams and put them out there" ("Heart of the Matter" 22). Appropriately, it was a dream telling her to "go work at the Archives in Ottawa" ("Heart of the Matter" 23) that changed the focus for her writing. At the archives she encountered the "letters, poems, short stories, articles [and] . . . manuscripts" of Muriel Kitagawa, "an activist of the '40s, a young, married woman," who had been living in Vancouver during and after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Kogawa, "Dilemma" 32). This experience had a profound effect on Kogawa as she explained in an article for Toronto Life in 1985: "When I first read her material, I was gripped. I carried her papers through the halls of the Archives, holding back the tears, facing the corners where no one could see me. Sometimes, around midnight, I would sit alone in the huge rooms of tables and let the floodgates loose" ("Dilemma" 32). Kogawa knew immediately that Muriel Kitagawa's papers should be published.

> My initial encounter with Muriel's papers was to feel that they deserved to be a book of their own. . . . What I initially thought I should do was just take her words and edit them and put them as a book. . . . At first I used them verbatim, because I didn't want to alter the words. Later, I had to cut them and change them to make them fit a story. ("Heart of the Matter" 22)

The story Joy Kogawa would write, however, was not a traditional narrative, either in the fictional or the historical sense. She doesn't adapt either her own or Muriel Kitagawa's experiences into an autobiographical or a biographical summary; nor does she compose a realist representation of history that synthesizes evidence into formal arguments of cause and effect or that combines elements into a cohesive plot structure. Instead she produces a text that self-consciously delineates the process of recovering and interpreting information about the past. In effect, Obasan is an illustration of history taking "shape in language, emotion, thought, and discourse in [an] attempt to make sense of the kind of experiences [people] have endured" (White, Figural 13).

In her depiction of Naomi's gradual understanding of the story of expulsion and dispersion, Kogawa mirrors her own experience. Just as Emily's papers evoke memories and impressions that allow Naomi to recover the story of the experiences of her family and her community, Muriel Kitagawa's papers propelled Joy Kogawa through a similar odyssey. In an article in 1985, referring to Kitagawa as an "unrelenting ghost" and "a historian's guide," Kogawa admitted that "the spirit of Muriel Fujiwara Kitagawa . . . haunted [her] through [the] papers in the Public Archives" ("Dilemma" 32). In an interview with Janice

Williamson, she explains Kitagawa's powerful and pervasive influence on the creation of Obasan:

> I was so unconscious when I was writing [Obasan]. I just felt Emily's consciousness, which is Muriel Kitagawa's consciousness, and I felt myself having to work with that. And with Obasan. It didn't feel like it was a part of me but a part of *them*, and they were demanding the right to exist and I was saying, "Yes, Emily, yes, Obasan, you can exist. What is it you've got to say? I wasn't aware of really making decisions; it was their doing. ("In Writing" 154)

Whether it emerged through seemingly psychic intervention or methodical research, Obasan is clearly an attempt to preserve Muriel Kitagawa's legacy. Several years after the publication of Obasan, Roy Miki did what Joy Kogawa had originally considered doing; he published a selection of Muriel Kitagawa's letters and other writings in a book entitled This is My Own (1985). One look at Miki's publication attests to just how extensively Muriel Kitigawa's papers figure in Obasan. Every letter that appears in Emily's journal diary to her sister can be related to a letter written by Muriel Kitagawa. In some cases, Kogawa simply repeats portions of the letter. Other times, she alters the details for purposes of elaboration or clarification. Joy Kogawa recognized the importance of preserving Muriel's words, but she also realized that they represented only part of the story. In the winter and spring of 1942 when Japanese Canadians were forced to leave their homes in coastal British Columbia, Muriel Kitagawa and her family were among those able to relocate to eastern Canada and avoid the horrors of the internment camps, the privation of the ghost towns and the hard

labour on the prairies. The Kitagawas, however, were in the minority. Most British Columbia Japanese faced some or all of these indignities and hardships. Kogawa's text represents an effort to depict the overall Japanese-Canadian experience, including those elements that went beyond her own, and Muriel Kitagawa's experiences: elements such as the seizure of the fishing boats, the internment in Hastings Park, the transfer to the work camps and the separation of families. Joy Kogawa blends elements of Muriel Kitagawa's story with elements of her own story and intersperses extracts from documentary evidence with imaginative recreation of a people's story to compose a deeply moving and comprehensive account of this moment in Canadian history. Though Kogawa does take fictional excursions in her novel, any deviations from the facts serve to ensure that the portrayal is the most representative possible of the event in question. And, as is the tendency of any historian, she occasionally speculates on possible outcomes or probable causes of events not revealed through documentary evidence or explained in other historical accounts.

Emily's early letters present Muriel Kitagawa's report to her brother of the situation in Vancouver after the attack on Pearl Harbor: for example, the incidents of "hoodlumism" within the Japanese community, the frequent blackouts, the closure of two of the three Japanese newspapers and the seizure of fishing boats. They also reveal Muriel Kitagawa's reaction to these events, her bewilderment at "how . . . protesters are much more vehement against the Canadian-born Japanese than they are against German-born Germans" (Kitagawa 72), and her conclusion that it all "boils down to . . . racial antagonism" (Obasan 88, Kitagawa 72). When using letters that refer to Kitagawa's personal experiences, however, Kogawa adds imaginative details that enhance the level of pathos in her presentation.

Referring to the rising tensions between the Japanese-Canadian children and their non-Japanese classmates, Muriel writes that her daughter "came crying home once because some kid . . . said something" (Kitagawa 74). In Kogawa's text the description is more precise, accentuating the cruelty of the incident. Emily writes that Stephen "came crying home the other day because some kid on the block broke his violin" (Obasan 90). In one of her letters, Muriel mentions that the blackouts that had been imposed in British Columbia over fear of a Japanese invasion of western North America were frightening her children (Kitagawa 70). Kogawa's version, as Emily tells her sister how the blackouts are affecting the young daughter she left behind, is a more elaborate and moving description:

> There was a big storm during the last blackout. Nomi woke up. That peach tree is too close to her window. When the wind blows, it sways and swings around like a giant octopus trying to break in. . . . Mark woke up to find Nomi sitting on his pillow, hitting the Japanese doll you gave her. He tried to take the doll away from her and she started to cry and wouldn't stop. He said it's the first time she's ever really cried. She doesn't understand what's going on at all. (Obasan 86-7)

In this episode Kogawa seems to be combining her personal experience with Kitagawa's, enhancing the factual and emotional significance. Kogawa frequently mentioned "the peach tree in the back yard" of the family home in Vancouver, and as she would have been a six-year-old child when the blackouts occurred, this episode most likely represents a personal, childhood memory.

Neither Muriel's family nor Joy's family suffered internment in Hastings Park Exhibition Grounds in Vancouver, which was "used as a 'clearing station' or 'assembly centre' to house evacuees until arrangements could be made for" their removal to the interior of British Columbia or to eastern Canada (Adachi 218), but Kogawa provides a vivid description of the appalling conditions based on Muriel Kitagawa's graphic report of her visit to the park in April of 1942. The two accounts are very similar, right down to the "manure and maggots . . . [that] are still breeding and turning up here and there" (Obasan 107, Kitagawa 116), but without changing the facts, Kogawa imaginatively alters the circumstances, greatly enhancing the emotional effect of the incident. Following a visit to "the Pool," Muriel describes her encounter with an old lady who "was crying, saying she would rather have died than have come to such a place . . . she clung to Eiko and cried and cried" (Kitagawa 115). In Kogawa's story, the old woman Emily encounters is her sister's mother-in-law, her niece and nephew's grandmother, a woman for whom she too felt a deep affection:

> And then, Nesan, and then, I found Grandma Nakane there sitting like a little troll in all that crowd, with her chin on her chest. At first I couldn't believe it. She didn't recognize me. She just stared and stared. Then when I knelt down in front of her, she broke down and clung to me and cried and cried and said she'd rather have died than have come to such a place. (Obasan 106)

While Kitagawa's account of this incident is unquestionably moving, Kogawa's fictional version is yet more poignant by virtue of its personal relevance for Emily and her sister.

In addition to the letters in the journal-diary, Emily's political writings in Obasan are based on Kitagawa's papers. For example, Emily's manuscript, The Story of the Nisei in Canada: A Struggle for Liberty (Obasan 40), entails the combination of extracts from two of Kitagawa's writings: I Know the Nisei Well (Kitagawa 186), written in 1943 and This is My Own, My Native Land (Kitagawa 286), dated c. 1946-47. After reading the first paragraph of Emily's sixty-page manuscript, which is extracted from the first section of Kitagawa's paper on the Nisei, Naomi "[skims] over the pages till [she comes] across a statement underlined and circled in red: *I am Canadian*" (Obasan 41). Kogawa then presents a much abridged rendition of Kitagawa's essay about the personal significance of the Canto from Sir Walter Scott's "The Lay of the Minstrel."[3] Though Kogawa's version is much shorter than Kitagawa's, she adroitly captures the range of experiences as described by Kitigawa: the pride of a twelve-year-old child first feeling "the stirrings of identification with" one's homeland, then her sense of sadness and anger as an adult at having been betrayed by that homeland, and finally the resolve to assert her right of citizenship. Both Emily's fictional and Muriel's factual political reflections end by asking, "*Is* this my own, my native land?" (Obasan 42, Kitagawa 288). Muriel Kitagawa's rhetorical response follows:

> *Well, it is.* My Canadian birth certificate wasn't enough, and my record . . . in a very small way . . . as a fighter for TRUE Canadian democracy wasn't enough to prevent all that happened to me, because racially I am *not* Caucasian. I have to have something better than that. I have to have a deeper faith in Canada, a greater hope for Canada. My daily life and my future must be an integral part of Canada. I have to be a better Canadian than most of the

> Celtic or Anglo-Saxon variety . . . which hasn't been too difficult lately . . but which ought to be difficult if and when you, and I, succeed in our work. (Kitagawa 288)

Kogawa's greatly abbreviated response manages to deliver essentially the same message without the political oratory. Emily simply concludes her paper with: "The answer cannot be changed. Yes. It is. For better or worse, *I am Canadian*" (Obasan 43). The political message in Kogawa's novel emerges in much the same way as the historical information, as part of a process of gradual discovery. Kogawa clearly believed Muriel Kitagawa's opinions were valid and valuable, but by presenting only pertinent portions of the essays followed by Naomi's reflections, she avoids the didacticism that can accompany political deliberations. By systematically integrating and reinforcing the political ideas with soulful introspection and dramatic action, the message emerges for Noami and reader alike as a product of personal deliberation rather than political persuasion.

Kogawa considers government action and public reaction during this time in much the same way she portrays Emily's and Muriel Kitagawa's political positions. Scattered throughout the text are excerpts from a range of 'factual' and 'figurative' government documents and newspaper articles. As Naomi considers this material she makes some important discoveries regarding the validity of the information and begins to understand the extent of the injustice committed against her community. Again, revelations and conclusions are not enunciated but insinuated through informal comments, thoughts or impressions. In one incident, for example, Emily's response to a report in the Vancouver Daily Province contending that "everything is being done to give the Japanese an opportunity to return to

their homeland" (Obasan 203) adeptly illustrates government hypocrisy regarding efforts to deport Japanese Canadians to Japan during and after the war. "Everything was done, Aunt Emily said, officially, unofficially, at all levels and the message to disappear worked its way deep into the Nisei heart and into the bone marrow" (Obasan 202). Considering that these Nisei were native-born Canadians, Emily's stance points out that the Japanese Canadians were, in fact, not being helped "to return to their homeland" but being pressured to leave. Another time Naomi is bewildered both by the use of the word "indifferent" to describe people aboard a ship departing for Japan and the inference that their departure was voluntary. A newspaper article headlined "'Indifferent' Jap Repats Start Homeward Trek" explains: "There were few smiling faces among the boatload. Solemness was written in their faces; only indifference they showed. The ship of the voluntary repatriation was SS *Marine Angel*" (Obasan 204). As Emily's comment suggests, neither "indifference" nor "voluntary" accurately describes the circumstances: "'What it must have been like,' Aunt Emily said. 'Who knows how or why they decided to leave? Some Issei without their children around couldn't read and simply signed because they were urged to'" (Obasan 204).

Kogawa is constantly turning the emphasis from the public back to the personal in this way, because as critical as an examination of the political and social factors are to understanding the history of Japanese Canadians, it is the personal story that is paramount in Obasan, the story of what it felt like to be a Japanese Canadian during and after Pearl Harbor. While it is an exceedingly more difficult task to explain the emotional impact of experience than it is to relate events, Kogawa succeeds by creating an association between an incident in Obasan and an external element with an already prefigured emotional or intellectual

connotation. In Hayden White's words, she facilitates understanding by "rendering the unfamiliar, familiar." And, White insists, "what is involved in the rendering of the unfamiliar into the familiar is a troping that is generally figurative. . . . [proceeding] by the exploitation of the principal modalities of figuration [which are] metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (Tropics of Discourse 5). Through such tropological representation Kogawa depicts the impact of the broader social and historical events on the individual and on segments of the community, and she evokes the sense of a wide range of emotions.

The cognitive and emotional focus of Obasan being Naomi, it is through her perceptions and reactions that the details of the personal dramas unfold. Appropriately, her childhood experiences and sensations are processed in terms of fairy tale metaphors, all but one of which would be familiar to a general Canadian readership, facilitating the associative process of discerning the emotion of experience. The exception is the Japanese fairytale of Momotaro which represents the bliss of Naomi's childhood and of pre-evacuation life in the insulated and close-knit Japanese-Canadian community. For four-year-old Naomi, the meaning of the tale of "the little boy" who astonishes the old grandmother and grandfather by leaping to life "from the heart of [a peach]" is that "simply by existing a child is a delight" (59). When the outside world begins to invade her idyllic life, non-Japanese fairytales become more representative of her world than the Momotaro tale. In response to Old Man Gower's assaults, she imagines herself as Snow White, trapped alone in the forest, terrified and helpless: "I am Snow White in the forest, unable to run. He is the forest full of eyes and arms. He is the tree root that trips Snow White. He is the lightening flashing through the dark sky" (Obasan 69). In the early days of the evacuation, essentially unaware of what is

happening, Naomi is relatively content, but Stephen, her older brother, who has been exposed to racist persecution, understands only too well what is happening to his family. Sensing his emotional fragility, Naomi compares him to Humpty Dumpty, "half in and half out of his shell, . . . cracked and surly and unable to move" (Obasan 123). Later, settled in the "little grey hut" in Slocan, another fairy tale metaphor illustrates that Naomi too is growing despondent:

> Clearly, we are that bear family in this strange house in the woods. I am Baby Bear, whose chair Goldilocks breaks, whose porridge Goldilocks eats, whose bed Goldilock sleeps in. Or perhaps this is not true and I am really Goldilocks after all. In the morning, will I not find my way out of the forest and back to my room where the picture birds sing about my bed and the real birds sing in the real peach tree by my open bedroom window in Marpole?
>
> No matter how I wish it, we do not go home. (Obasan 136)

Fairytale metaphors continue, the images sometimes a source of encouragement, other times a reminder of the harshness of reality, often both, as when she convinces herself that if "Rapunzel's long ladder of hair could bear the weight of a prince or a witch," she "can endure [the] nurse's hands yanking, at the knots in [her] thick black tangles" (Obasan 163). For a brief time, during the reunion with her father in Slocan, it seems that the delights of the fantasy world will prevail: "I am Minnie and Winnie in a sea shell, resting on a calm seashore. I am Goldilocks, I am Momotaro returning. I am leaf in the wind restored to its branch, child of my father come home. The world is safe once more and Chicken Little is wrong. The sky is not falling down after all" (Obasan 186). The optimism, however, is

short-lived: "Then one day suddenly Father is not here again and I do not know what is happening" (197). Around this time, as Naomi enters the bleakest point in her life, in the beet fields of Alberta, the fairytale images cease, symbolizing the end of any hope that life might revert to the pre-evacuation condition of serenity. She describes her "late childhood growing-up days" in Granton as "sleep-walk years, a time of half dream" (Obasan 220). When she is finally awakened by Emily's parcel of documents, the childhood feelings of joy, innocence, hope and trepidation are gradually replaced by an adult's anger, bitterness and despair, and the fairytale metaphors are replaced by irony.

Perhaps the greatest injury to Japanese Canadians was the permanent loss of their possessions and their livelihood. Their homes, their businesses and most of their wordly goods were seized and no reparation made until forty years later, long after many of the victims had died. Kogawa revealed her own enduring indignation over this injustice in an interview in 1984: "I still think that the people who have my parents' house have stolen property" ("In a Hailstorm of Words" D1). This sense of resentment permeates Naomi's thoughts as she gradually understands the details surrounding the loss of their family home and as she remembers the subsequent living conditions they were forced to endure for the remainder of their lives. In the midst of Emily's papers, Naomi finds a letter concerning her grandmother's property in Vancouver:

> My eyes caught a brief official-looking letter from one signed B. Good to Aunt Emily. B. Good? I noticed that he was the custodian in charge of all the property that was supposedly being kept safe for us. I read the short note:

Dear Madam

This will acknowledge your letter of the 31st ultimo.

This will also advise you that as Mrs. T. Kato is a Japanese National living in Japan at the outbreak of war, all property belonging to her in Canada vests in the Custodian.

Yours truly,

B. Good

The irony in the name of the signatory of the letter, alone, is a powerful indictment against the government and its official representatives for actions taken against the Japanese Canadians. Naomi's acerbic comments emphasize the severity of this impropriety and illustrate the sense of anger that prevailed within the Japanese-Canadian community thirty years later:

> The Custodian's reply to Aunt Emily must have been the same to anyone else who dared to write. "Be good, my undesirable, my illegitimate children, be obedient, be servile, above all don't send me any letters of enquiry about your homes, while I stand on guard (over your property) in the true north strong, though you are not free. B. Good." . . .
>
> Did B. Good sometimes imagine himself to be God? (39)

The memory of the home they were forced to abandon in Marpole in Vancouver is unbearable for Naomi when compared to the decrepit little hut in Slocan that seemed "more like a giant toadstool than a building" (Obasan 129). Incredibly, though, her memory many

years later of life in the sorry little ghost town community bespeaks industry, prosperity and even contentment:

> In Bayfarm, in Slocan, the community flourishes with stores, crafts, gardens, and home-grown enterprise: Sakamoto Tailors, . . . Slocan Barber T. Kuwahara Prop., Tahara's Barber Shop, . . . Tak Toyota's photo studio, Shigeta watch repair, Kasabuchi dressmaker . . . The ghost town is alive and kicking like Ezekiel's resurrected valley of bones. . . . There are times for resourceful hands to be busy with survival tasks – pickling, preserving, gardening, drying and smoking food. There are times to relax and talk, to visit, to worship, to commune. (Obasan 175)

Despite the efforts of the Japanese Canadians to sustain a decent life in Slocan, the cruel irony was that destiny was not theirs to control.

> The fact is that, in 1945, the gardens in Slocan were spectacular. In the spring there had been new loads of manure and fertilizer and the plants were ripening for harvest when the order came.
>
> The fact is that families already fractured and separated were permanently destroyed. The choice to go east of the Rockies or to Japan was presented without time for consultation with separated parents and children. (Obasan 201-2)

The greatest irony of all, though, was the reality that confronted Naomi, her aunts and her uncle when they took "a trip through the interior of British Columbia" in 1962:

> The first ghosts were still there, the miners, people of the woods, their white bones deep beneath the pine-needle floor, their flesh turned to earth, turned to air. Their buildings – hotels, abandoned mines, log cabins – still stood marking their stay. . . .
>
> We looked for evidence of our having been in Bayfarm, Lemon Creek, in Popoff. . . . Not a mark was left. All our huts had been removed long before and the forest had returned to take over the clearings. (Obasan 125)

A fitting legacy to a community that had been described in a newspaper headline as "a stench in the nostrils of the people of Canada" (Obasan 126), no evidence remained of either the government's injustice, or of the Japanese Canadians' efforts to survive this injustice, only resounding evidence of the success of the British Columbia authorities to eradicate any sense of a Japanese-Canadian community from their province.[4]

The erosion of this large, united, thriving community in Canada is a pivotal element of both the political and the personal history of the Japanese Canadians. Through the presentation of historical personages and the imaginative depiction of the experiences of fictional characters, Kogawa creates a series of synecdoches to illustrate the impact of these historical events on both the individual and the Japanese-Canadian community. In the foreword to Obasan, Kogawa states: "Although this novel is based on historical events, and many of the persons named are real, most of the characters are fictional." What Kogawa more accurately could have said was: "many of the persons named are" 'factual' (or documentary), most of the characters are 'figurative' (or 'worklike')," because real persons and fictional characters alike represent, either factually or figuratively, real experience. Once

again, Kogawa joins fact with fiction to present a collage of characters that creates a superbly apprehensible performance of history. The real persons named in Obasan belong to the historical presentation in the novel. They include well-known Canadians like Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent, British Columbian politicians, provincial and municipal authorities who figured prominently in the historical events, public servants who were just doing their jobs as well as prominent and ordinary members of the Japanese-Canadian community. When real persons are mentioned, they are presented within proper historical context, their position or role at the time often clarified. While reading extracts from a debate in the House of Commons, June 21, 1944, between MacKenzie King and Stanley Knowles, for example, Naomi notes that at the time Knowles was the member of parliament for "Winnipeg North Centre"(Obasan 43). Another time, Louis St-Laurent is identified as the federal Minister of Justice. Among lesser known Canadians who had salient roles in this historical event are three key members of the British Columbian Security Commission, identified in one of Emily's letters to her sister: "Austin C. Taylor, [who represented] the Minister of Justice, Commissioner Mead of the RCMP [and] John Shirras of the Provincial Police" (Obasan 100). Years later, recalling a visit to the ghost towns that housed the Japanese Canadians during the war, Naomi remembers that one town was named "Tashme—formed from the names" of these three men (Obasan 125). There are as well a number of individuals named in Emily's letters whose roles are not clarified in Kogawa's text, but whose existence is confirmed in other historical accounts. Mrs. C. Booth, for example, who provides the permit documents for Emily and her father to go to Toronto, is a very real spokesperson for the also very real Grant MacNeil, "Executive Secretary of the Security

Commission" (Kitagawa 144). In his history of the Japanese, Ken Adachi reveals that "Alderman Wilson, the man who says such damning things about the [Japanese Canadians]," and his father, "an Anglican clergyman" (Obasan 95), are actually Halford Wilson, a Vancouver alderman described as one of the earliest and most vehement of the anti-Japanese community and his father Reverend G.H. Wilson, whose segregation crusade dated back to the "anti-Oriental rally of 1907" (Adachi 186). While reading Emily's manuscript about the Nisei, Naomi wonders why her aunt had "singled . . . out" a Mr. Green. For good reason, it seems: Howard Green was an infamous proponent for the evacuation of the Japanese Canadians, using fear as his political ammunition:

> . . . chastising the federal government over its delay in removing the Japanese, . . . [Howard Green] declared in the House of Commons on January 29 that Japanese forces could well use Prince Rupert or Port Alberni as bases for attacks on the entire Pacific Coast. . . . Green continued: "It would be possible to make the whole of British Columbia a battleground, and even to bomb the prairie cities such as Edmonton and Calgary." Guiding the invaders to "strategic" points on the coast would be the resident Japanese. (Adachi 205)

As Naomi begins reading Emily's "journal of letters," she introduces some of the individuals discussed in these letters:

> The people she mentions would be my age, or younger than I am now: her good friends, Eiko and Fumi, the student nurses; Tom Shoyama, the editor of the New Canadian; Kunio Shimizu, the social worker; my father, Tadashi

> Mark; Father's good friend, Uncle Dan; and Father's older brother, Isamu, Sam for short, or Uncle as we called him. (85)

Among the real Japanese-Canadian persons who figure in Emily's letters are Tom Shoyama who was a founder and editor for many years of the New Canadian and Kunio Shimizu, a social worker, who was secretary of the Japanese Canadian Citizens' League (JCCL) and partly responsible for setting up a council to work with the British Columbia Security Commission "to provide assistance in social services . . . and relief for the . . . Japanese Canadians confined in Hastings Park" (Kitagawa, 35). Fumi and Eiko are friends of Muriel Kitagawa, who assisted in caring for the detainees at Hastings Park (Kitagawa 75, 114, 116). Uncle Dan in Obasan is fictional, but he is clearly modelled after Kitagawa's brother, Doug, who like the "fictional Dan" relocated to Dalton, Ontario rather than be sent to a work camp in the British Columbia interior (Obasan 115, Kitagawa 138). Although there are similarities between the emotional experiences of Naomi's fictional family and Joy Kogawa's factual family,[5] Naomi's father and uncle are fictional, and along with a host of other "fictional characters" serve as synecdoche for the historical events that went beyond Kogawa's and Muriel Kitagawa's experiences.

Through the portrayal of the experiences of Naomi's Uncle Isamu, her father Mark, and her Grandpa and Grandma Nakane, Kogawa demonstrates the personal toll of the seizure of some 1,200 fishing vessels in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor and of the brutal separation of families. Naomi's grandparents and her Uncle Isamu were Issei, naturalized Canadians, born in Japan, and like most Issei, they pursued the same occupations in Canada that they had in Japan, which in their case were boat-building and fishing:

> Grandpa Nakane, "number one boat builder" Uncle used to say, was a son of the sea that tossed and coddled the Nakanes for centuries. The first of my grandparents to come to Canada, he arrived in 1893, wearing a western suit, round black hat, and platformed geta on his feet. When he left his familiar island, he became a stranger, sailing towards an island of strangers. But the sea was his constant companion. He understood its angers, its whisperings, its generosity. The native Songhies of Esquimalt and many Japanese fishermen came to his boat-building shop on Saltspring Island, to barter and to buy. Grandfather prospered. (Obasan 18)

Her Grandpa Nakane had retired long before the war, but Naomi's Uncle Isamu had retained the family business. Isamu's boat, not just "a fishing vessel, or an ordinary yacht, but a sleek boat . . . made over many years and many winter evenings . . . a work of art," was among those seized after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The last sight her uncle had of the boat was as [it] sliced back through the wake," an RCMP officer at the helm shouting: "'What a beauty! What a beauty!'" Then Isamu "too was taken away, wearing shirt jacket, and dungarees . . . with no idea where the gunboats were herding him and the other Japanese fisherman in the impounded fishing fleet" (Obasan 22), and later he was ordered "to report to the local Registrar of Enemy Aliens" (Obasan 40). As ghastly as this experience seems, the greatest horror, as one of Emily's letters reveals, is that Isamu's disappearance took place with no notice or consideration for either his wife or the rest of his family: "Mark told me he felt sure Sam had been carted off. I took the interurban down as soon as I could. Isamu couldn't have been gone too long because not all the plants were parched" (Obasan 91). Though

concerned for Isamu's ageing parents, Emily naively believes they are safe: "Grandma and Grandpa Nakane will be so upset and confused when they find out he's gone. You know how dependent they are on him. They went to Saltspring Island a couple of weeks ago and haven't come back yet. I know they're with friends so must be all right" (Obasan 91). Two months later, however, during a visit to the Hastings Park holding centre, Emily encounters Grandma Nakane, who had been imprisoned there with Grandpa Nakane, again with no notification to their family (Obasan 106). Naomi's last memory of her grandparents is in Slocan: ". . . they arrived by train. I know they wanted to stay with us. But an ambulance took them away . . . to New Denver" (Obasan 137). As evidence of how extensively the once cohesive family unit was torn apart, when Grandma Nakane dies shortly thereafter, only her granddaughter and her daughter-in-law attend the wake; her husband is too ill and both her sons, Isamu and Mark, Naomi's uncle and father, are inexplicably missing, presumably in a work camp.

The behaviour of Naomi's uncle and father, along with her brother Stephen, illustrates as well the generational differences characterizing the reaction of Japanese Canadians to their ordeal. As mentioned, Isamu was an Issei, born in Japan, a first generation, naturalized Canadian. His younger brother Mark, having been born in Canada, was a Nisei, and Mark's son, Stephen, also born in Canada, was a third generation Canadian, a Sansei. Each character is a product of his particular circumstances of birth and upbringing: Isamu steeped in Japanese tradition, Mark devoted to his native land, but heavily influenced by the culture of his Issei parents and brother, and Stephen, as Emily explains, is "thoroughly Canadian" (Obasan 90). Each reacts to the events that followed Pearl Harbor in a manner

commensurate with his generationally determined cultural perspective. As Ken Adachi explains, "most Japanese did not resist evacuation but co-operated with a docility that was almost wholly in line with their background and their particular development as a minority group" (225). For the Issei, this background was acquired in Japan:

> [They] were inclined to follow lines of least resistance since their cultural norms emphasized duty and obligation as well as the values of conformity and obedience. The status of immigrant issei was similar to the roles and positions they had left in . . . Japan, so the status their superiors held in Japan was now transferred to the white officialdom, and subsequent patterns of deference or humility were matters of course . . . Disruptive behaviour was censured, discipline and obedience were mandatory so that self-control, resignation and gratitude were desirable. Issei felt that suffering and hard work were necessary ingredients of character building. (Adachi 225)

Isamu faced his treatment in typical issei fashion. He stoically endured losing his livelihood, his property, being treated as an enemy alien, and being sent to a work camp. When he rejoins his family in Slocan, he expresses gratitude for a safe return rather than bitterness at having been separated in the first place. Yet always sensitive to his alien status, he carefully avoids any behaviour that might offend the authorities and possibly jeopardize his family's security, as precarious as that might have been. When Japanese language classes are offered in Slocan, for example, he and Obasan decide it would be unwise for Stephen and Naomi to attend as it might appear as a sign "of disloyalty to Canada" (Obasan 149). Ultimately, like so many issei, his reward for cooperation and loyalty was burial in a remote "north-west

corner" of a cemetery in the company of "many [other issei] fishermen [who] died on the prairies" (Obasan 247).

The Nisei simply "wished to prove that they were 'Canadian' by cooperating fully with the authorities" (Adachi 226). Tadashi Mark, Naomi's father, naively believed that his birthright would protect him and his children from injustice, even in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary. In one instance, Naomi recalls her father's unrealistic reaction to Stephen's description of a painful encounter at school:

> The girl with the long ringlets who sits in front of Stephen said to him, "All the Jap kids at school are going to be sent away and they're bad and you're a Jap." And so, Stephen tells me, am I.
>
> "Are we?" I ask Father.
>
> "No," Father says. "We're Canadian." (76)

"Steeped in the traditions of 'British justice' and 'fair play,'" Adachi explains, the Nisei "felt an acute sense of betrayal" when their citizenship rights were abused (Adachi 232). Long before he is ordered to a work camp, most of Mark's friends had already disappeared and in the days before he too vanishes, Naomi recalls a man who seems withdrawn, whose spirit is broken, whose strength is waning. "When I talk to him," she remembers, "he smiles but he stares away as if I am not there," and "when he speaks, his voice is thin as the wind" (Obasan 79-80). Even confined in a work camp he seems incapable of facing reality, desperately hanging on to the past. In one of the letters to her sister, Emily writes: "We've heard from Mark. Crazy man. All he thinks about are Stephen's music lessons. He sent two pages of exercises and a melody which he thought up" (Obasan 113). Shortly before the final

separation from her father, during a brief reunion in Slocan, Naomi recognizes, once again, the signs of disbelief and desperation: "after music, after breakfast, uncle and father sit at the kitchen table and I can see it in Father's eyes. It's happening again, it's happening again—the same stare, the eyes searching elsewhere" (Obasan 189). Years later, a letter in Emily's package reveals that he had been confined in the camp at New Denver for refusing to consider deportation to Japan, for committing the crime of wanting to remain in the country of his birth. This senseless injustice explains the deep and irrevocable pain Naomi sensed in her father just prior to his departure. As family and friends join in songs of farewell, Naomi remembers: "Father's eyes are closed. He joins in the singing but his rich baritone voice is weak and thin as if his throat is in pain" (Obasan 195). His death, like the last few years of his life, is almost imperceptible. Naomi doesn't recall when or "even if [she was] told at all" (Obasan 226) that he had died, the only evidence "a small black and white snapshot of a graveyard scene" (Obasan 231).

In contrast to his father's despondence and his uncle's docility, Stephen's reaction is anger and a profound contempt for the cultural heritage that shunned resistance. Like most Sansei, Stephen never questioned his nationality, never perceived a distinction from his white fellow-citizens, until his country dispossessed him. Then, exceedingly more perceptive than his father, he realizes that despite his Canadian birth, he and his family "are both the enemy and not the enemy" (Obasan 76). Forced to remain within the confines of his minority community, he withdraws into his music, ultimately escaping his repressed existence by winning top marks at music festivals and a chance to study in Toronto. When he returns to

his aunt and uncle's home two years later, Naomi observes that his contempt has barely wavered:

> If he has changed at all, perhaps he is less surly—less easily angered. But he still seems irritable and is almost completely non-communicative with Obasan.
>
> She mends and re-mends his old socks and shirts which he never wears and sets the table with food which he often does not eat. Sometimes he leaps up in the middle of nothing at all and goes off, inexplicably, no one knows where. (Obasan 236)

Stephen has been living with Emily in Toronto, and when Naomi asks him about the aunt she hasn't seen for almost twelve years, he answers: "'she's not like them,' . . . jerking his thumb at Uncle and Obasan" (236), clearly demonstrating his preference for Emily's outspoken activism over the tacit submissiveness of his issei aunt and uncle.

In an article in 1984, Joy Kogawa described the enduring effect of the expulsion and dispersal on the various generations of Japanese Canadians:

> My experience of the Japanese Canadians . . . is of a vastly and profoundly disparate and broken people. . . .
>
> Many Nisei, like myself, who suffered the drawn out trauma of racial prejudice during our formative and young adult years have a deep timidity burned into our psyches with the injunction that we must never again congregate, never again risk the visibility of community.

> The Sansei, the children of the Nisei, are the most vocal and fearless in their belief that Canada is best served by a full exposure of Japanese Canadian history. . . .
>
> Apart from the Nisei and the Sansei, there are a dwindling number of aged and dying Issei, the ones who suffered the most measurable trauma and who today are of all Japanese Canadians, the ones most abused, forgotten and politically powerless. These are the pioneers who . . . infused this land with their gentle dignity and their endurance. They still endure – without the comfort and care that other aging Canadians take for granted.
>
> ("Just Cause" 21)

While this literal description of the enduring impact of the persecution of the 1940s on Japanese Canadians is telling, it is not nearly as informative or moving as the figurative dramatization of the experience in Obasan, demonstrating, in contradiction to mainstream historical theory, the validity of Hayden White's contention that figurative representation "can . . . refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do" (Figural Realism ix). White contends that the various positions in the debate over the role of narrative in historical discourse formation can be summarized in terms of the "functional model of discourse [which] relegates logic, poetic, and rhetoric alike to the status of 'codes' in which different kinds of 'messages' can be cast and transmitted with quite different aims in view: communicative, expressive, or conative, as the case may be" (Content 39-40). He contends, as well, that "most of those who would defend narrative as a legitimate mode of historical representation and . . . as a

valid mode of explanation stress the communicative function" over the expressive and conative functions on the basis that they are not concerned so much with communicating information but rather with "expressing an emotional condition of the speaker of the discourse . . . or . . . engendering an attitude in the recipient of the message" (White, Content 39-40). Such discourse, proponents of the communicative model maintain, does little to advance historical knowledge because it "is assessed less in terms of its clarity or its truth value with respect to its referent than in terms of its performative force" (White, Content 39). According to the communicative model, then, it "is the content alone that has truth [or informational] value. All else is ornament" (Content 41). Not surprisingly, Hayden White prefers the performance model of historical discourse, which he maintains consummately implicates narrative form not only in the delivery, but also in the substance of the message. Joy Kogawa's Obasan is clearly a validation of the performative model of historical discourse, illustrating that the expressive function both effectively imparts information and actually enhances "the clarity or truth value" of the message. Kogawa's comments in her 1984 article provide the facts, while the performance of the experience in Obasan reveals the emotion, a revelation that is essential for those unfamiliar with this experience to understand its impact on ordinary lives.

Two pivotal episodes in Obasan that have origins in fact, but that operate primarily as powerful performative expressions of history are Naomi's molestation by Old Man Gower and the tragedy that befalls her mother. It is a fact that an old man lived across the lane from Joy Kogawa's childhood home in Marpole in Vancouver, and one article even suggests that she was molested by this elderly neighbour (Stainsby C1). Figuratively, though, Old Man

Gower represents a much more official aspect of history. Through the portrayal of his vile treatment of Naomi and its lasting effects, as well as through his subsequent behaviour, Old Man Gower is a synecdoche for the betrayal and victimization of the Japanese Canadians by their fellow citizens. In a chilling scene, Kogawa posits Gower as the symbol of those people who both permitted and benefited from the permanent seizure of the property of Japanese Canadians. Waking frightened one night during a blackout, Naomi searches for her father:

> I feel my way along the walls into the living-room where there are voices.
>
> Old Man Gower is here. He has never come into our house before and it is strange that he should be sitting in the darkness with Father.
>
> "Yes, yes," he is saying, his large soft hands rubbing together.
>
> "I'll keep them for you, Mark. Sure thing." Old Man Gower's voice is unlike the low gurgling sound I am used to when he talks to me alone. "The piano. Books. Garden tools. What else?"
>
> Although I am in the room, he acts as if I am not here. He seems more powerful than Father, larger and more at home even though this is our house. He sounds as if he is trying to comfort my father, but there is a falseness in the tone. The voice is too sure—too strong. (Obasan 74)

Gower's greed, his insincerity, his air of authority and his audacious disregard for his past actions and his future intentions accentuate the powerlessness of the Japanese Canadians. Confirmation that Old Man Gower symbolises, as well, the pervasive and debilitating long-term effects of this victimization on the lives of Japanese Canadians occurs when the adult

Naomi wonders years later: "Does Old Man Gower still walk through the hedges between our houses in Vancouver, in Slocan, in Granton and Cecil?" (Obasan 66).

Still, in spite of the mistreatment of the Japanese Canadians by their government and fellow citizens, Kogawa also acknowledges those individuals who tried to help by opposing government action:

> Throughout the country, here and there, were a few people doing what they could. There were missionaries, sending telegrams, drafting petitions, meeting together in rooms to pray. There were a few politicians sitting up late into the night, weighing conscience against expedience. . . . In Toronto there were the Jews who opened their businesses to employ the Nisei. But for every one who sought to help, there were thousands who didn't. Cities in every province slammed their doors shut. (Obasan 205-6)

The significance of these gestures of support as well as the meagre effect it had on improving the overall situation is symbolised in Rough Lock Bill. In opposition to Old Man Gower, the evil perpetrator, Rough Lock is the kind benefactor. Much like the activists who pressured the government to revoke the deportation orders in 1947, literally saving the lives of thousands of Japanese Canadians destined for ocean transport to a Japan devastated by the war, Rough Lock Bill saves Naomi from a watery death:

> Again and again I am plunged and twirled in the frantic dizziness.
>
> Then, as through a wavering tunnel, there is something pulling me along, through the water, slow as a courtly dance.
>
> Suddenly my ears clear and I am aware . . . [of] a roaring sound.

> "Okay, okay, I gotcha," a man's voice is saying.
>
> Between gasps, I am breathing, I am breathing and I know I am safe. . . .
>
> When I open my eyes at last, . . . Rough Lock Bill is kneeling beside me. (Obasan 162)

Though her recovery from either the near-drowning or the profound tragedies that have plagued her young life is far from complete, there is a sense of hope for future cooperation in the image of cultures coming together as Rough Lock Bill's arms give Naomi over to "Obasan's hand rubbing [her] back" (Obasan 163).

It is concern over the apocalyptic possibilities of sustained resistance to inter-cultural cooperation and prolonged inter-racial intolerance that is portrayed in the final figurative drama in Obasan. The Nagasaki episode at the end of the novel has provoked powerful and conflicting critical response. In her generally favourable review of Obasan, Susan Kelman points to this event as its one weak point: "I think that Ms. Kogawa makes one major error here, in giving the family a final, special secret of hair–raising drama. She did not have to reach so far – the common story was good enough" (39). In fact, what Kogawa is articulating here is that this drama is part of the "common story," both figuratively and, as it turns out, factually. In the introduction to his collection of Muriel Kitagawa's letters and papers, Roy Miki mentions that at the time Muriel's letters begin, a week after the attack on Pearl Harbor, "Muriel's younger sister Kay, 26 years old, and her mother Tsuru Fujiwara are in Japan, prevented by government regulation to return to Canada" (Kitagawa 67). Muriel's concern surfaces in her letters as when she is describing the family Christmas to her absent brother:

> It was such fun, I forgot that there were two in the family who were not having Christmas as we in Canada have it. But it does no good to think of it anyway. Mom, if she lives through this, will be a white-haired old lady before we see her. As for Kath, she may be a war-widow, and we may have more nieces and nephews. (Kitagawa 77)

Later in the same letter she considers: "But there's Mom stuck over there . . . she's most likely worrying about us being bombed. Lord what an awful mess. I hope America hurries up with those defence industries" (Kitagawa 78). Given the horrific results of "those defence industries" a few years later, Kogawa reasonably would have been impressed by that fact that Muriel Kitagawa's mother and sister had been trapped in Japan, and would have speculated that if not they, certainly other Canadians were caught in the bombings. And, as Sunahara explains in her text, it is a historical fact that, like Naomi's mother and grandmother, many Canadians who survived the nuclear blasts, were stranded in Japan for an unreasonable period of time after the end of the war:

> Those whose parents, children or spouses had been trapped in Japan by the advent of the Pacific War had no alternative except to go to Japan if they wished to be reunited with them. In 1946 the Canadian government was bringing back to Canada only the Caucasians among the Canadians trapped in Japan during the war. Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry in Japan were ignored by Ottawa until 1947 when they were finally allowed to obtain documentation of their Canadian birth but were allowed no other assistance, not even a passport. (Sunahara 144)

Beyond the factual basis, there is powerful figurative purpose for the Nagasaki episode in Obasan, with more far-reaching relevance than that suggested by various critics. Mason Harris, for example, suggests that: "In her grandmother's description of the bombing of Nagasaki, Naomi finds the ultimate form of death inflicted from the sky and destruction of community – a much more visible example of racist atrocity than the hypocritical policies of the Canadian government" (51). And Marilyn Russell Rose seems to agree when she claims that Naomi's pursuit of the answer to the question of why she and her uncle visit the coulee at the same time every year "will uncover the history not only of the Japanese-Canadian internment but of racial injustice in modern times on a truly apocalyptic scale" (Obasan 219). While the element of racial determinism in Obasan is indisputable, when Magdalene Redekop asked Joy Kogawa about the historical context for invoking the bomb in Obasan, her response indicates that the context far surpasses this one event and the meaning transcends any attempt, or intent, to assign culpability to any single or determinate source:

> I think that the Japanese, or any self-perception of victim is deliberately chosen. It's something I've experienced myself doing quite as a matter of defence. It's so much easier, I've discovered, to be a victim than it is to be responsible for being a victimizer that it's almost automatically chosen and one looks for those ways in which one is a victim. . . . But what I've discovered through the political process is that it's self-defeating. . . . One would want to choose the role of victim rather than to concentrate on one's responsibilities for the atrocities. I've spent some time in the last few years thinking about that in relation to redress for Japanese Canadians and in my

> relationship with a man who is a Jew, trying on different roles as victimizer and so on.
>
> . . . I've been seeing that change does not come about when one remains solely in the role of victim. . . . We do not promote real change until we see the ways in which we are the victimizers. How that change comes about is problematic because we cling so desperately to the role of victim because it *is* so much more comforting and it gives us a feeling of righteousness and we don't willingly let that go. (16)

Thus the Nagasaki episode in Obasan has much broader significance than the representation of the effects of racial hostility. In the same manner as words like Waterloo, Titanic, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Chernobyl and Jonestown, which without elaboration evoke impressions and meaning of near universal similarity, Nagasaki is metonymy for the "catastrophes [that are] possible in human affairs" (Obasan 156). The Nagasaki element in Kogawa's text is a reminder that the victims of such catastrophic events are always common, innocent people. Despite its grave and universal significance, however, the assessment of the revelation of the tragedy at Nagasaki as either the moment of resolution, when Naomi "no longer . . . perceives the past as unknowable" (Gottlieb 23), or as the "climactic telling" overestimates the relevance of this episode to the historical representation in Obasan and misses the essence of Kogawa's text.

Obasan is about preserving Muriel Kitagawa's legacy and tracing Joy Kogawa's personal journey of discovery. The climax occurs when Naomi understands that "'the past is the future'" (45), and allows herself to "remember everything" (54). And, reclaiming her

history, she voices her contradiction of a long-standing, alternative perspective of this history. When she comes across the folder entitled "Facts about evacuees in Alberta," with the newspaper article describing the "happy" Japanese working in the beet fields, her memories and her emotions spiral out of control: "Facts about evacuees in Alberta? 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" (Obasan 214). She compares the process of remembering the past to undergoing abdominal surgery without anaesthetic, and just as there is no turning back once the incision is made, once memories are unleashed they cannot be curtailed. Horrid memories of their living conditions in Alberta race through her mind, "the blackflies that curtain the windows, . . . the chicken coop 'house' [they] live in, the bedbugs . . . and the welts over [their] bodies" (Obasan 214-5). These images then lead to those of "standing in the beet field under the maddening sun . . . and lying down in the ditch, faint, and the nausea in waves and the cold sweat, and getting up and tackling the next row" (Obasan 215). Enraged by the contradiction between her recollection and the story documented in Emily's folder, she declares: "'Grinning and happy' and all smiles standing around a pile of beets? That is one telling. It's not how it was" (217). Contrary to Emily's belief that acknowledging the past will lead to emotional healing and reconciliation, however, Naomi's illuminating experience is far from consoling or hopeful:

> In time the wounds will close and the scabs drop off the healing skin. Till then, I can read these newspaper clippings, I can tell myself the facts. I can remember since Aunt Emily insists that I must and release the flood gates one by one. I can cry for the flutes that have cracked in the dryness and cry for the

> people who no longer sing. I can cry for Obasan who has turned to stone. But what then? Uncle does not rise up and return to his boats. Dead bones do not take on flesh.
>
> What is done, Aunt Emily, is done is it not? And no doubt it will all happen again, over and over with different faces and names, variations on the same theme. (Obasan 219)

Following on this moment of wrenching comprehension, learning of her mother's fate is much like a postscript to a tragedy which knows no bounds. It does reveal an important lesson, however: that there is danger in remaining silent, in denying history. In a private confidence with her mother Naomi admits: "Gentle Mother, we were lost together in our silence. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction" (Obasan 267). At this moment of illumination, Naomi's journey has come full circle. Towards the beginning of the text, as she opened Emily's parcel of documents a slip of paper fell out with the following words in Emily's handwriting: "Write the vision and make it plain, Habakkuk 2:2." In this early stage of her quest, Naomi does not share Emily's understanding of the relevance of these words: "Write the vision and make it plain? For her, the vision is the truth as she lives it. . . . The truth for me is more murky, shadowing and grey. But on my lap, her papers are wind and fuel nudging my early morning thoughts to flame" (Obasan 33). By the time the flames of Nagasaki rage into Naomi's life, the vision is clearer, though, and clearer too is the need to preserve "this vision." In a final prayer, she assures her mother and all her ancestors that, though they may be dead, their stories will survive:

> Father, Mother, my relatives, my ancestors, we have . . . turned and returned to your arms as you turn to earth and form the forest floor. Tonight we picked berries with the help of your sighted hands. Tonight we read the forest braille. See how our stained fingers have read the season, and how our serving hands serve you still. (Obasan 270)

In an interview in 1985, Joy Kogawa explained the importance of recuperating and preserving history:

> If I were to draw an analogy between . . . personal history and history in the public sense, I think it is that there are things to learn and we keep repeating and repeating the lessons until we learn them. Once we learn them, we don't have to repeat them anymore. We go from learning to learning. So, it's important to deal with the past in order for the lessons to be learned. ("A Matter of Trust" 31)

Confirmation that Obasan is an attempt, in a "personal . . . [and a] public sense . . . to deal with the past" is the evidence closely linking the "figurative" presentation to "factual" events. Affirmation that lessons have been learned is the impact Obasan has had in both a historical and social context. In addition to the critical reception of the novel acknowledging its contribution in raising public awareness about the experiences of Japanese Canadians during and after the war, perhaps the most telling illustration of its influence is that Obasan, not other official, "factual" texts dealing with the subject,[6] was quoted in the House of Commons on the day the government issued its formal apology and announced its plans for

financial redress. The Honourable Edward Broadbent, who read the passage, introduced it with the following words: "Obasan . . . is a story of the life experiences of families at this time. It is noted that the families are fictional but all experiences are very real. At one point the heroine of the novel, who is in her thirties, describes the impact this has had on her life. I know it is a true story" (House of Commons debate 19501, September 22, 1988). The passage that was read[7] does not provide factual information but describes the emotional experience, confirming the importance of the expressive function in historical discourse, the importance of understanding the feelings as well as the facts of history. The plain facts as stated by Ann Gomer Sunahara are these:

> In February 1942 the federal cabinet ordered the expulsion of 22,000 Japanese Canadians residing within one hundred miles of the Pacific coast. The order marked the beginning of a process that saw Canada's Japanese minority uprooted from their homes, confined in detention camps, stripped of their property, and forcibly dispersed across Canada or shipped to a starving Japan. (Sunahara 1)

Joy Kogawa also recounts the facts of the situation,[8] but through imaginative elaboration and figurative explanation, she recreates the "feelings" ("In Writing" 156).

Long before Obasan appeared, another Canadian writer attempted, through a work of literary figuration, to tell the story of the experience of Japanese Canadians after the attack on Pearl Harbor. That writer was Dorothy Livesay and the work her long poem Call My People Home. The events described in Call My People Home are the same events Kogawa portrays

in her novel, but the format of, and the context for, Livesay's poem, as well as its reception, differ markedly from Kogawa's novel. Like Obasan, Call My People Home, the subject of my next chapter, is a superb illustration of the power of figurative language to impart historical information.

Endnotes

[1] In the introductory chapter, I have argued that the works of literature considered in this thesis, because they are overtly based on historical events and strive to present an accurate portrayal of these events, are more correctly categorized as "metahistory" rather than "historiographic metafiction." The term "metahistory" coined by Hayden White is a multi-faceted concept referring to the subliminal, linguistic strategy that is used in processing historical data into a comprehensive explanation of historical events as well as the theoretical or critical method that seeks to illuminate the principles of the historical discipline. In addition, I contend that given the theoretical propositions and conclusions that have evolved from Hayden White's "metahistorical" studies, "metahistory" refers also to all historiography. See page 8 of Introduction and corresponding end note.

[2] In fact there are two works preceding the novel Obasan that touch on the wartime experience of the Japanese Canadians: the short story, "Obasan" and a poem written in the 1960s entitled "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation." These works only minimally consider the motivation and ramifications of this historical event, but they notably prefigure the evolution, the structure, and the tone of the novel. The speaker in the poem, like the narrator of Obasan, is an adult trying to recall details about this time in her childhood. For the most part, her memories are not of suffering and persecution, but of being fiercely loved and protected by her parents, with one notable exception. Lingering in the deep recesses of

her mind is a bewildering and painful memory of senseless cruelty that, as the last few lines of the poem explain, she could attribute to nothing other than her Japanese heritage:

> And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life
>
> Who said "Don't insult me" when I
>
> Proudly wrote my name in Japanese
>
> And Tim flew the Union Jack
>
> When the war was over but Lorraine
>
> And her friend spat on us anyway

Like young Naomi, this child sees only one solution to the problem.

> And I prayed to the God who loves
>
> All the children in his sight
>
> That I might be white.
>
> ("Choice" 55).

In the short story, published in the Canadian Forum in 1978, the narrator who, like the protagonist of the novel, is visiting her widowed aunt after the death of her uncle, finds a shoebox in the attic "full of documents" related to his, and his family's, experiences following the attack on Pearl Harbor. After a cursory glance at a number of the documents, the narrator begs the question of her dead uncle: "Am I come to unearth our bitterness that our buried love too may revive" ("Obasan" 28). But, reminiscent of Naomi, unwilling, or perhaps unable, to pursue this painful quest, the narrator closes the shoebox and leaves it behind in the attic. In these two works, we have the basis for the ultimate binary strategy that informs Kogawa's novel, the evocation of repressed childhood memories and the revelation

of personal and public documents from the past. And the process that is foreshadowed in these two earlier works and that comes to fruition in the novel closely mirrors the process that Kogawa underwent to produce her novel of personal and political discovery.

[3] The Canto is as follows:

> Breathes there the man with soul so dead
>
> Who never to himself hath said:
>
> This is my own, my native land!

(Scott qtd. in Obasan 41)

[4] Ann Gomer Sunahara describes the ringleader of the campaign to remove persons of Japanese descent from British Columbia as "the ubiquitous Ian Mackenzie" (Sunahara 32), the federal minister of pensions and health and "M.P. for Vancouver Centre" (Sunahara 16). Among other things, Mackenzie chaired a "Conference on the Japanese Problem" convened in Ottawa in January 1942, where the British Columbia delegation "unanimously declared that they did not trust persons of Japanese racial origin and that they considered the continuing presence of Japanese Canadians in B.C. a menace to public safety" (Sunahara 32-3). The dispossession of Japanese Canadians of their homes and livelihood is cited as the major factor facilitating their removal from British Columbia. Ian Mackenzie took credit for both accomplishments:

> In April 1942, Mackenzie had journeyed to the West Coast to accept the gratitude of his constituents for his role in the uprooting of British Columbia's Japanese population, and to assure them that he would continue his efforts to obliterate what he called the Japanese menace. "It is my intention," he

> declared [as quoted in the Vancouver Province] on 4 April 1942, "as long as I remain in public life, to see they never come back." (Sunahara 101)

In 1941, "95% of Canada's 23,450 Japanese" resided in British Columbia. By 1947, the ratio of Japanese in B.C. to the rest of Canada had been reduced to approximately 30%, 6,776 of a total national population of 20,558. (Sunahara 7, 173)

[5] Kogawa's family was never permanently separated, but Kogawa's father was frequently absent and she experienced a painful emotional separation from her mother. While her father was not sent to a work camp, like Nakayama-sensei in Obasan, Kogawa's father, whose name was Nakayama, was "an Anglican clergyman, [who] was rarely home since he had to be 'on the road' visiting the dispersed community" ("Literary Politics" 15). And while she remained with her mother, as she explained to Janice Williamson in an interview, Kogawa experienced an emotional separation from her mother that has had a lasting effect:

> My mother used to be such an elegant woman. . . . She had been a very bourgeois beautiful, elegant woman with a lovely house, lovely clothes and furs, and china and furniture and music lessons. She was a musician . . . and suddenly she was out in the prairies in this dusty place and an important part of her gave up. She didn't seem to care any more . . . [and] increasingly she retreated from the semblances of things that children need. It's difficult for me to talk about this. ("In Writing" 156-7).

In this same interview, Kogawa acknowledged the possibility that "she had made [the] two female characters, Naomi's idealized mother of childhood plus the *obasan*, because [she]

wasn't able to cope with the reality of what happened to [her] real mother" ("In Writing" 156).

[6] The following texts, cited in the present study, were published prior to the announcement of redress in 1988 and have been acclaimed for their contribution to raising awareness about the history of the Japanese Canadians: Ken Adachi's first edition of The Enemy that Never Was (1976), Barry Broadfoot's, Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of the Japanese Canadians in World War II (1977), Ann Gomer Sunahara's, The Politics of Racism (1981), and Roy Miki's collection of Muriel Kitagawa's writings, This is My Own (1985).

[7] The passage that was read in the House of Commons, which coincidentally comes from the chapter I have identified as the climactic point of the novel, is as follows:

> 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.
>
> There is a word for it. Hardship. The hardship is so pervasive, so inescapable, so thorough, it's a noose around my chest and I cannot move anymore. (Obasan 214)

[8] As if to confirm that Obasan is a figurative and factual personal presentation of a moment in Canadian history with powerful political significance, Kogawa ends her presentation with an excerpt from a factual document, "the Memorandum sent by the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and the Senate of Canada, April 1946," denouncing the deportation orders (Obasan 272).

Chapter Two

A Portrait of Courage and Remarkable Patriotism: The Evacuation and Dispersal of Japanese Canadians as presented in Dorothy Livesay's Call My People Home

In her essay "Dorothy Livesay as a Political dramatist," Rota Herzberg Lister alludes to the similarities between Kogawa's novel and Livesay's poem when she characterizes "Call My People Home" as "anticipating by more than thirty years Joy Kogawa's award-winning novel Obasan" (64). In addition to the subject matter, the two works are comparable in several other ways, including the fact that both are politically motivated and intended to be historically accurate and informative. At the same time, as with Obasan, the historical aspect of Call My People Home has been undermined or misinterpreted by critics. And Livesay's work, like Kogawa's, has even been drawn into the quagmire of postmodern indeterminacy regarding historical writing: the insistence on the one hand that historical accuracy is unattainable and, on the other, that fidelity to existing evidence is unnecessary in works of literature.

While Dorothy Livesay's long poem has not specifically been discussed within the framework of postmodern theory, "reformulations of Livesay's arguments" regarding the Canadian documentary poem undermine the inherently historical aspect of the genre as she defined it, and, by extension, undermine the historical objective and achievement of Call My

People Home. As Manina Jones points out: "much of the writing around the notion of the documentary in Canada has been self-consciously framed as a reaction to Livesay's paper," "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre" published in 1971[1] (The Art of Difference, 1993 4). The most notable example is a 1984 essay in which Stephen Scobie provides an analysis of the postmodern documentary based extensively on Livesay's theory. Towards the beginning of his discussion, Scobie provides a useful summary of Livesay's description of the Canadian long poem:

> Livesay argued that the Canadian long narrative poem did *not* follow either the "epic" pattern, "Concerned with an idealized 'hero'," or the Chaucerian pattern, concerned with "the development of individualized characters," or the American pattern "where the emphasis is on historical perspective and the creation of a national myth." Rather, she argued, Canadian poems are *documentary*, "based on topical data but held together by descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements." Theme becomes more important than plot; and "our narratives are told not from the point of view of one protagonist, but rather to illustrate a precept." Above all, the documentary poem is characterized by that "dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet": it can never be purely one or the other, but must always involve an active interplay between both. ("Amelia" 267)

Scobie declares Livesay's "definition . . . and her intuition in the naming of the form . . . brilliant and in many ways prophetic," contending that "in the fifteen years since her talk,[2] there has been a plethora of examples of the "documentary poem" ("Amelia" 267).

However, Scobie's ensuing discussion and the works he cites as "examples of Livesay's theory" represent a basic misapplication of Livesay's concept of the documentary. These works include Michael Ondaatje's long poem The Collected Works of Billy the Kid and Margaret Atwood's, The Journals of Susanna Moodie, and novels such as Ondaatje's Coming Through Slaughter, George Bowering's Burning Waters and Timothy Findley's Famous Last Words. While Scobie does admit that these examples do not follow "every aspect of [Livesay's] definition," he insists that "all of them have maintained the dialectic of objective fact and subjective feeling, and the importance of grounding it in documentable reality, in the authoritativeness of fact"("Amelia" 267). At the same time, however, he points to a blatant disdain for historical accuracy in these works and even comments that "it is remarkable that there have been so few legal actions as a result of the 'documentary' claims made by writers" ("Amelia" 267). He describes Michael Ondaatje's insistence that "source material" in Billy the Kid has only been edited or slightly reworked as "outrageous understatement" and he characterizes George Bowering's entire novel, Burning Water, as a "glorious travesty of facts" ("Amelia" 273). In light of this prevailing disregard for historical evidence, Scobie offers "a new definition, or at least a description, of the documentary poem" since 1969:

> It is a long poem, or sequence of poems, usually of book length, and narrative in structure. The events which make up this narrative are documented, historical happenings, although the poet will frequently modify or shuffle these events, or add to them purely fictional incidents. ("Amelia" 269)

Scobie contends that the tendency in the modern documentary to modify or fictionalize historical evidence is comparable to Livesay's depiction of the documentary as "a conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" ("The Documentary Poem" 267). Positing this dialectic as the "key characteristic" of Livesay's definition of the documentary poem, Scobie insists that it involves the "assertion of the poet's presence in the work, the personal applicability of even the most remote historical material" ("Amelia" 266 & 277). The "writers of documentary poems," Scobie explains, "speak frequently of a sense of 'possession' by the voices they assume . . . [which] can lead to a freedom, a liberation of the writer to imagine" ("Amelia" 277). Identifying this "sense of 'possession'" as "the self-defining aspect of the documentary poem" ("Amelia" 276), Scobie maintains that it "stresses the key role of the author as the *creator* of a historical past" ("Amelia" 278).

Manina Jones offers a similar interpretation of Livesay's notion of the "dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" ("The Documentary Poem" 267). According to Jones, Livesay was suggesting that "a factual, historical situation . . . gives rise to the poet's fictional, creative musings" ("Scripting the Docudrama" 26). Like Scobie, Jones applies Livesay's theory of the documentary to a discussion of The Collected Works of Billy the Kid. Jones, however, acknowledges a distinction between Ondaatje's long poem and Livesay's concept of the documentary:

> The Collected Works counters the notion of a [didactic], monologic 'formal voice' both by offering a multiplicity of alternative discourses, and by drawing out alternate readings of official texts. This move constitutes a kind of

> strategic misreading of Livesay's related requirement that the documentary poem use a dramatic technique and a representative protagonist. The Collected Works may be seen as a revisionary or experimental 'docudrama' that presents language as spectacle. . . . It is indeed a drama of documents, or 'play' of texts. (The Art of Difference 69-70)

According to Jones, the protagonist of Ondaatje's work Billy the Kid does not "illustrate a precept" as prescribed by Livesay ("Documentary Poem" 269); rather, he "is a signifier that becomes a *dramatic* locus of textual intersection . . . the place where problems of documentation are enacted" (The Art of Difference 69-70). Defining Billy the Kid as documentary-collage, Jones maintains that it departs from traditional documentary that "'seeks to achieve an effect of authenticity and credibility' in its dramatization of historical events"[3] by focusing on the aspects of documentary that subvert notions of authenticity and credibility. While she concurs with Scobie's observation that The Collected Works, along with Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie, "established the [documentary] form in the practice of Canadian literature" since 1969 (Scobie, Signature Event Cantext 120), Jones turns to an alternate theoretical consideration of these works:

> The Collected Works, like [the] later texts, deals with a figure of legend, one that is obviously already filtered through layers of story and whose 'true character' is therefore problematic. Billy's 'legendary' status places him on what Linda Hutcheon would call a 'middle ground of reference' where he both is and is not a 'real' historical figure.[4] Hutcheon observes that in writing of Billy the Kid in a self-consciously metafictional way, Ondaatje creates "what

> we might call a 'historiographic' referent. Unlike the historical (or real) referent, this one is created in and by the *text's writing* (hence historio*graphic*). (The Art of Difference 71)

As noted previously, Linda Hutcheon has coined the label "historiographic metafiction" for works such as these[5] that focus on the "problems of documentation" to the exclusion of consideration for historical accuracy and informational value. She describes the genre as

> [a] kind of metafiction [that] represents something beyond a . . . need to reclaim the past, because it is not necessarily [the] past that is always sought out. Instead, [these works] . . . appear to signal another need, one shared by writers everywhere today: a need to investigate both the ontological nature and function of their literary products and of the processes that created them and keep them alive. ("Canadian Historiographic Metafiction" 236)

Such a description is quite removed from Dorothy Livesay's notion of the documentary poem, which, according to Livesay, is overtly concerned with recording history, with seeking out the past. Livesay does acknowledge that the "documentary material [used] as the basis for poetry . . . is rearranged for eye and ear [or] reorganized imaginatively," but she does not equate the imaginative rearrangement or reorganization "of the actual data" with changing historical evidence (Livesay, "The Documentary Poem" 267 and 276). Rather, as her summary of the genre at the conclusion of her seminal essay indicates, Livesay sees this poetic manipulation of the data as a mechanism to enhance the aesthetic and instructional value of the work:

> Such poems record immediate or past history in terms of the human story, in a poetic language that is vigorous, direct, and rendered emotionally powerful by the intensity of its imagery. Thus we have built up a body of literature in a genre which is valid as lyrical expression but whose impact is topical-historical, theoretical and moral. ("The Documentary Poem" 281).

Arguably, since Livesay's theory was introduced in 1969, it might require some revision when applied to the critical perspective of the mid-1980s. According to Manina Jones, it is just such a revision that Scobie has undertaken:

> While he agrees with Livesay that the documentary draws on a sense of "the authoritativeness of fact," Scobie interrogates the basis of objective-subjective polarity when he notes that the very category of 'objective fact' or 'historical reality' is currently being rethought by poststructuralist theorists who have demonstrated the basis of 'fact' itself in textual construction, and have shown it to be subject to the same contextual and interpretative contingencies often associated exclusively with fiction: "The documentary invokes the authority of fact only to consign it to a systematic blurring of limits: it appeals to the historical character's signature only in order to forge it."[6] (Jones, The Art of Difference 7-8 and Scobie, Signature Event Cantext 122)

But even in the 1980s, Livesay envisioned a literature that was very distinct from historiographic metafiction. In notes for lectures on literature and politics dated 1980 and 1981, Livesay acknowledges the existence of political bias in literature, but, in contradiction to the postmodern tendency to view all writing, particularly historical writing, as weapons of

"ideological manipulation" (Hutcheon, "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction" 235), Livesay regards literature as an instrument for social justice. While lengthy, the following quotation is worthwhile as it precisely outlines Livesay's position on this key issue.

> All literature is political. Its means of communication is through language where there is always bias, always a point of view. Language is power. It can corrupt. Politicians use it as do poets, dramatists, novelists. Could this be the reason why there has developed, in recent decades, an anti-language movement? I have a theory that the reason why painting [and music] in our century has turned away from realism into abstraction, cubism, surrealism [and postmodernism] arises out of a desire to free art from significant meaning. Nature, fragments of nature, distortions of nature are to be presented without comment, "the thing in itself" and this is supposed to eliminate any charge of propaganda. However, it <u>is</u> political. It represents the artist as anarchist. In my view this has resulted in . . . "the dehumanization of art,"[7] art lacking any human content. . . .
>
> Let's look at literature in this context. Writers of the present decade have followed the other arts instead of leading the way. They have attempted to create a new vocabulary, changing spellings, coining words in such a way as to sterilize time of normal meaning. . . . Already this sort of writing has created a whiplash: the flashbulb production of fact into fiction.
>
> For the above reasons, summarily presented here, I reject the premise that fine literature can be considered only for its aesthetic techniques, without

> reference to its content. Rather than saying that the best writer must be political I prefer the word 'committed'. The best creative writing in Canada or elsewhere has been and will be that of the committed artist.
>
> A good . . . poet should not be bound by rigid theory or political strategy. He or she should be bound by inner conviction and feeling. . . . We have to remember history if we are to be committed writers. So I hope there may be young poets . . . who have something to say about our violent time . . . some belief in human survival. We need desperately a literature of courage. (University of Manitoba, MSS 37, Box 106, Folder 27)

A few years later, in her short overview of "The Canadian Documentary" presented at the Long-liners conference in 1985, Livesay continued to promote a theory of the documentary with a very different view from Scobie's of "the authority of fact." Livesay defined the "true characteristics of a documentary [as] historical accuracy, dramatic voices and socio-political implications" ("Overview" 127). Given such a description, then, Dorothy Livesay's notion of the Canadian documentary poem is not a precursor, as Scobie suggests, but an alternative to the postmodern documentary. And, according to Livesay, her long poem Call My People Home is an enduring example of just such a text:

> In my own case, in my 1940's undertaking concerning the Japanese-Canadian diaspora (the radio documentary "Call my People Home") political criticism was the energizing force driving my characters into dramatic monologues. The third element was there also, for every scene was based on factual research. ("Overview" 128)

Livesay also once described Call My People Home as her "most thoroughly documented 'public' poem" ("Song and Dance" 45), and in her introduction to the poem in The Documentaries, she outlines the combination of personal experience and research that contributed to her presentation. Livesay and her husband, Duncan McNair, were residents of Vancouver at the time of the evacuation of the Japanese Canadians from the coast. While McNair served on "a committee of Canadian citizens [that] had been formed to protest" the evacuation, Livesay worked diligently to address the matter of education for the children of the evacuees. Due to the recent birth of her daughter, Livesay reluctantly had to decline a request in the summer of 1942 to participate "in the organization of an evacuation center at New Denver, B.C., and [the establishment of] school classes for" the children of the evacuees. A few years later, however, when the government agreed to permit school-age children "to return to Vancouver for further education, provided foster homes could be found," the McNairs agreed to take a young girl into their home. Livesay obtained first-hand accounts of their lives before and after Pearl Harbor from this youth and her brother. Livesay claims that the section of her poem entitled "A young Nisei" is based on an excursion she took with the boy "to Lulu Island in the Fraser Delta to see the place where he had" spent his childhood. She obtained details for the sections of her poem entitled "The Fisherman" and "the Wife" from letters and articles in "back files of" Japanese-Canadian newspapers. The material for "the Mayor," Livesay explained, is based on a visit she made "to the Similkameen where the then mayor of Greenwood, B.C., showed [her] around that 'ghost' town and told [her] most movingly of his experience with the" evacuees.[8] Even the section that Livesay identified as the one fictional part of the poem is based on factual

accounts of the "very distressful period of the evacuation when women and children were separated from their menfolk . . . and forced to live in Vancouver's Exhibition grounds, in the buildings usually allocated to farm animals" (Documentaries 32-3).

As is often the case with historically based works of literature, critics have varied in their emphasis on, and their assessment of, the historical aspect of Call My People Home. Interestingly, though, it is the form more than the content that has influenced the differing critical responses to Livesay's work. Call My People Home is truly a polymorphous work of art that defies definitive categorization. By subtitling the work "A Documentary Poem for Radio," Livesay established the work as both documentary and poetry and many years later, in her autobiography, she referred to it as a "documentary drama" and a "play" (Journey 173). In addition to being a conglomerate of all of these genre types, the genre category is even blurred in terms of whether Call My People Home is predominantly poetry or prose. Before being published in 1950, Livesay's long poem was presented twice on CBC radio in August 1949. The radio production, which entails the recital of free verse by multiple voices, accompanied by background music and sound effects, resembles more a dramatic than a poetic performance.[9] As a publication, Call My People Home looks and reads like poetry, but it recites like prose.[10] From the time it first appeared as a Ryerson Chapbook in 1950, critics have approached Call My People Home from these different genre perspectives, and reaction has varied, depending on the particular critic's assumption as to the defining aspect of the text. According to Hayden White, this influence of form on the production of meaning is an integral component of the performance model of discourse. "From the perspective provided by this model," White explains,

> a discourse is regarded as an apparatus for the production of meaning rather than as only a vehicle for the transmission of information about an extrinsic referent. Thus envisaged, the content of the discourse consists as much of its form as it does of whatever information might be extracted from a reading of it. It follows that to change the form of the discourse might not be to change the information about its explicit referent, but it would certainly change the meaning produced by it. (Content of the Form 42)

White describes the production of meaning as the effect of encoding a list of events as a particular story type:

> [O]n this level of encodation, the historical discourse directs the reader's attention to the secondary referent, different in kind from the events that make up the primary referent, namely, the plot structures of the various story types cultivated in a given culture. . . . [W]hen the reader recognizes the story being told in a historical narrative as a specific kind of story – for example, as an epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, farce – he can be said to have comprehended the meaning produced by the discourse. This comprehension is nothing more than the recognition of the form of the narrative. . . .
>
> The production of meaning in this case can be regarded as a performance . . . [since] it is the choice of the story type and its imposition upon the events that endow them with meaning. The effect of such emplotment may be regarded as explanation . . . [through] the *topoi* of literary plots . . . (43)

White's discussion refers to the varying effect of encoding historical events as a story type, and critical reaction to Livesay's Call My People Home demonstrates that reception is also influenced by perception of genre, whether poetry, prose or drama, each of which carries its own set of preconditioned aesthetic and utilitarian expectations. In addition, White contends that poetic interpretation of events produces a meaning different from prosaic discourse due to "the prominence given in poetic discourse to patterning – of sounds, rhythms, meter, and so on – which draws attention to the form of the discourse quite apart from (or in excess of) whatever message it may contain on the level of its literal verbal enunciation" (Content of the Form 43). And critical reaction to Livesay's long poem does indeed illustrate that the greatest differences exist between assessments of the text as poetic versus prose discourse.

Dorothy Livesay's "documentary poem for radio" had two publishing debuts: in 1950 as a Ryerson Chapbook and in 1968-69 as a selection in The Documentaries. Both times critical reaction has been influenced by the individual critic's interest and genre expectations. In the "Letters In Canada: 1950" review of poetry, describing Livesay's long poem as "a story of the exile of the Japanese from British Columbia," Northrop Frye applauds its narrative simplicity and lack of lyrical excess: "It is written with close sympathy and a dry unlaboured irony, and in a taut, sinewy narrative style with no nonsense about it: it will pick up an image as it goes along, but it never stops for any synthetic beautifying" (259). The same year, approaching Call My People Home as poetry, Anne Marriott views the narrative quality of the work as a deficiency compromising Livesay's poetic potential:

> "Call My People Home" . . . is the story of the Japanese Canadians uprooted after Pearl Harbor. It was written as a documentary poem for radio. It starts out with two sections which, while not up to Miss Livesay's usual standard, lead us quite eagerly. And then – it bogs down in prosaic expressions of fact and never gets back onto good poetic ground. (18)

Ronald Hambleton's review of the chapbook, aired December 31, 1950 on the CBC series Critically Speaking, demonstrates quite clearly how a reader's genre expectations can influence critical reception. Pointing out that Livesay "seeks out and grasps new subjects for poetic composition, but also uses those subjects as areas of contemplation and social analysis," he believes the poetic attributes of the work inhibit its effectiveness as social commentary and questions Livesay's artistic prudence in calling the poem a documentary:

> It is . . . called a documentary, and in form I suppose it is, to some extent. To my mind, however, the elements of a documentary should be characteristic of the people or the place dealt with. If there is one general criticism I would make of Mrs. McNair's poem, it is that the necessarily sharpened language consistent with the poetic idea, makes the characters vague and negative as people. I confess it is quite likely that if the word documentary had not been tacked on to the poem, this might not have mattered to me. But since the word is there, its effect is there. It may be argued that [the characters] are not by design fully drawn as people. (University of Manitoba, MSS 37, Box 49, Folder 9).

Twenty years later, all critics give due consideration to both the social and historical value of Call My People Home, most likely as a result of Livesay's description of The Documentaries as a collection of "social histories" from the 1930s and the 1940s, a time when "poetry, in England and in North America, became political" (The Documentaries v). But again, depending on their genre orientation, critics vary in their opinion of the importance, or the effectiveness, of these aspects of Livesay's poem. Declaring Call My People Home "an indictment of Canadian treatment of the Japanese in this country during World War II," Peter Stevens attributes the social accomplishment of the poem to its "dramatic strength," which he maintains comes "from the quality of the narrative," specifically "its low keyed language and its emphasis on spoken language" (76-7). According to Philip Resnick, the artistic achievement is secondary to the social and political message. Call My People Home, he claims, is "not . . . great poetry, but it [is] . . . good poetry, clearly and cleanly expressed. More importantly, it deals with subject matter which is absolutely crucial for any radical poetic or political sensibility, which only infrequently finds its way into Canadian Literature" (38). In a similar vein, a review in the Victoria Daily Colonist declares that what Call My People Home "lacks in style . . . [it makes] up for in reportorial authenticity. Apart from . . . literary merit, [it belongs] on the shelves of high school and university libraries as Canadian social history" ([EDWH], University of Manitoba, MSS 37, Box 18, Folder 10).[11] Yet another critic questions the compatibility of lyrical and political expression, and feels that Livesay's documentary lacks tangible information. Describing Call My People Home as "imagism in an uneasy alliance with social commentary," Hugh MacCallum maintains that it provides "surprisingly little detail

from the past, but [it does] project something of the drama of the author's social concern" (349-50). Finally, in a provocative illustration of the effect of preconception on critical reception, in particular the tendency of historical and literary critics alike to exclude "literary texts . . . from the relevant historical records or [to] read [them] in an extremely reduced way" (La Capra 33), Doug Fetherling undermines the historical effectiveness of Call My People Home, not in terms of the integrity of the information, the quality of the presentation, or even directly because of the genre form, but solely because it has been written by a poet rather than a historian. He writes:

> As [documental] poetry, it is immeasurably better than E.J. Pratt's tales about Dunkirk and the Titanic, but I question the publisher's claim of its "inestimable value in helping today's youth in high schools and universities understand their Canadian past." That's what popular historians are for, not poets. But the author's long introduction prose notes are truly worthwhile. (24).

As this wide-ranging criticism illustrates, Dorothy Livesay's long poem not only defies definitive generic categorization, it eludes any conclusive critical evaluation. In the absence of any defining consistency, then, perhaps the best description of Call My People Home comes from Dorothy Livesay herself. In The Documentaries she describes Call My People Home as "a tribute to the endurance and tolerance of the Japanese Canadians who so roughly and so violently in the year 1941, were uprooted from their fishing-villages and fishing-boats, on the west coast of British Columbia, because it was believed that they might be spying for the Japanese – our enemies" (32). She maintains her "poem for radio managed

to combine a sense of personal poignancy and alienation with a sense of social purpose" ("Song and Dance" 45). Contrary to some critical opinions, she insists that it contains the same elements as her private poems: "music; dance rhythms (metred and free); speech rhythms; and in tone, a sense of isolation leading to a game of wry wit, a play on words" ("Song and Dance" 47). And, as she contends, Livesay does manage to create an artistically accomplished, socially evocative and reliably informative depiction of the history of the Japanese Canadians after Pearl Harbor. What makes Livesay's documentary accomplishment impressive is that she did it without the benefit of historical and social documents available to later historiographers. What makes it especially intriguing as a composition is that it is presented in the ultimate form of literary figuration, poetry, demonstrating that "figurative language can . . . refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do" (White, Figural Realism ix).

In his discussions of the role of narrative in historical writing, Hayden White deals primarily with prose works of narrative figuration, but the same criteria he cites to validate the effectiveness of the historical representation in these works can be applied to Dorothy Livesay's documentary poem. As White explains:

> Most of those who would defend narrative as a legitimate mode of historical representation and even as a valid mode of explanation (at least for history) stress the communicative function. According to this view of history as communication, a history is conceived to be a "message" about a "referent" (the past, historical events, and so on) the content of this is both the

> "information" (the "facts") and "explanation" (the "narrative" account). Both the facts in their particularity and the narrative account in its generality must meet a correspondence . . . criterion of truth value. . . . Not only must the singular existential statements that make up the "chronicle" of the historical account "correspond" to the events of which they are predications, but the narrative as a whole must "correspond" to the general configuration of the sequence of events of which it is an account. (Content of the Form 40)

Livesay's poem corresponds closely "to the general configuration of the sequence of events" as they are portrayed in more recent, critically acclaimed texts dealing with the history of the Japanese Canadians, attesting to the relative "truth value" of Livesay's historical presentation on both a public and personal level. The description of the events in Call My People Home corresponds to the treatment of these same events in Sunahara's and Adachi's historical texts and the portrayal of the emotional impact of these events on the lives of Japanese Canadians is comparable to the experiences relayed in Joy Kogawa's novel and Muriel Kitagawa's letters. Livesay's 'social history,' however, is not a narrative summary of facts and figures, a recital of decrees and proclamations, or the analysis of evidence supporting allegations of racism and political propaganda as are Sunahara's and Adachi's histories. Nor is it a personal record of experience as presented in Muriel Kitagawa's letters or the portrayal of the rediscovery of a repressed past as in Kogawa's novel. It is, quite simply, as Livesay herself defined it, "poetic reportage" (Overview 127). Livesay's role is that neither of a historical researcher nor of a participant in a historical event. She is a witness, and most importantly a documentary reporter. Livesay has compared the Canadian long poem to

documentary approach "in film, radio, or television," the trend begun by "John Grierson . . . in the forties when he used film to document the immediacy of Peoples' lives" (267). Her long poem, both in performance and print, figuratively emulates the documentary film tradition. Throughout Call My People Home, the announcer sets the stage, provides context and introduces the speakers who give testimony of their experiences. Embedded within the oratory are instances of imagery that elicit the sense of a film panning over the landscape or scene of action while the voice-over provides the appropriate description or commentary. The strength of these images and of the power of the social and political message are achieved by "a troping that is generally figurative . . . [proceeding] by the exploitation of the principal modalities of figuration [which are] metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. (White, Tropics of Discourse 5).

At every step in her documentary, Livesay employs precise metaphors to evoke an emotion or an image with remarkable clarity and brevity. There are even moments of animation in the section describing the seizure of the fishing fleet, as in the following passage which graphically depicts the vulnerability of the "long lines of sixty boats" being towed through rough seas:

> At Milbanke Sound we ran into heavier seas
> The buffeted boats like so many bobbing corks
> Strung on a thin rope line that over and over
> Would break, be mended by the corvette's men
> And then again be snapped by snarling sea.
> Smashing like blind birds through a log-strewn sea

. . . plucked along in fistfuls by the waves

Then brought down with a thud—

Propellors spinning helpless in mid-air

By contrast, as the vast flotilla moves closer to land, the parallel shoreline takes on a quality of eerie calm:

As we set sail at midnight, now a thousand boats

Chained to the naval escort, steadily south

Into familiar waters where the forests cooled their feet

At rock's end, mountains swam in mist— (5)

Taking over the story from the Issei fisherman, the young Nisei recalls the breathtaking beauty and tranquility of the setting moon as it greeted the sleepy fisherman setting out on their pre-dawn excursions: "a burnt-out moon / An orange eye on the river" (6). Juxtaposed against this celestial scene from the past is the depiction of torturous labour and oppressive heat in the beetfields of the prairies as keenly portrayed in the image of the "sun's beak / [tearing] at [their] backs bending over the rows" (13). In the midst of suffering, however, the prairie provides brief moments of solace. At the end of a long day of toil, as the night approaches, the weary labourers watch

A lime green sky rim the mauve twilight

While in the pasture fireflies danced

Like lanterns of Japan on prairie air. (14)

But as impressive as the lyrical imagery is in Call My People Home, it pales in comparison to the perspicuity and intensity of the personal story. With striking metaphors,

stinging irony and vigorous, frank and passionate commentary, Livesay paints an emotional portrait of physical and spiritual endurance in the face of injustice and inhumanity. The immigrant Issei's struggle to achieve a comfortable living through fishing, and the despair at seeing this hard-won life destroyed after Pearl Harbor, are powerfully rendered through metaphors of love and domestic comfort. He compares life aboard his boat to the serenity of falling asleep in the arms of a woman:

> Now I could own my own boat, *Tee Kay,* the Gillnetter
> The snug and round one, warm as a woman
> With her stove stoked at night and her lanterns lit
> And anchor cast, brooding upon the water
> Settled to sleep in the lap of the Skeena. (3)

In an extension of this metaphor, an allusion to the life-giving force of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman explains the vital relationship between the Issei and his boat.

> Stooping over the engine
> Priming the starter, opening the gas valve,
> I felt her throbbing in answer; I laughed
> And grasped the fly wheel, swung her over.
> She churned off up the river – my own boat, my home. (3)

In a final double metaphor, the Issei fisherman likens the loss of his boat to the loss of love, which in turn equates to the loss of life. He describes this "last long trip south" as "The time my life turned over, love went under / Into the cold unruly sea" (4).

The fact that the Issei tolerated such loss without resistance has been the subject of contentious discussion both within and outside the Japanese-Canadian community, cited as both the reason the evacuation and dispersal were so easily achieved and yet proof that these acts were unwarranted. In a very precise metaphor, Livesay attributes the Isseis' peaceful compliance with the government orders, not to their inherent docility, as have other studies, but to a combination of ignorance and terror. In response to the order to "head . . . to the nearest port, report to the authorities," the Issei fisherman explains that he "obeyed, / But as a blind man" (3-4). His continued cooperation stems from escalating trepidation: "The numb fear about my boat, /*Tee Kay*, found no release in port, off shore. . . . / No one knew more than his fear whispered, / No one explained" (3-4). Even when they learn that their "boats were to be examined, searched / For hidden guns, for maps, for treachery" (3), the Issei continue to cooperate, confident that once the fleet had been searched, they would be cleared of all suspicion of treason and allowed to head back out to sea to resume fishing. Ironically, the Isseis' greatest concern is that they wouldn't be released before the end of the fishing season:

> We thought: perhaps it's all a mistake
>
> perhaps they'll line us up and do a search
>
> Then leave us free for Skeena, Uclulet--
>
> The time is ripe, the season's fish are running. (4)

When it became apparent, however, that "There was no mistake. It wasn't a joke" (4), the Issei fisherman soon realizes, "that was the end of my thirty years at the fishing / And the

end of my boat, my home" (6). The cruelest irony, however, was that as great as this loss seemed, it was but the first of many.

Although the seizure of the fishing fleet is described from the perspective of the Issei (first generation) fisherman, many Nisei (second generation) had also forged a living on the sea, often, as depicted in Obasan, continuing a family tradition. As in Kogawa's novel and the history books, Livesay's poem addresses the generational differences in the reaction to the events that followed Pearl Harbor. As the fleet "chained to the naval escort / . . . set sail for home," the fisherman explains, "the young ones, born here, swore / Not softly, into the hissing night. The old men wept" (5). The Issei are heartbroken at this turn of events; the Nisei, on the other hand, are infuriated by the acts of their government. In a powerful metaphor, the announcer explains the Nisei's attachment to his homeland, thereby evoking a sense of the magnitude of the feelings of betrayal felt by all Nisei:

> These their children, the Niseis, were born
> Into the new world, called British Columbia home
> Spoke of her as mother, and beheld
> Their future in her pungent evergreen. (6)

Forsaken by his motherland, this member of the Canadian-born generation then describes the changes that took place in his life. The ring of a school bell is replaced by the sound of sirens, the image of berry picking, "with the bees humming and the sun burning," transforms into the sight of "women crying and the men running" (7-8). In a startling metaphor, the young Nisei describes the feeling of being rounded up by the Mounties and loaded onto trucks for transportation to an unknown destination as "the stifled feeling / Of being caught,

corralled" (8). In the next section, entitled "The Letter," the metaphor is extended to evoke a sense of the oppressive conditions of their detainment in the overcrowded buildings in Hastings Park that had previously housed livestock. Explaining that her mother "is continually frightened -- / never having lived so, in a horse stall before" (9), the author of the letter laments:

> . . . nothing is private.
>
> Hundreds of strangers lie breathing around us
>
> Wakeful, or coughing; or in sleep tossing;
>
> Hundreds of strangers pressing upon us
>
> Like horses tethered, tied to a manger. (9)

No less poignant than this situation is the subsequent transfer of Japanese Canadians from Hastings Park to the ghost towns in the interior of British Columbia. The extent of the personal tragedy is powerfully expressed in the mayor's pragmatic concerns for the basic needs of the evacuees. His quandary, "Sixty-eight persons, and where could they find a pillow" (10), refers not only to this single group of exiles, without a place to rest their heads, but is a synecdoche for a once prosperous ethnic community, now dispossessed of homes, of livelihood and a country. As the mayor describes the Japanese Canadians disembarking from the train, the inevitable comparison between this image and what has become the twentieth-century's metonymy for man's inhumanity against man – the atrocities of Nazi-occupied Europe's "final solution" – reveals the magnitude of the injustice enacted in Canada:

> Slowly the aliens descended, in huddled groups,
>
> Mothers and crying children; boys and girls

Holding a bundle of blankets, cardboard boxes,

A basket of pots and pans, a child's go-cart—

Looking bewildered up and down the platform,

The valley closing in, the hostile village. . . . (11)

Over time, as the wife explains, the "aliens" manage to make even "this village . . . home":

Our small plot grown to wider green

Pastured within the Fraser's folds, the shack

Upbuilded to a cottage, now a house—

The cherry trees abloom and strawberry fields

White with snow of blossom, of promise. (13)

Incredibly, however, they are faced with the prospect of another uprooting. They must choose between staying in the ghost towns where they have managed to achieve some comfort and security, but where families remain separated, or they can "chose another home, another way" (12), and possibly keep the family together. A powerful metaphor characterizes their choices as "two iron doors beyond which lie more doubt, more gloom" (12). A long journey to a strange place and an uncertain future seems neither worse nor better than the certain present, which yet another exquisite metaphor paints as an infinite longing for an irretrievable yesterday:

there to sit

With idle hands embroidering the past

Upon a window pane . . . (12)

Opting to "labour as one – all the family together," they choose the journey eastward to the prairies, to "a harsh new land," and a life that "was harder than hate" (12-13).

Appropriately, Livesay's long poem ends with this bleak and irresolute picture of life on the prairies. Not only is the image consistent with the lives of the exiled Japanese Canadians at the time, it was necessary to Livesay's political and social purpose. Call My People Home was written sometime between 1946 and 1948, and "the . . . order-in-council that revoked the restrictions on Japanese Canadians," allowing them "the same freedom of movement as their American counterparts," came into effect only "on 31 March 1949, . . . seven years after their initial uprooting" (Sunahara 149). In a letter to B.K. Sandwell, Feb. 28, 1949, Livesay admits that Call My People Home was written "with a view to helping the Japanese case when the Federal ban is lifted March 31" (Queen's University Archives, Series I, Folder 25). In an earlier letter to the Japanese American Citizen's League, dated January 31, 1949, Livesay explained her strategy:

> . . . a student at the University of British Columbia, has told me that you have a film available on the evacuation of the American Japanese from the coast. . . . I . . . am requested to enquire whether the film could be sent here in time for a meeting on Monday, March 7? March 31 is the date on which all ban against Japanese Canadians living at the coast is lifted and we would therefore [like][12] to make return easier for those who may decide to come. At the same meeting I will propose to read a documentary poem I have written on the dispersal of the Canadian Japanese.
>
> (University of Manitoba Archives, MSS 37, Box 58, Folder 20)

Forty years later, however, Livesay would express disappointment, but not surprise, that her long poem had failed in its social purpose. In her 1991 memoir, Journey with My Selves, she explains: "twenty years went by before the Canadian public began to realize what had happened; my play had failed in its aim to rouse the wrath of the people. It was ahead of its time" (173). Several years earlier, George Woodcock had also discussed the effect of timing on the initial reception of Livesay's poem. Because it appeared "so close after the war," Woodcock maintains, "Canadians were still not prepared to view [the episode] with the shame that Livesay stirs through her treatment" ("Sun, Wind, 56). The broadcast of Call My People Home by CBC Winnipeg in July 1954 attests to the validity of Woodcock's assessment. Even nine years after the end of the war, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was reluctant to depict the actions of the government as anything other than a wartime necessity. Following the recital of the first stanza, before proceeding with the "Chorus of Isseis," the announcer interjects the following introduction:

> Call my People Home by Dorothy Livesay. A retelling in verse with music and sound of something that somehow had to be. A precaution in time of danger. A modern exodus. The wartime movement of Japanese Canadians from the Pacific waters to new lives on inland hills and plains.
>
> (NAC/NFTSA, acc. no. 1982-0204, no. 2511)

As well, presumably to avoid offending or discomfiting the radio audience, some of the most troublesome sections of the poem are omitted. These omissions include the young Nisei's description of the round up and detainment of the Japanese Canadians in Hastings Park; the letter from Mariko describing the appalling conditions in this detainment centre; and the

Mayor's description of the arrival of a bewildered, half-terrified people in a "hostile village" (11). Even a single line referring to the dispersal of the evacuees to the prairies as "The eastward journey into emptiness," is left out: the image perhaps not consistent with the CBC's benign depiction of the dispersal east as "the . . . movement . . . to new lives on inland hills and plains." Or, possibly, this image of the prairies would not be conducive to a Winnipeg-based production.

Even more astounding, though, than the CBC's reluctance in 1954 to acknowledge the injustice of this moment in our history are more recent assessments of Livesay's poem that temper her social and political message. Many critics, twenty and even forty years later, are still unprepared to accept the harshness of the central imagery of Livesay's poem. Characterizing Call My People Home as essentially a positive and optimistic portrayal of the evacuation and dispersal of the Japanese Canadians, these critics downplay the enduring and devastating effect of this event on the lives of the victims, thereby overlooking the culpability of a government and a nation in an act of unwarranted persecution. Paul Denham fails to recognize the specific social and historical message in "Call My People Home" when he contends that while Livesay's work is a "compassionate depiction of personal hardship and courage . . . there is no analysis of why the injustice was done and little account of why it was so readily accepted by other Canadians" ("Lyric and Documentary" 98). In fact, Livesay quite clearly establishes racism as the cause of the government actions and fingers wartime fear and hysteria as the conditions that made these measures seem not only acceptable but also necessary. As the announcer explains, since the arrival of the Issei, Japanese Canadians had endured racial discrimination:

Each season in the new land found him struggling
Against the uncertain harvest of the sea
The uncertain temper of the white fisherman
Who hungered also, who had mouths to feed
Who pressed the government to give them licences
Before the yellow faces. So these cut his share
From half to one-eighth of the fishing fleet (2)

Through fortitude and perseverance, the Issei managed to attain a comfortable and prosperous life in Canada, but their achievements came to a swift halt after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The seizure of the fishing fleet and the actions that followed were all tolerated by the Canadian public, the announcer explains, because "wartime panic fed / on peacetime provocations" (10).

In her essay, Rota Herzberg Lister provides the following benign description of Livesay's dramatic poem:

> Though the language is emotional, . . . one senses a note of restraint and reconciliation. The individual voices of a Fisherman, a Mayor of the resettlement town, a Wife and a Philosopher, provide the facts of the dislocations, the narration of the events and the impact upon those most closely affected. The tone is poetic and compassionate, not political and defiant. . . . What matters is the common humanity of Canadians of all races and ethnic origin. (66-67)

While Livesay provides a compassionate portrayal of the Japanese Canadians, the poem, contrary to Lister's misreading, is defiantly political in its depiction of their suffering as the result of unwarranted and cruel persecution. There is little sign of "restraint and reconciliation" in the fisherman's declaration, as the fleet moves toward Steveston, that the "waves / washing the cabin's walls / lashed hate in me" (4). Even the one instance of benevolence towards the Japanese Canadians is portrayed as an isolated incident; very few Canadians were prepared to view their fellow citizens of Japanese descent as anything other than "criminals and spies" (10).

> Between the fury and the fear
> The window-breaking rabble and the politician's blackout,
> (Wartime panic fed
> On peacetime provocations)
> Between the curfew rung
> On Powell Street
> And the rows of bunks in a public stable
> Between the line-ups and the labels and the presentation
> of a one-way ticket
> Between these, and the human heart—
> There was in every centre one man, a white man—
> A minister, a layman—even a mayor. (10)

Admittedly, the image of the mayor and "the Issei" mother joining hands and beginning "to work together," and that of him strolling "down the street . . . / arm and arm with a flock of

Japanese kids" (11), suggest a bond between Canadians of [different] races" (Lister 67). But the notion that this harmony was widespread is quickly dispelled by the assertion that "no one else in the town would say 'hello'" (12). And the repetitive refrain "Once a Jap, always a Jap" (14-15) throughout the young "renegade" Nisei's testimony suggests that any "common humanity of Canadians" did not extend to those of Japanese origin.

In another inapt interpretation of the message in Call My People Home, Paul Denham insists that "the unifying thread of the poem's imagery is the attempt of several generations of Japanese Canadians to make something that they can call home" (99). While "home" is unequivocally the functional word in the poem, the prevailing image is not so much the making of a home, as the repetitive and irretrievable loss of home. The first reference to "home" in the poem is a "dismissal of [the] cliché: 'Home, they say, is where the heart is'" (Denham 98), and the ensuing metaphors in the introductory chorus firmly dispel any notion of home as the locus of comfort and security. Home is described as "uprooting," "separation," "despair," and "fear" (2). Home is characterized by drought, by tears and by endless watching and waiting for life to improve. And in the closing words of the Issei chorus, "our yearning fading" (2), it is apparent there is little hope of ever recapturing the domestic solace lost in the days and years following Pearl Harbor. As the poem continues, the word "home" is the sign of more loss and increasing hardship. Of "A prairie place called home," the Issei wife explains, "It was harder than hate" (13). For the Nisei, the internment, evacuation and dispersal signified the loss of nationality, of identity, and even of their very way of life:

Never again did I go

Blackberry picking on the hillside.

Never again did I know

That iron schoolbell ringing (8)

Nevertheless, Denham suggests that by the last stanza of the closing chorus, the Japanese Canadians' quest has been achieved, maintaining that this stanza declares that "home, then, is a place where productive work is done" ("Lyric and Documentary" 99).

In another errantly idealistic interpretation of the last stanza of Livesay's poem, Philip Resnick contends, "The mood is not all hatred or bitterness, however; even in transplantation love of life can win out, or the memory of better times bring solace. In fact, exile is in the end ennobling. The Japanese Canadians, seeing beyond their fishing villages, come to see their experience in cosmic terms" (38). The last stanza, according to Resnick, is a declaration that "consciousness, political and philosophical, emerges from the complex fabric of their lives" (38). In an earlier review, Alison White describes this final stanza as "the epiphany of the poem, the finest flash of insight . . . in the realization of a torn people," though unlike Resnick, she does not specify the nature of this epiphany.[13] Arguably, the last stanza does signify an "epiphany," a "realization" of sorts, but the operative phrase in White's quote is "of a torn people." The image at the end of Call My People Home may be one of endurance and strength, but it is also a bleak image of unrelenting sorrow and suffering. The line, "home is labour, with the hand and heart," suggests that the indignity and futility of their labour are wearing down even their hearts. The sense of home as "a wider sea than we knew," emphasizes their prevailing feelings of dislocation from both their Japanese roots and their Canadian identity. The image of a sun that is "more enduring" than

they, with the inescapable strength of a "magnetic" force evokes a sense of the unrelenting and oppressive heat of the prairies.[14] When Livesay wrote her poem, between 1946 and 1949, Japanese Canadians were still in a state of exile, with very little hope of being able to return to their homes. It is unlikely, therefore, that Livesay would have intended this final stanza to be an optimistic and uplifting portrayal of their circumstances. One indication that Livesay did not intend this final moment to be a cause for celebration is a notation in the rehearsal notes for the first broadcast of Call My People Home in August 1949, a broadcast wholeheartedly endorsed by Livesay.[15] The notation, which refers to the musical accompaniment to the final chorus, is: "finale unresolved – without malice – the strong determination of a wrong minority" (Concordia University, Archives of Center for Broadcasting Studies). The Issei wife's description of the torturous conditions in the beetfields, just prior to the conclusion of poem, corroborates a sombre interpretation of the final image:

> In summer the sun's beak
> Tore at our backs bending over the rows
> Endless for thinning; the lumpy soil left callouses
> Upon our naked knees, mosquitoes swarmed
> In frenzied choruses above our heads
> Sapping the neck; until a hot wind seared
> The field, drove them away in clouds. (13)[16]

While the final stanza bespeaks an awareness of their situation – it is not characterized by ennobled resolution, but rather, determined resignation to survive in the face of seemingly insurmountable hardship.

In more than any other way, this image of life on the prairies illustrates how closely Call My People Home anticipates "Joy Kogawa's . . . novel Obasan" (Lister 64). The image portrayed in the wife's testimony is remarkably similar to Naomi's painful recollection of life on the prairies:

> There is a word for it. Hardship. The hardship is so pervasive, so inescapable, so thorough, it's a noose around my chest and I cannot move anymore. All the oil in my joints has drained out and I have been invaded by dust and grit from the fields and mud is in my bone marrow. . . . My fingernails are black from scratching the scorching day and there is no escape. . . .
>
> I mind everything. Even the flies . . . that curtain the windows . . . and the mosquitoes mixed . . . with the other insect corpses round the base of the gas lamp. . . .
>
> It's the bedbugs and my having to sleep on the table to escape the nightly attack. . . .
>
> Or it's standing in the beet field under the maddening sun, standing with my black head a sun-trap . . . and the nausea in waves and the cold sweat, and getting up and tackling the next row. (Kogawa, Obasan 214-15)

But even more striking than the visual and emotional similarities between these two figurative accounts of the prairie experience is the comparable evidence they provide of the Canadian public's enduring disinclination to recognize or acknowledge the unnecessary devastation of thousands of lives and of a community. The epiphany in the last stanza of Call My People Home is similar to the climactic moment in Obasan when Naomi controverts the newspaper reports about life in the beetfields:

> Down the miles we are obedient as machines in this odd ballet without accompaniment of flute or song.
>
> "Grinning and happy" and all smiles standing around a pile of beets?
>
> That is one telling. It's not how it was. (Kogawa, Obasan 217)

The misinterpretation of the final chorus in Livesay's poem by critics is grim confirmation that the Canadian public's ignorance or avoidance of the facts is itself a historical fact that endured well into the years of the battle for redress for Japanese Canadians.

Perhaps the most outrageous misinterpretation of Livesay's poem, however, is in Paul Denham's conclusion:

> Rather then being a study of a particular historical injustice, "Call My People Home" is really a presentation of an aspect of the immigrant experience, a continuing subject in Canadian writing from the era of Susanna Moodie to Rudy Wiebe and Joy Kogawa. If the Japanese had a harder time than most, Livesay also shows them as readier than most to accept and live creatively with it. ("Lyric and Documentary" 98-9)

This assessment is simply erroneous. While the immigrant experience is an important element in both Kogawa's and Livesay's works about the Japanese Canadians, it serves primarily as historical background to a story of injustice inflicted upon a Canadian ethnic community by its government and its fellow citizens. Both texts depict and applaud the immigrant struggle and the hard-won achievements, but the emphasis is on the events that happened after the immigrants had attained a secure life in Canada and had become Canadian citizens. The Announcer's introductory statement that the Issei fisherman had arrived in Canada over "thirty years" earlier (1) clearly situates the immigrant experience in the past. Confirming that the emphasis is on the post-immigration experience, the Issei fisherman twice refers to this passage of time, the first in relation to his accomplishments – "Now after thirty years a free man, naturalized, / A man who owned his boat!" (3) – the next to profound and unbearable loss: "That was the end of my thirty years at the fishing / and the end of my boat, my home" (6). It is not as an immigrant that he speaks these words but as a man who has been forsaken by his country.

Moreover, in a moment of cruel irony, the Canadian-born Japanese Canadians realize that they have a lower status even than does an immigrant. The images of the Japanese Canadians being torn from their prosperous homes, sent to live in shacks in the ghost towns, then to back-breaking labour under the searing sun of the prairies contrast sharply to the experience of their Ukraine neighbour, who, "using words more broken than [theirs,]" explains:

> "See how tomorrow is fine. You work
>
> Hard, same as me. We make good harvest time."

He came from a loved land, too, the mild
Plains of the Dneiper where, in early spring
(He said) the violets hid their sweetness. "This land
Is strange and new. But clean and big
And gentle with the wheat. For children too,
Good growing." (14)

The same land that opened its arms to the Ukraine farmer is the land that has stripped its naturalized and native-born citizens of their property and their rights. While the Ukraine farmer is grateful for the opportunities afforded his children in this new land, the Japanese Canadians anticipate a much bleaker future for their children than they had envisaged before the war. The Nisei are portrayed as either renegades or philosophers. The former could face either a transient or a criminal lifestyle, ending up "in a road camp / In a freight car bunk in the bush" or in jail "on a robbery charge" (15). The philosopher, on the other hand, faced with a life of loneliness and uncertainty, is resigned "Without rancour; to let the past be / And the future become" (15). While Call My People Home opens with the chorus of the Issei, it closes with the chorus of the Nisei, the "generation born in Canada" (6). And the lasting image of Livesay's poem is not of a people "readier than most to accept and live creatively with" hardship, but of a people with no alternative.

Dorothy Livesay's documentary long poem is both an informed and informative work of historically based literature. Drawing on a combination of personal experience and responsible research she has recreated a socially evocative, moving and reliable account of a dark period in Canadian history. The marvel of Dorothy Livesay's achievement is that her

social history is presented in the ultimate form of literary figuration, a hybrid of poetry, documentary and drama. Her method does not involve elaborate description or lengthy explanation, but rather "a troping that is generally figurative . . . [proceeding] by the exploitation of the principal modalities of figuration [which are] metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (White, Tropics of Discourse 5). Call My People Home is a definitive demonstration of the effectiveness of figurative language in imparting historical information.

In her address to the Longliners Conference in 1985, Dorothy Livesay described the documentary long poem as "an archive for our times" (127). She might justly have described her own documentary poem about the uprooting of the Japanese Canadians in 1941 and after as "an archive for [all] time." The world recently commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It is crucial that the historical record also include the events that followed, so that neither acts of wartime injustice are forgotten. Thanks to Dorothy Livesay's artistry and her sincere and responsible political and social consciousness, we have a vivid and reliable record of a moment in history that can, and has, stood the test of time.

Endnotes

[1] Dorothy Livesay's essay was published in Eli Mandel's collection Contexts of Canadian Criticism (1971).

[2] Before her essay was published in Eli Mandel's 1971 collection, Livesay presented it at the June 1969 Learned Societies conference. Scobie is referring to this presentation.

[3] Jones here is quoting Ira Kronigsberg in The Complete Film Dictionary (88) published by New American Library.

[4] Hutcheon, Linda. "The Postmodern Challenge to Boundaries."

[5] Scobie provides a brief list of works that in his opinion have followed the "precedent set by Atwood and Ondaatje" (Signature Event Cantext 120). Many of these same texts are discussed by Linda Hutcheon in relation to her theory of Historiographic Metafiction: for example, see her 1984 essay entitled "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction."

[6] Manina Jones does not include the final section of Scobie's quote following the semi-colon, but I have added it because I believe it illustrates Scobie's opinion that a blatant disregard for any notion of truth or reliable fact is a principle characteristic of the post 1969 Canadian Documentary.

[7] In her notes, Livesay credits this quote to Ortega Y Gasset, but does not provide bibliographical citation.

[8] In Barry Broadfoot's 1977 "oral history" entitled Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame, there are letters referring to this mayor and the assistance he provided Japanese Canadians evacuated to Greenwood. The sections, entitled "a Mayor Named McArther" and "How Life

Was in Greenwood" (186-190), are comparable to the images Livesay presents in the section of her poem entitled "The Mayor." Below are some excerpts from Broadfoot's text. The first is testimony from a resident of the ghost town confirming Livesay's suggestion that the mayor's decision to take in the Japanese Canadians was not supported actively by the current residents of the town:

> One of the towns the Japanese were sent to was Greenwood. . . . It was once a booming town . . . but in 1940 it was a ghost town. . . . Only two small stores were in business. The rest were boarded up. In fact, most of the town was boarded up. . . .
>
> Our mayor in '42 was Mayor McArther and he had read in the papers about how the Japanese were going to be relocated, and he felt that these people from the coast could put some life in Greenwood. He read where they had thousands in Hastings Park and the problem was where to put them. And it appeared that nobody wanted to have the Japanese. . . . Here's a chance, he thought. Help the war effort by taking the Japanese. . . There certainly was a lot of space in town. . . Old hotels, once some of the best, were in a state of disrepair, but some were still livable in after a fashion. . . .
>
> So the Japanese came. (186-7)

The second section which retells the experience from the viewpoint of one of the Japanese Canadians transferred to Greenwood compares to Livesay's description of their arrival and the role played by the mayor in their successful settlement:

> I was sent to Greenwood in British Columbia, which is a couple of hours' drive beyond the Okanagan Valley. It was a ghost town then.
>
> Each family had one room. . . . This was in an old hotel and . . . with all the families and all the people . . . it was terribly crowded. It was hard for the women to cook. So many pots and pans on the stove at one time. . . . (187)
>
> How did the people in Greenwood treat us? Hah! Well at first I don't think the people in Greenwood knew what kind of persons the Japanese people are. They were very curious. When the first of us went there . . . everybody came . . . to see what kind of strange people we were. Most of them had never seen a Japanese person before. But they found out that they were quite similar to the white people . . . and we were able to communicate with each other nicely and there was no trouble. The mayor, especially, was very good to us. . . . The sisters started a school for us . . . (188-9)
>
> . . . there was formed a community association with the mayor's help, and we built a library and a swimming pool and did other things. To make the town a better place. The mayor's name was McArthur. (190)

Note: the different spellings of the mayor's name are the spellings in the actual quotes in Broadfoot's text.

[9] The August 1949 recitals of Call My People Home have not been preserved, but a copy of the 1954 CBC Winnipeg performance has been stored in the National Archives of Canada.

This performance has the characteristics of a radio drama, complete with sound effects and background music that rises and falls for dramatic effect.

[10] An audio tape of a recital of sections of the poem by Livesay herself was obtained from the archives of the University of Manitoba. The narration, during which Livesay interjects comments of clarification or introduction, sounds like prose (University of Manitoba, MSS 37, TC 31, Tape 13/S.1 and S.2).

[11] This review is part of the Livesay collection at the University of Manitoba. The author of the review is indicated as "E.D.W.H". The name of the periodical and the date of the review, Jan 5, 1969, are handwritten on the photocopy, but the page number is not provided.

[12] In Livesay's letter the word like is spelled "lke". I have corrected this error in the quotation.

[13] White, Alison. "Good Poetry that Shakes Readers." Rev. of The Documentaries. Edmonton Journal 2 May 1969.

This review too is part of the Livesay collection at the University of Manitoba. The name of the periodical and the date of the review are hand written on the photocopy, but the page number is not provided.

[14] There are two versions of this last stanza: the final line in the 1950 Chapbook uses the adjective "enduring" to describe the sun; in The Documentaries it is the "magnetic" sun. Both images can be read as oppressive: "enduring" suggests that the sun was stronger than they, "magnetic" that it was a relentless, inescapable force.

[15] That Livesay approved of this broadcast is suggested in the following quotation from the essay "Dorothy Livesay and the Politics of Radio," by Paul Gerard Tiessen and Hildegard Frese Tiessen:

> CBC Montreal, with the help of the finest musicians from the Montreal Symphony, produced the thirty-minute version in 1949. Livesay, as pleased with the performance as the Montreal producers, declared that "Call My People Home" was perhaps her best work to date, not only in radio performance but also in print. (77).

Presumably Livesay would have agreed with the interpretation of this final stanza as "unresolved – without malice – the strong determination of a wrong[ed] minority" " (Concordia University, Archives of Center for Broadcasting Studies).

[16] The following description of life in the beet fields of Alberta, from The Politics of Racism by Ann Gomer Sunahara, bears striking resemblance to Livesay's figurative representation:

> The conditions under which transient beet labour lived, however, were crude at best. As a consequence, the B.C. Japanese arrived to find that they were expected to live in old, uninsulated granaries and chicken coops, to wash in and drink alkaline water for the sloughs and irrigation ditches, and to perform stoop labour more strenuous that that to which they had been accustomed. (81)

Chapter Three

Travesty or Truth:

Mutual Hostages: A Revisionary History

There were many people across the country who, like Dorothy Livesay, were willing to campaign for "the restoration of civil rights" for Japanese Canadians (Sunahara 134). By 1949, due in large measure to this public support, deportation to Japan had been arrested, restrictions against the return of Japanese Canadians to British Columbia had been lifted and they had been granted the provincial franchise. A few years earlier in 1946, public pressure had even led to the appointment of a royal commission "headed by Justice Henry Bird of British Columbia" to investigate the "issue of compensation" (Miki 58). Unfortunately, however, neither the terms of reference nor "the methods used for the Commission" resulted in what the Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians[1] would consider either fair or adequate compensation.[2] Nevertheless, to the dismay of Japanese Canadians and their supporters, the Bird Commission, which terminated in 1950, "worked well to diffuse public opinion and to close the door on negotiations" (Miki 59). In 1977, however, with the removal of the thirty-year embargo on government documents and spurred on by rising community pride on the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese settlers in Canada, the matter of compensation was raised again. For the next eleven years, the Japanese-Canadian community waged a long and difficult battle before reaching an

agreement with the Canadian government on the matter of redress and compensation in September 1988.

But not everyone endorsed the Canadian government's decision. In 1986, at the height of the battle for redress, historian Jack Granatstein wrote an article for Saturday Night in which he questioned the case for redress. Declaring that "it's the business of historians to keep rummaging through the past to make sure that the construction put on it represents something as close as possible to reality," Granatstein ostensibly re-examines the events of the 1940s (1986 34). Based solely on speculation, Granatstein contends that the loyalty of Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals was questionable in the years prior to, and following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and he declares that the government's decision on evacuation may have been warranted.[3] Fortunately, Granatstein's article, which I discuss more extensively in the next chapter, did not forestall the success of the redress movement, but neither did the success of the redress movement discourage Granatstein from expounding his opinion regarding the events of the 1940s in a book titled Mutual Hostages (1990) that he co-authored with another Canadian historian, Patricia E. Roy, and "two Japanese historians of Canada"[4] (Roy et al, ix). This book provides a very different portrayal and interpretation of the events of the 1940s than that presented in the works of literary figuration and historiography discussed previously, which together present a quite consistent portrait of "past actuality" (Mink 145). As well, the authors of Mutual Hostages insist that their purpose, motives, technique and achievement vary significantly from these other presentations. Moreover, they maintain that their text is superior to the alternative versions of historical events, contending that it is more comprehensive, more objective and more

reliable (xi). An analysis of this text seems a fitting addition to the discussion of the role of narrative in historical representation, as it provides an opportunity to examine a competing narrative and determine its mechanism for producing an alternative "knowledge-effect" (White, Figural Realism 7).

In a letter to the editor of Saturday Night, Ken Adachi discredits Granatstein's version of history as portrayed in the 1986 article:

> Unfortunately, Granatstein's rhetorical flourishes will linger in the minds of readers with little knowledge of the mainsprings of the federal government's evacuation policy and the subsequent issues of dispersal and deportation. I would suggest that they consult, among other books, my own work, The Enemy That Never Was, for an analysis of those events which Granatstein has seen fit to distort. (letter 5)

Four years later, in the preface to Mutual Hostages, the authors respond to Adachi's recommendation, declaring the authority of their text over these "other books." Describing "Ken Adachi's study of the Japanese in Canada [as] comprehensive," they criticize it for its lack of "archival material" (xi). They acknowledge Ann Gomer Sunahara's extensive exploitation of "the archival sources" and her numerous interviews with participants in the events of the 1940s, but they fault her tendency "to see issues in black and white and to ignore the shades of grey that often cloud history" (xi). They point out that Joy Kogawa's "powerful and popular novel Obasan" was based "on the letters of Muriel Kitigawa" (xi), but they virtually dismiss its informational value, declaring simply that it "has had great

emotional impact" (xi). Conceding that the subject is an emotional one, they nevertheless distinguish their treatment of it significantly from these previous endeavours:

> We know that ours is an emotional subject, especially in Canada where the Japanese Canadians' long campaign for redress of the wrongs of war has kept the issue in the public conscience. We wrote this book with the intention of examining the events of the war years as dispassionately as possible and trying to explain them in the context of their times. Fingers can easily be pointed at historical actors, blame can readily be affixed on politicians and generals, but that would do little to help today's Canadians and Japanese understand the wartime actions of their compatriots and governments.
>
> Understanding the past is hard at the best of times. After examining the evidence, we are convinced that no simple answer can satisfactorily explain the events of the war years. Only by accepting the complexity of motivation, only by understanding the context and attitudes of a half century ago, can the truth be found. That we have tried to do. (Roy et al. xi-xii)

Such a description suggests that the presentation will be based on hard evidence, steeped in verifiable facts and expressed in simple, direct language, providing an informed but non-judgemental portrait of the past. In fact, the authors of Mutual Hostages have very definite opinions concerning the events of the past and they present and support these opinions primarily through rhetorical persuasion rather than with tangible evidence, illustrating both the fallacy in their claim to historical truth and confirming "the literariness of historical writing" (White, Figural Realism ix). Recall Hayden White's explanation:

> Like poetic discourse . . . historical discourse is intentional, that is, is systemically intra- as well as extrareferential. This intentionality endows the historical discourse with a quality of "thinginess" similar to that of the poetic utterance, and this is why any attempt to comprehend how historical discourse works to produce a knowledge-effect must be based not on an epistemological analysis of the relation of the mind of the historian to a past world but rather, on a scientific study of the relation of the things produced by and in language to the other kinds of things that comprise reality. In short, historical discourse should be considered not primarily as a special case of the "workings of our minds" in its efforts to know reality or to describe it but, rather, as a special kind of language use which, like metaphoric speech, symbolic language, and allegorical representation, always means more than it literally says, says something other than what it seems to mean, and reveals something about the world only at the cost of concealing something else. (7)

The authors of Mutual Hostages reject this notion of historical discourse. They explain: "Our object in writing this book has been the historian's traditional task: to set out what happened and try to determine the reasons. We have sought to explain, not condone or condemn" (Preface ix). Their method, however, does not involve the objective consideration of evidence as they suggest. Rather, it consists of selective inclusion and exclusion of information, speculative interpretation and explanation of events, broad innuendos, systematic repetition of the arguments, and unsubstantiated declarations of opinions as fact. While they do exploit a great deal of archival material, this material pertains primarily to

government records or the personal papers or correspondence of government officials or their representatives, with little reference to material pertaining to the Japanese-Canadian perspective. For the most part, this information represents the opinions of participants in history rather than factual evidence. Nevertheless, the authors present this information as proof of their argument. When they lack definitive evidence to support a particular opinion, or are confronted with conflicting evidence, they simply bolster their argument with a declaration reiterating their position. And, contrary to their claim, they clearly condone and condemn certain parties for their role in history, and none too subtly. Specifically, they condemn Japanese Canadians as potential traitors, the citizens and politicians of British Columbia as racist extremists, and the military as incompetent and unreliable. On the other hand, they strongly condone the federal government's actions in the 1940s. In effect, the strategy in Mutual Hostages is much more consistent with Hayden White's notion of historiography than their perception of the historian's task. As White explained in his seminal text, Metahistory:

> It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding," "identifying," or "uncovering" the "stories" that are buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the historian "finds" his stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which "invention" also plays a part in the historian's operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific

> characterization of the set to which it belongs. . . . The historian arranges the events in the chronicle into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process. . . (6)

The authors of Mutual Hostages inventively select, characterize and arrange historical data to support their very particular version of history.

Of course, the literary versions of history discussed previously involved invention, elaborate and imaginative characterization and selective presentation and arrangement of historical data. The difference between those works and Mutual Hostages is that Livesay and Kogawa foreground their perspectives and their motives, making no pretence of the fact that their stories are biased and subjective representations of the past. Kogawa characterized her novel as "an act of discovery" ("In Writing" 156), intended to portray the truth of the feelings of being persecuted and betrayed by her country, while Livesay described her documentary poem as "a tribute to the endurance and tolerance of the Japanese Canadians" (Documentaries 32). And both authors acknowledge that there is a political and social message in their presentations: to expose the actions of the federal government against people of Japanese origin in Canada as a case of unwarranted and callous injustice. Yet, Livesay's depiction of the documentary poem as "a conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" ("The Documentary Poem" 267) and Kogawa's characterization of Obasan as "fictionalized reality" attest to their belief in the relativity of historical knowledge. At the same time, their insistence on the need

to strive for "historical accuracy" (Livesay, "Overview" 127) indicates that they believe that in order "to communicate a just understanding of the past in relation to the present and the future, . . . the historian's first obligation is to be as accurate and as just as possible" (Levin 5-6). The authors of Mutual Hostages, on the other hand, while substituting rhetoric for evidence and parading speculation, innuendo and personal opinion as facts, declare their presentation to be dispassionate and true. Their claims demonstrate that despite the theoretical debate over the form of historical writing and the source of historical knowledge that has been raging for decades within both the historiographic and literary disciplines, there has not been the same level of resultant reform in historical writing as has taken place in the literary world. As Lionel Gossman points out: there are still some "historical texts [that] continue to recount . . . events and situations located in the past as though the 'age of suspicion' had never dawned" (36). Commensurate with this line of thought, in the preface to Mutual Hostages, the authors posit their status as historians and their professed compliance with "the historian's traditional task" (Preface ix) as reason for accepting the authority of their version of history. On the contrary, an analysis of the strategy in Mutual Hostages exposes the task of historians, at least these historians, to be a systematic exercise in rhetorical persuasion.

The basic premise of Mutual Hostages is that the Canadian government had no alternative but to take the action it did with regards to the Japanese Canadians after Pearl Harbor. According to the authors, Japanese Canadians had to be removed from the coast, both for their own protection and to ensure the safety of Canadian civilians and POWS being detained in Japan and Japanese-occupied territory during the war. As they explain:

"Paradoxical as it seems, the Japanese Canadians were subjected to the hardships of the evacuation as much for their own protection, and, by implication, the protection of Canadians in Japanese hands in Hong Kong and elsewhere, as for any other reason" (215). Due to mounting paranoia and long-standing racial tension, authorities feared that other residents of British Columbia were capable of violence against the Japanese Canadians. At the same time, they believed that mistreatment of people of Japanese origin in Canada could provoke retaliatory action against Canadians detained in Japanese territory. The government, therefore, moved people of Japanese origin from the Pacific coast to seclude them from the general population both for their own safety and to prevent actions that might jeopardise the safety of Canadians in enemy territory. In its recounting of history, Mutual Hostages not only defends government action of the 1940s but presents a very favourable picture of Mackenzie King, his liberal government, and the government's representatives in their dealings with people of Japanese origin. Finally, the authors maintain that their research revealed that the loyalties of Japanese Canadians were mixed (Roy et al. x), and they go to great lengths to explicate their findings.

Without actually proclaiming that Japanese Canadians were disloyal to Canada, the authors of Mutual Hostages strongly imply that Japanese Canadians could have posed a security risk to Canada both in the years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor and during the evacuation and dispersal. Incredibly, as I will discuss later, they even cite lack of evidence to support their argument. For the most part, though, the case for potential treason is developed and sustained by speculation and innuendo. Pointing out that British Columbians had for years been "worried about the activities of Japanese living on the coast" (46), the

authors admit that there was very little explicit information regarding these activities. The evidence, they explain, consisted of unsubstantiated reports that members of the Japanese navy were posing as fisherman, suspicion that the "Japanese consul in Vancouver [was involved in] propaganda . . . and possibly subversive efforts," and "rumours that Japanese Canadians were" participating in armed drills (46). Still, while acknowledging that "these fears were fed by paranoia," the authors claim that "there was just enough in the open and secret actions of Japan and Japanese Canadians during the 1930s to keep [these fears] at the boil" (46). Yet their descriptions of these "open and secret actions" are as elusive as these unsubstantiated reports, suspicions and rumours mentioned above, amounting to alleged efforts by Japanese intelligence officers to recruit Japanese Canadians for espionage activities, and gestures of support for Japan by Japanese Canadians during the war against China (47). The authors dismiss the significance of the support given Japan during the war with China when they admit that "there was nothing remotely improper in the Japanese Canadian activities. Other ethnic groups in Canada had acted similarly in the past and would do so again in the future" (48), but they sustain the notion that Japanese Canadians' loyalties may have favoured Japan over Canada. In fact, following a lengthy discussion on the dearth of evidence against Japanese Canadians, they state: "the simple truth is that espionage and sabotage were genuine possibilities" (54). They base this opinion on a report in February of 1941 from "Canada's high commissioner in London" indicating "that 'reliable information of a most secret character' had revealed that 'official Japanese circles' were taking an interest in the British Columbia coast" (54). The information provided by Canada's High Commissioner, they claim, "was soundly based on American sources," specifically American

intelligence efforts "under the code-name 'Magic'" that managed to intercept and decipher Japanese telegrams referring to the utilization of Nisei and nationals in espionage activities (54). Astoundingly though, a few paragraphs later they admit that it is not known whether Japan was successful in recruiting "Nisei and Japanese nationals for espionage purposes . . . since the Magic documents do not appear to report espionage results and the records in Japan seem to have been destroyed" (55). Nevertheless, the authors do not discount the validity of the suspicions against Japanese Canadians. Rather, they claim that the lack of evidence against Japanese Canadians was due to "the weaknesses of Canada's intelligence and security apparatus" (48). They maintain that the overall lack of human resources in the RCMP and branches of the military, and particularly the lack of personnel who understood Japanese, resulted in the Canadian government having "very little factual information available on the Japanese Canadians and almost no hard information on who likely troublemakers or spies might be" (48). In lieu of hard evidence, the authors defer to the opinion of an authority on the subject, Hugh Keenleyside, a British Columbian native and a Canadian diplomat who had "served in the Canadian legation in Tokyo during much of the 1930s" (13). As they explain:

> . . . Hugh Keenleyside, who had publicly sympathized with the Nisei campaign for the same civil rights as other Canadians, told his friend H.F. Angus in June 1940, "If Japan should enter the war against us . . . there would be danger of subversive activities on the part of some elements in the Japanese community. The police are not in a position to ferret out the dangerous Japanese who might be expected to take part

> in attempts at sabotage," he continued. (50, quoting Department of External Affairs records as per endnote 137, p.232)[5]

The authors endorse Keenleyside's opinion, not by explaining the nature or the source of his information, but by asserting the authority of his perspective. Following the quote, they state: "In other words, in the opinion of someone in the position to know, one who understood and sympathized with the Japanese Canadians, the intelligence information being gathered on the coast was strictly limited" (50). And, a page later, they provide the following conclusive statement that, even with the qualifying clause, implies that Japanese Canadians could not have been considered completely trustworthy: "The fairest thing that can be said almost half a century after the fact is that the RCMP and military intelligence had uncovered little hard information about possible subversion within the Japanese-Canadian community, if indeed the potential for any existed, because they lacked the necessary resources and competence" (51). Finally, the authors do not allow the lack of evidence to dissuade them from their opinion. They simply offer a very creative consideration to substantiate their hypothesis. As they point out, many Japanese Canadians had relatives in Japan, and the Japanese government, being a "harsh dictatorship," could use "threats of punishment" against family members still in Japan. Such threats, the authors contend, "would be hard for anyone to resist" (55). While the thought makes for intriguing narrative, surely such provocative speculation has no place in a putatively dispassionate examination of "the events of the war years" (Roy et al. ix).

The authors continue to inscribe the notion of disloyalty among Japanese Canadians throughout their discussion of the evacuation and dispersal. At the beginning of the

evacuation process when efforts were primarily limited to removing Japanese men from the coast and sending them to road camps in the interior of B.C. and Ontario, the authors report that it was the Canadian-born Nisei who "made the strongest protests against going to" these camps (113). While conceding earlier that the Nisei "were justly sensitive about their Canadian birth and citizenship," the authors claim that these protests were a sign of disloyalty, rather than a reaction to the loss of their civil liberties (113). "Some Nisei," they maintain, "had ties with Japan" (113). They base this conclusion on a report that a number of Nisei had consulted with the Japanese "Vice Consul [who] advised them that . . . he was 'not in a position to tell [them] what to do,'" but did tell them "in an ambiguous message, . . . 'to take the right path'" (113). Despite categorizing the vice consul's message as ambiguous, the authors seem to have deciphered its meaning, as the following statement illustrates:

> The RCMP also determined that early in April, twenty-six Nisei, eight naturalized Canadians, and eight Japanese nationals attended a meeting at the home of an official of the Japanese consulate and that some Canadian-born Japanese were considering surrendering their birth certificates in order to become Japanese nationals. (113, referring to British Columbia Security Commission records as per endnote 24, page 245)

There is no confirmation that any Nisei had revoked their Canadian citizenship, but the authors never withdraw the allegation that "some Nisei . . . had ties with Japan" (113). Doubt over the loyalty of the Nisei figures prominently as well in the discussion of the "Nisei Mass Evacuation Group" (NMEG). This organization, they explain, was founded by Nisei who, though "willing as Canadians to cooperate with the evacuation, . . . refused to be

separated from their families" (115). In protest, they "threatened to defy the evacuation order en masse" (115). The authors then proceed to state that "the NMEG was divided between those who were fighting for their rights as Canadians and those who were using the movement for other reasons" (115). The authors intimate that these "other reasons" were related to security concerns, when they point out that "the RCMP recommended breaking up the NMEG 'without further delay' and concluded, after receiving evidence from 'Secret Agents and other confidential Japanese contacts,' that at least nineteen Nisei should be interned" (115). Once again, however, the nature of this evidence is not specified. Perhaps the most outrageous allusion to the possible disloyalty of Japanese Canadians pertains to an incident in which a group of forty-two women, some with children, insisted on going to an internment camp, rather than relocating to one of "the interior settlements" (117). While admitting that the motives of these women were unclear, the authors suggest, with no accompanying rationale, that "They may have been trying to show loyalty to Japan by seeking internment" (117). They do suggest as well that "like members of the NMEG, they may have been *merely* protesting the evacuation" (117, italics mine), but apparently, for the authors of Mutual Hostages, the loss of livelihood, forced evacuation, seizure of goods and property and separation of families were not reasons enough to warrant protest, so they allude to the possibility of more covert motives.

But then the authors of Mutual Hostages are not likely to spotlight government actions as the cause for protest because they viewed them as inevitable and necessary war-time measures. Even more crucial to their argument than the suggestion of possible disloyalty of Japanese Canadians is demonstrating that the citizens of British Columbia

posed a threat to the safety of Japanese Canadians. This factor is the basis for their hypothesis that government action was necessary to protect Japanese Canadians and to ensure humane treatment of Canadians in Japanese-occupied territory. Once again, the authors support their hypothesis through highly selective reporting and unsubstantiated conclusive statements. The chapter outlining the circumstances leading up to the evacuation process, for example, begins with the declaration that "The Canadians in Hong Kong were the victims of military atrocities; the Japanese in Canada were the victims of civilian paranoia" (75), and throughout the chapter the authors couch their presentation to confirm this allegation. They begin by explaining that, while the immediate concern for British Columbians following the attack on Pearl Harbor was the possibility of an air attack, the government in Ottawa had other concerns. "While air-raid precautions were the immediate local concern, officials in Ottawa worried about protecting loyal residents of Japanese racial origin from the mob violence and demonstrations they had long feared" (74, referring to Cabinet War Committee records, as per endnote 2, p. 238). A subsequent reference to the records of the Cabinet War Committee confirms that government and military leaders were motivated more by concern over the safety of the Japanese Canadians than over security: "By 29 December there was sufficient anti-Japanese hysteria that the Chiefs of Staff Committee in Ottawa advised the Cabinet War Committee that they, police, and local authorities 'were concerned less at the possibility of subversive activity by Japanese than at the danger of serious anti-Japanese outbreaks'" (79, citing Cabinet War Committee records as per endnote 13, p. 239). At times, as they have with other allegations, the authors simply render their own opinion as if it were a fact. For example, when mentioning that the

"commander on the Pacific Coast" concurred with demands for the internment of "Japanese males of military age" (78), they add the following unsubstantiated comment: "However, he was more fearful of white violence against [Japanese] than he was of sabotage" (78). The authors, however, do not explain how they determined that this was the commander's primary concern.

The most extreme attempt to demonstrate the severity of the danger facing Japanese Canadians occurs in the discussion of the meeting between provincial officials and the federal government in January 1942. Understandably, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, fears escalated. Faced with mounting pressure to remove Japanese people from the coast, Mackenzie King ordered officials and politicians from British Columbia to meet with federal government representatives in Ottawa: the purpose of the meeting, to formulate "'a definite policy with respect to Canadian Japanese and Japanese nationals in Canada which all concerned [could] cooperate in implementing'" (80, quoting Department of External Affairs records, note 15, p.239). The portrait that ensues is of two vastly disparate groups: politicians representing a terrified and hostile population in British Columbia poised for imminent vigilante defence of their community and an alarmed, but rational, federal government forced to take drastic measures to forestall tragedy. As explained: "the meeting was a stormy one because officials and politicians based in Ottawa were generally less suspicious of the Japanese Canadians" (82). When federal officials "requested substantiation of the opinion . . . that unarmed Japanese Canadians. . . could 'jeopardize Canadian defence in the event of a bombardment,'" the authors explain that "'all hell broke loose' among the BC delegates who had gone to Ottawa 'breathing fire'" (83).[6] At this point in the discussion,

the authors are attempting to express "an emotional condition of the speaker of the discourse . . . or . . . engendering an attitude in the recipient of the message" (White, Content 39-40), as much as communicating information. Hayden White refers to this tendency as the performance model of historical discourse, which he maintains consummately implicates narrative form not only in the delivery, but also in the substance of the message. I have described how Joy Kogawa and Dorothy Livesay employ this expressive function effectively, through figurative representation, to impart information and enhance "the clarity or truth value" of the message. In Mutual Hostages we have an example of how this strategy can be used, irresponsibly, to influence reception. To illustrate the potentially explosive situation in British Columbia, the authors make reference to an episode that is metonymy for unparalleled evil in human affairs. They explain that a participant at this meeting, Escott Reid of the Departmental of External Affairs, recalled that the BC delegates "'spoke of the Japanese Canadians in the way that the Nazis would have spoken about Jewish-Germans'" (83 quoting Reid in Queen's Quarterly 1967).[7] While this opinion is a quote from an external source and not the express opinion of the authors, my objection is that the authors of Mutual Hostages use a comment made in 1967, long after it has acquired powerful metonymic significance, to support allegations regarding political motivations in 1942. This characterization of the BC representatives, combined with an opinion about the military expressed earlier in the text, suggests that the danger facing Japanese Canadians was tremendous. While contending that "the state should use whatever police and military protection . . . necessary to ensure the safety of peaceful citizens and resident aliens" (53),

the authors discern that such a tactic would not likely be effective in protecting "even . . . completely loyal" Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. As they explain:

> . . . if Canada and Japan were at war, there would be serious practical difficulties in using the armed forces for this duty. All the militia units and many of the few trained troops in British Columbia were citizens of that province who likely shared the suspicions and prejudices of their neighbours. The federal government could provide security for the Japanese Canadians but only at the very real risk of serious political disruptions and possible breakdowns in military discipline. (53-4)

The authors fail to provide an example of the type of comments that would have led to Reid's impression or evidence to support this opinion of the military, but certainly the impact of these statements suggests that the federal government faced a difficult challenge in protecting Japanese Canadians. Given the image of provincial government officials with Nazi tendencies, and of a military motivated by racism, it would seem that the federal government had no option but to remove Japanese Canadians, for their own safety, from the coast of British Columbia.

It wasn't the safety of Japanese Canadians alone that prompted the federal government to take this action. Repeatedly the authors maintain that the federal government acted out of concern, as well, for the Canadian civilians and POWS detained by the Japanese. Once again, the authors support their position with selective citations and conclusive statements. In their discussion about the escalating hostility toward Japanese Canadians after Pearl Harbor, they introduce the notion that Japanese Canadians were evacuated as a measure

to secure the humane treatment of Canadians in Japanese-occupied territory. Explaining that the "commander on the Pacific Coast" had made arrangements to dispatch troops "to defend Japanese Canadians," the authors also point out that he took this action partly due to the realization that "Japan might use any action against 'local Japanese' as an excuse 'to deal harshly with our own prisoners'" (79 citing Cabinet War Committee records as per endnote 13, p. 239). In their summary of the outcome of the Ottawa conference, the authors credit the prime minister with a similar concern:

> A press release was the government's only written record of its policy. Issued on 14 January, it reiterated the primacy of national defence, the desire to treat persons of Japanese racial origin justly, and the need to maintain 'a calm and reasonable attitude among Canadian citizens generally.' At the specific request of the prime minister, it warned against any anti-Japanese action or demonstration which might give Japan an excuse to mistreat Canadians in its hands. (83-4 citing Mackenzie King Papers as per endnote 27, p. 240)

A little later, the authors simply declare concern for Canadians abroad to be an important consideration in dealing with the Japanese problem. They state: "Given that local leaders were frightened, warnings about 'a popular outburst of feeling' which could have regrettable repercussions both for the Japanese in Canada and the Canadians in Japanese hands were prudent" (91). Amazingly, the authors persist with this argument, while admitting there was little evidence to suggest Japan intended any kind of retaliation for the treatment of people of the Japanese race in Canada. In the preface, they state: "In Japan, the Imperial government

and the public had only modest interest in and knowledge of the Japanese in Canada" (x). A little later, after a description of the early measures affecting Japanese Canadians and nationals – unauthorized searches, "a dusk-to-dawn curfew," the confiscation of "automobiles, radios, cameras, and firearms" – they mention that the "fate" of the Japanese Canadians "generated limited interest" in Japan (96). The discussion of the experiences of Canadian POWS in Japan even includes the following explanation: "American and British POWS, not Canadians, were ordinarily singled out for especially severe treatment by the guards. 'They did not dislike us, or hate us,' a private of the Royal Rifles said. 'If you were American you got the worst treatment. The British got the next worst'" (74, citing Dancocks, In Enemy Hands, 239-40). Yet, despite the fact that Canadians did not appear to be victims of Japanese "viciousness," the authors declare: "Whatever their rank on the hate list, the Canadian POWS . . . paid heavily" (74). Finally, in the concluding chapter, while suggesting that Japan was not necessarily inclined toward mistreatment of Canadian civilians and POWS under their control, the authors still maintain that it was a factor the government had to take into consideration.

> In sum, Japan loomed far larger in the eyes of the Canadian government than Canada did to the generals and admirals who controlled the government in Tokyo. Given the different forms of government and the disparities in power, that was inevitable. Ottawa, moreover, was also hostage to the Canadian public. Just as the King government could not treat the Japanese Canadians too badly for fear of reprisals against Canadians in Japan, so it could not treat them too well lest it alienate Canadians whose tolerance in

> wartime was, perhaps, less than usual. The well-entrenched prejudices of the Canadian public, stimulated by Japan's aggression, by atrocities committed on Allied troops, and by wartime propaganda, allowed for precious few distinctions between Canadian citizens of Japanese origin and Japanese nationals. (218)

Interestingly, the kind of lack of distinction mentioned in the above quote comprises a critical element of the argument in Mutual Hostages. Not only do the authors frequently blur the differences between Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals in Canada, they make a number of other alarming equations. As if to dispel the notion that the actions taken against Japanese Canadians by the government were exceptional or unreasonable, the authors compare Canadian citizens to foreign nationals from enemy states. In the chapter discussing the approach of war with Japan, they report that close to 1300 Italians, Germans and "domestic fascists," were arrested "under the authority of the War Measures" evoked in September 1939 (41-2). They make a point of mentioning that these internees included Canadian citizens, sixty Germans who were naturalized citizens and "the mayor of Montreal, Camilien Houde, who had urged his French-Canadian compatriots not to cooperate with the National Registration of August 1940" (41-2). While this number is miniscule compared to the number of Japanese Canadians uprooted from their homes, and despite reporting that significant numbers of these other internees were shortly released (41-2), the authors, nevertheless, use this information to rationalize the actions taken against Japanese Canadians. "This was the harsh context in which the question of Japanese Canadians must be considered. There was little tolerance evident anywhere in Canada at a time of war. . . .

People were fearful, worried, and unready to trust the actions of those living among them who spoke a different language or merely looked different" (42).

Japanese Canadians are even equated with prisoners of war. Referring to the problem authorities faced dealing with 'dissident' Nisei who had refused to comply with evacuation orders and who had participated in a demonstration in the "Immigration Building" in Vancouver, the authors claim that "lest Japan take reprisals against Canadians under her control, the BCSC[8] could not use ordinary jails or penitentiaries as detention centres" to hold these individuals. They go on to explain that "suitable facilities were being fully used for German and Italian prisoners of war"(116). That the authors are equating Japanese Canadians and POWS is clear when they explain that the problem was resolved when "space in internment camps became available and 188 Nisei were sent to them" (116). Another discussion compares Japanese Canadians to an element of Canadian citizenry, but the comparison is no more palatable. Explaining that the decision to send men to work in the road camps was a "scheme [that] had been devised at the Ottawa Conference on the Japanese Problems in January 1942," the authors point out that "It was not a new idea; both the BC and federal governments had used road camps to get unemployed men out of the cities during the Depression. The scheme was not satisfactory then, especially to the inmates; it was also unsatisfactory to most Japanese" (110). The comparison of Japanese Canadians to depression era vagrants completely overlooks the fact that these "husbands, fathers and adult brothers. . . [destined] for road camps" had not become unemployed due to economic conditions but by the direct actions of their government (110). In a similar vein, Japanese Canadians are referred to as "wards" of the state, despite the fact that the state had forced

them into the position of needing this social assistance by seizing their property and depriving them of a livelihood:

> The circumstances of wartime Canada demanded stringent economy and in the interior housing settlements and on the beet farms, the Japanese Canadians received little more than the bare necessities of shelter and education. Because of the importance Ottawa accorded to the International Red Cross and to Japan's protecting power in Canada, and because of the obvious implications for Canadians held by Japanese, the Canadian government did ensure that its *wards* received good food and health care. (216, emphasis mine)

One comment even compares Japanese Canadians to refugees. Discussing the resistance of people in the resettlement towns to accept the evacuees, they mention that "even those who felt disposed to oppose their coming into the town on personal grounds, began to see that the poor Japs had to go somewhere" (119). These numerous comparisons serve to illustrate the extent of the authors' blatant efforts to misrepresent the status of Japanese Canadians.

The prevailing faulty comparison in the text is, of course, between people of Japanese origin in Canada and Canadians detained in Japanese territory during the war: a major premise of the argument justifying the treatment of Japanese Canadians being that the situations of Japanese Canadians and Canadians in Japan were parallel. A reference to a comment from Austin C. Taylor, Chairman of the BCSC, supports this comparison.

> Taylor urged the BC public to be cooperative, patient, considerate and humane in their treatment of the Japanese. "[F]or our own protection," he declared, "we have unavoidably brought sorrow to many thousands of people," but he

> warned that the Japanese must be treated "as well as we expect our Canadian soldiers and civilian internees to be treated in Japanese-occupied territory in the Far East." (103, 106)

The only differentiation the authors make between the Japanese Canadians and the Canadians in Japan is in how they were treated by their keepers. As they explain, "The Canadian government and the Canadian people treated the Japanese Canadians, most of whom were British subjects, very harshly during the war. Nonetheless, the evacuees and internees, no matter what their citizenship, unquestionably were better treated than Canadian soldiers and civilians in Japanese hands" (217). Even while admitting to the harshness of the treatment of Japanese Canadians, the authors put much more emphasis on the fact that the fate of Japanese Canadians, like that of Canadians in Japan, was an unavoidable eventuality of war, as the closing statement in the text illustrates:

> The taking of hostages is as old as warfare, as contemporary as today's newspaper. War forced both Canada and Japan into the hostage business. For neither government was it a welcome enterprise, but it was the *Japanese in Canada* and the Canadians in Japan and Japanese-occupied territory who paid the price as mutual hostages. (218, emphasis added)

The final reference to the Japanese Canadians as "the Japanese in Canada" sustains to the end one of the major tactics in the text, the tendency to obscure the fact that these people were Canadian citizens. Canadian citizenship was, in fact, the only similarity between the Japanese Canadians and the Canadians detained in Japanese-occupied territory. In every other aspect, their situations were different. The civilians in Japan had elected to remain in

Japanese occupied territory despite appeals from Canadian officials to come home and the POWS were simply that, military personnel who had been captured by an enemy force while fighting in a wartime battle. The vast majority of the people referred to by the authors as "the Japanese in Canada" were Canadian citizens who were already at home. They were not civilians of an enemy state and they were not POWS. The fallacy of this prevailing comparison alone renders the argument of Mutual Hostages untenable.

But another crucial rhetorical ploy on the part of the authors is their portrayal of the actions of the Canadian government and its representatives as not only necessary but compassionate and just. Early in the chapter outlining the evacuation, the authors claim that the RCMP demonstrated genuine compassion. Acknowledging that the impounding of the fishing fleet "severely tried all fishermen," the authors point out that "The RCMP had not anticipated any immediate hardship for the fisherman because winter was normally a slack season" (76). One wonders if the authors presume that the fate of the fleet would have been different if Pearl Harbor had been attacked at the height of the fishing season. As well, the authors overwhelmingly commend the efforts of the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC), the body established to oversee the evacuation and dispersal process. Declaring that "doing its best to treat Japanese fairly was the hallmark of the BCSC policy" (103), Mutual Hostages includes numerous measures taken by the BCSC to ensure the comfort and safety of the evacuees. The unintentional irony in these illustrations would be laughable if the implications were not so offensive. In relation to the accommodations in the settlement towns, the authors explain: "Despite the temporary nature of the interior settlements, the BCSC sought to place 'Japanese evacuees in housing commensurate with the tradition of

British fair play.' Thus, though it used tents as short-term shelters during the summer, it rejected a suggestion that women and children be housed in tents during the winter" (119).[9] The BCSC is credited, as well, for being "anxious to relieve grievances" (120). For example, in response to Red Cross reports that residents in settlement towns had complained of "the high cost of food and the scarcity of Japanese foods," they "permitted the establishment of a factory at Tashme to make soya sauce and miso (a paste made of rice and soybeans used mainly in soups) to supply all the settlements with these Japanese ingredients" (120-22). And, as a measure of their consideration, it is noted that the commission took this action even though "it believed the complaints were only 'talking points'" and not, presumably, directives from the Red Cross. The BCSC, it turns out, even provided amenities that surpassed those provided by the Americans:

> . . . the BCSC had favoured facilities which would allow each family to do its own cooking . . . in contrast to the American practice of establishing mess-style dining halls in its relocation camps. . . . Because of lack of space and the wartime scarcity of stoves, most families had to share kitchens. Inevitably, as a Vancouver Sun reporter . . . observed, 'petty annoyances' could be magnified under the unaccustomed detention of large groups of people.' Eventually the BCSC supplied additional stoves where necessary to end feuds. (120)

This action, it seems, not only helped to preserve the peace, but proved to be economical while serving the personal interests of the evacuees: "The BCSC believed that making each family responsible for its own meals would eliminate the hiring of catering staff, reduce the need for supervision, and encourage self-sufficiency" (120). This portrait of the BCSC,

while stressing their compassion, conveniently omits the fact that these people had been admirably self-sufficient before being forcibly removed from their comfortable homes, thereby illustrating the "process of exclusion, stress and subordination" that enters into the constitution of history (White, Metahistory 6).

But the most blatant attempt to sustain the notion that the events of the 1940s were justified is the avoidance of the details of the redress movement. Coverage amounts to a single paragraph outlining the compensation package but omitting any reference to the formal acknowledgement of injustice and the apology issued by the government of the day. This reference to the redress movement, which occurs following the brief discussion of the Bird Commission and its failure to obtain fair compensation for the financial losses during the war, makes no mention of the bitter and lengthy struggle of the 1970s and 1980s. As they do with the events of the 1940s, in their discussion of the redress movement, the authors manage to create the impression of an affable and generous government, and to maintain the notion of disloyalty on the part of Japanese Canadians. The full reference to the redress movement is as follows:

> In the 1980s, as a new generation matured and as Japanese Americans renewed their demands for compensation, the Japanese Canadians resumed their fight for redress. The Canadian government offered $12 million as a community fund; the National Association of Japanese Canadians sought compensation of $25,000 for each of the approximately 14,000 surviving evacuees. In the fall of 1988, the dispute was settled. The Canadian government offered $21,000 to affected individuals who were still living, the restoration of Canadian

> citizenship to those who had lost it, and a pardon for any person of Japanese ancestry convicted under the War Measures Act or related legislation. (156)

Possibly as part of their strategy to condone the efforts of the government, and sustain suspicion of Japanese-Canadian loyalties, the text systematically disparages Japanese Canadians, portraying them as hostile, potentially unruly, petulant, irresponsible and ungrateful. Referring to the refusal of some Japanese Canadians and nationals in road camps to work, the authors claim that their reasons were "sometimes trivial ones" (112). In fact, the reasons they cite, which include such things as dissatisfaction with food, "inadequate and irregular pay, leaky tents . . . and the feeling of being like a prisoner," hardly seem "trivial" (112). Another time they are made to seem ungrateful. During the relocation, various church groups had pushed for people of the same religion to be relocated together so that "their spiritual needs could be met" (122). These efforts, the authors point out, did benefit the evacuees, since "resettlement by religious group provided some social cohesion and certain practical advantages since the churches often undertook kindergarten and high-school instruction" (122). But the authors suggest that the Japanese Community was not adequately appreciative when they comment that, despite the well-intentioned intervention, "some Japanese feared the clergy might become too powerful in the settlements" (122).

It is not altogether surprising that the authors view the friction among Japanese Canadians in the settlement towns as "petty annoyances," their complaints trivial or their attitude ungrateful, for they tend to view the government actions and the hardships endured by Japanese Canadians during this time to be far less severe than do other historians. As a result, they tend to downplay the ideas of cruelty and suffering. For example, following a

brief description of the seizure of the fishing fleet, they point out that "except for the fishermen, internees, teachers and journalists, the majority of Japanese Canadians were free to continue in their ordinary work during the first three months of war" (77). Again, one does not have to wonder for long just who would comprise the "majority" still at liberty: wives without husbands, children without fathers, families without breadwinners. The authors also stress that very few Japanese Canadians were actually interned, only 800 people who "included some ardent supporters of Imperial Japan and the most vociferous opponents of the evacuation and the separation of families. . . . The remaining 22,000 or so Japanese Canadians were evacuated inland . . . [where they] received good food and health care" (216). The authors seem to be suggesting that internment was the primary affront to Japanese Canadians; the evacuation, I presume, was to be viewed as a necessary inconvenience. This attitude prevails in the description of Hastings Park, which is vastly tempered in comparison to other accounts. There is even the suggestion that relocation to Hastings Park was voluntary, that they could enter and leave at will:

> The first evacuees *entered* Hastings Park on 16 March 1942; the last *left* on 30 September 1942. All told, about 8000 Japanese *passed through* the park and many Japanese residents of Vancouver *visited*. Inhabitants of Hastings Park could get weekly passes to the city and, to avoid congestion on the crowded public transport system, the BCSC arranged special buses between the park and Powell Street, the heart of Vancouver's Japanese quarter. (108, italics mine)

The authors do acknowledge that "despite [the] limited freedom, life at Hastings Park was unpleasant, indeed even humiliating," and they provide a brief description of the unsanitary conditions and the lack of privacy in "the livestock barn [that had been adapted] for human use" (108). But they still maintain there were advantages. For example, there were bargains to be had; "food was served in the mess halls . . . at the cost of less than ten cents per meal" (108). In another reference to complaints that the menus were monotonous and did not include "Japanese-style food," the authors make a bewildering statement suggesting long-term dietary benefits for the detainees at Hastings Park. Despite the complaints, the authors explain, "the BCSC . . . congratulated itself for giving residents of Hastings Park 'many valuable lessons in food values'" (108).[10]

Occasionally, the authors of Mutual Hostages make pretence of being open-minded in their assessment of the events of the 1940s. In the concluding chapter, for example, they declare the loyalty of the Nisei:

> Without question, the Nisei, Canadian citizens by birth, merited much better treatment than they received. Their loyalty to Canada was severely tried, but, with rare exception, never faltered. They proved to be more aware of their rights and obligations of citizenship than those who discriminated against them on the basis of race alone. (217)

This acknowledgement, however, amounts to a case of too little too late in the face of the numerous innuendos aimed at portraying the Nisei as potentially disloyal. Although, at one point, Granatstein et al. seem to suggest that the Canadian government acted inappropriately, in the same breath they invalidate this notion and maintain the position that the government's

actions were indeed justified. The concluding remarks by the authors on this point include the following:

> The Canadian government, whatever the contemporary and sometimes compelling justifications for its actions against the Japanese Canadians, nonetheless behaved in ways that seem to belie its claim to be fighting on behalf of democracy. . . . The story of Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War is one of prejudice, misunderstanding, and cruelty. . . .
>
> The war brought long-simmering events to the boil. In British Columbia, the racist dislike and economic fear of Japanese Canadians escalated towards panic as the army and navy of Imperial Japan swept over the Pacific in the days and weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result of this panic and plans for public demonstrations against the Japanese Canadians, the Canadian government caved in to racist fears. . . . The consequence was the order that all persons of Japanese racial origin must leave the coast. (214)

Right to the final pages of Mutual Hostages, the authors still obscure the identity of the evacuees as Canadian citizens. And they never suggest that the federal government might have been motivated by something other than concern for citizens at home and abroad.[11] As a result, their message amounts to an overall contradiction of the alternative versions of this moment in history.

Describing the historian's task, Hayden White explains:

> . . . the historian confronts a veritable chaos of events *already constituted*, out of which he must choose the elements of the story he would tell. He makes his

> story by including some events and excluding others, by stressing some and subordinating others. This process of exclusion, stress, and subordination is carried out in the interest of constituting *a story of a particular kind.* (Metahistory 6)

This study of Mutual Hostages should illustrate the volatility of the choices historians make in "constituting a story of a particular kind." They can, in effect, change the view of history. This is not to suggest that attempting to change notions of history is necessarily a bad thing. Joy Kogawa, for instance, altered the perception of history with her novel Obasan, which "opened up . . . an important moment in history to an audience who might not read the non-fiction accounts" ("In Writing" 150). The authors of Mutual Hostages have the right to their perception that Japanese Canadians were capable of treason or that the government of Canada acted justly, compassionately and responsibly in the matter of the evacuation and dispersal. The fallacy in Mutual Hostages is the authors' claim that their presentation is a dispassionate, objective, comprehensive and 'truthful' account of history. As this necessarily lengthy analysis has shown, their choices amount not only to the inclusion of select information, but also to the exclusion of information that might have allowed for a more impartial representation of the past, which is their stated intention. They present hearsay and personal opinions as facts and they manipulate information "in the interest of constituting *a story of a [very] particular kind*" (White Metahistory 6).

David Levin claims that

> It is time to *begin* literary discussion of any work of history with the assumption that the author is a man with some convictions. Unless their effect

> is disastrous to the work, these should be delineated chiefly as a means of establishing the framework in which criticism can function. (25)

And, he claims further that, as critics we

> . . . should frankly welcome contrivance that is not irresponsible manipulation, inference that is not fabrication. Taking their art seriously, historians try to find a language and a technique appropriate to their perceptions and hypotheses. One function of criticism is to study and evaluate the many ways historians find to solve this problem. (26)

The works of literary figuration discussed previously employed various techniques to impart their "convictions," providing not only valuable historical information but revealing the intensely figurative strategies used to produce a "knowledge-effect. " But, in comparison to these works that are admittedly subjective and biased versions of history, and in which the "documentary material [has sometimes been] rearranged for eye and ear [or] reorganized imaginatively" to enhance the aesthetic and instructional value of the work (Livesay, "The Documentary Poem" 267 and 276), Mutual Hostages amounts to "irresponsible manipulation," if not "fabrication" (Levin 26). One can only hope that the discerning reader, as Ken Adachi recommended in response to Granatstein's 1986 article, would consider alternative versions to this 1990 text before deciding what is a "just understanding of the past" (Levin 25). And one would hope further that these alternate versions would include the figurative contributions discussed previously, versions which clearly "refer to reality [more] faithfully and much more effectively than" has this specimen of "putatively literalist . . . discourse" (White, Figural Realism vi).

During the time that Jack Granatstein and his colleagues were reconsidering the history of the Japanese Canadians in the years following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Joy Kogawa was embroiled in the crusade for justice. As an active participant in the fight for redress during the 1980s, she realized she "was living through . . . [another] important story that had to be written" ("Heart of the Matter" 31). She tells that story in her novel Itsuka, which is the subject of my next chapter. Unlike Mutual Hostages, which masquerades bias and speculative invention as objectivity and truth, Itsuka is admittedly a self-conscious and subjective attempt to "represent the truth of experience in language" ("Heart of the Matter" 33). And, as she did in Obasan, through a process of brilliant tropological representation, Kogawa translates a personal journey into a powerful and important historical record.

Endnotes

[1] The Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians was formed in June 1945, when "representatives of twenty Caucasian organizations" joined with the Japanese Canadian Committee for Democracy (JCCD), an organization established in 1943 by Nisei who had relocated to Toronto during the evacuation (Sunahara 134). In her book, The Politics of Racism, Anne Gomer Sunahara provides the following description of the organization:

> Officially incorporated on June 19, the Cooperative Committee quickly grew to include representatives from over thirty organizations, including the major churches, labour unions, civil liberties and professional associations, the National Council of Woman and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Chaired by Rev. James Finlay of Carlton Street United Church, the Cooperative Committee sought to demonstrate that all Canadians were not anti-Japanese and that many were disturbed by the wartime treatments of Japanese Canadians. (134)

[2] Following is a description of the terms of reference and methods used by the Bird Commission as outlined in Justice In Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement:

> . . . the Bird Commission's terms of reference . . . were deliberately restricted to economic losses from the sale of properties in the care of the Custodian of Enemy Property. The Commission could not raise the issue of compensation for civil rights violation, . . . or other damages. . . [Losses were] calculated from the difference between the sale price set by the Custodian of Enemy

> Property, and the fair market value of the property at the time of sale. The losses were even more unfairly diminished because many properties deteriorated once vacated, and prices were depressed during the war. To make matters worse for the claimants, the onus was on the property owner to prove the "market" value. Even within these constricted parameters, the Commission eventually decided that proceeding with individual cases was too time-consuming, and ended up treating losses in broad general categories. (Kodato 58-9)

[3] The side script to Granatstein's article states that he was "at work, with professors Patricia Roy, Masako Iino and Hiroko Takamura, on a book about wartime relations between Canada and Japan" (Granatstein 32). I was anxious to find and see the finished product to determine if the authors had produced more tangible evidence to support the allegation in Granatstein's article, that the evacuation of the "Japanese Canadians from the Pacific coast" was justified. As the present chapter reveals, this was not the case. Mutual Hostages, like the Saturday Night article which will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter dealing with the redress movement, is based on speculation and innuendo and very little hard evidence. As well, the description of the book is somewhat inaccurate. It is really not about "wartime relations between Canada and Japan," but rather, a re-examination of the subject of the Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals in Canada "during the second world war" (Roy, et al. ix). Any discussion of relations with Japan is made in the context of the decisions regarding the treatment of people of Japanese origin after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

[4] These "Japanese historians of Canada," as explained in the preface to Mutual Hostages, are Masako Iino and Hiroko Takamura are (ix). It is not apparent what particular contribution any of the authors make to the text, although an article by Iino, "Japanese Immigration and Canada-Japan Relations in the 1930s," is cited in the first chapter that discusses Japanese immigration to Canada.

[5] The authors of Mutual Hostages often cite archival records as the source of information. These citations are presented in the endnotes. As I have done in this citation, when quoting a passage from Mutual Hostages that, in turn, cites another source or archival reference, I give the page reference for the passage, followed by the records collection or the source cited by the authors, the endnote number, then the page on which the endnote can be found.

[6] In this case, the authors do not specify the source of the opinion quoted. There is a single endnote referring to a lengthy paragraph. The endnote identifies several books and articles by a variety of authors, both historians and historical personages, but does not identify whose opinion this was.

[7] See Escott Reid, "The Conscience of a Diplomat: A Personal Statement," Queen's Quarterly, 74 (winter 1967): 587-9.

[8] The BCSC is the British Columbia Security Commission, a body established to oversee the evacuation and dispersal process.

[9] The source of this quote is not identified.

[10] Once again, the authors do not specify the source of the opinion quoted. The single endnote refers to several books by a variety of authors.

[11] Leaving aside the notion of potentially racist-based motivation, other formal and literary historians argue that both the provincial and federal politicians were motivated by political interests as well as other considerations, which seems a valid contention regarding practical politicians. Mutual Hostages avoids such a claim entirely, striving to sustain a highly favourable portrait of the federal government's motives.

Chapter Four

Tragedy into Triumph:
The Japanese Canadian Battle for Redress as presented in
Joy Kogawa's Itsuka

In 1977, more than thirty-years after the efforts of the Bird Commission[1] came to a disappointing end, the Japanese-Canadian community ended its resigned silence and again raised the "issue of compensation" (Miki 58). Due to the resounding critical success of Obasan in 1981, Joy Kogawa was "thrust . . . into a public role in" what would prove to be a long and difficult battle for redress ("Literary Politics" 14). Itsuka (1992; rev. 1993) is the story of Joy Kogawa's participation in the redress movement. It presents her political and social concerns and reveals the deep impact the movement had on her personally, on a community and on a nation caught in the grips of a political and cultural tug of war. While acknowledged for its political and social relevance, Itsuka did not receive nearly the critical acclaim of its predecessor, Obasan, with the unfortunate result that the story of the redress movement would not have as wide exposure as the story of the evacuation and dispersal of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s. Obasan had "opened up . . . an important moment in history to an audience who might not read the non-fiction accounts" ("In Writing" 150), but without comparable critical endorsement, Itsuka falls short of a similar accomplishment. There is, however, a latent and unexpected benefit of this poor critical reception. It has

provided a unique opportunity to assess the effect of "figurative language" on the representation of reality and to demonstrate that good narrative results in more comprehensible "*interpretations* of whatever information about and knowledge of the past the historian commands" (White, Figural Realism 2). Kogawa wrote two versions of Itsuka,[2] the second in response to the poor critical reaction to the first. In an interview with Karlyn Koh, published in 1995, Kogawa explained that after a particularly "devastating review . . . [she] tried to go back to rewrite the book," and she maintains that the second "edition is somewhat different from the" first (30). In fact, the second edition is considerably different from the original novel. It is, as well, an improvement over the original text, both in its artistic achievement and, by extension, in its informational value. The facts related to the redress movement are essentially the same in both texts, but the presentations vary. A comparison between the two versions of Itsuka illustrates quite powerfully that "good writing" should not be considered "an afterthought in history" or viewed "as an unexpected blessing that has little to do with the . . . business of the historian" (Levin 2). Through more precise imagery, more palatable rhetoric, better expressed and positioned tropes of literary figuration, Kogawa achieves a more aesthetically pleasing and comprehensibly superior narrative the second time around.

Despite the superiority of the second version over the first, the critical legacy of Itsuka is based solely on the original text. The opinions range from Janice Kulyk Keefer's insistence that Kogawa's "account of the formation of the Japanese-Canadian redress movement and its bitter and protracted struggle against a succession of obstructive ministers of multiculturalism makes absorbing reading" (35), to Stan Persky's complaint that it

contains "pages and pages of painfully embarrassing writing" (C20). Conceding that "Itsuka offers some interest as anecdotal sociology," Persky adds that "as literature," it offers "almost none" (C20). Most reviews, however, fall somewhere in between. Along with her praise for the political story in Itsuka, Keefer also admits "a certain disappointment . . . at the absence . . . of the kind of poetically charged language and intensity of perception that give Obasan its extraordinary beauty and power" (Keefer 35). In a similar vein, noting that "the highly poetic and allusive style of Obasan is nowhere to be found in Itsuka," Kathryn Barnwell still acknowledges Kogawa's successful sojourn "into the public and political realms" as she traces the story "of a fractured Japanese Canadian Community . . . demanding recognition from the Canadian government" (39). Admitting that "Kogawa's strengths as a writer are [occasionally] evident in passages of lyrical beauty and depth," Mary di Michele maintains that "the novel falls flat when it moves into the arena of documentary" (G17). At the same time, she states that "the questions raised and the vision offered make it . . . an important book, one that tells us stories we have denied or disowned" (di Michele G17). In Val Ross's opinion, Joy Kogawa has addressed and responded to any "misgivings" Canadians might entertain regarding the government's acknowledgement of injustice towards Japanese Canadians in the 1940s and its agreement to pay millions of dollars in compensation (C1). She also states that Kogawa's attempt at "the concrete language of journalism [in Itsuka], "simply doesn't suit her" (Ross C1). Aritha van Herk confirms the power of the narrative in Itsuka, but faults its artistic achievement. Describing Itsuka in such complimentary terms as a chronicle of "the sound and fury of the political process" and "invigorating political trajectory," she also remarks that "the stony silence that embedded

Obasan worked much more effectively as fiction"(van Herk 37). Ironically, the individual whose theory of historiographic metafiction has become the norm for discussing post-1960 Canadian historical literature, gives Itsuka its strongest endorsement as a historically informative text. Insisting that Itsuka exhibits "an almost fierce desire to teach us as much as possible about both the Japanese Canadian past history of repression and its recent history of redress," Linda Hutcheon declares that "the personal warmth, commitment, and generosity that characterize [the novel] . . . make the reader as student, for the most part, happy to listen here to the author as teacher" (Hutcheon, "Someday" 181).[3] At the same time, she claims that "history and fiction . . . do not always merge with ease, [that while] the prose and the passion are connected, . . . the seams often show" (181).

It is understandable that Itsuka would be compared to Obasan, being clearly the sequel to Kogawa's highly acclaimed first novel. Naomi Nakane returns as the central character and the narrator, and while most of the story pertains to the redress movement of the 1980s, it begins with a summary of Naomi's life prior to her involvement in political action. The first few chapters essentially recap the story in Obasan, dealing with the evacuation of Naomi's family from Vancouver to the ghost town of Slocan in the interior of British Columbia and their eventual move to the beetfields of Alberta. The remainder of the background narrative provides details not included in Obasan, describing Naomi's years in the bible belt of Granton, Alberta, her settlement into life as a "spinster schoolteacher" in Cecil and the decline and death of her much loved obasan (69). After Obasan's death, at Emily's insistence, Naomi resigns her teaching position and leaves her prairie life behind. Following a brief trip to Japan to "visit [her] mother's grave," and a stopover in what Emily

describes as the "one place in the world that feels the way home ought to feel," Hawaii (Itsuka 77), Naomi moves in with her aunt Emily in Toronto. When this portion of the narrative begins, four years have passed. In that time, Naomi has not "found it easy adjusting to this frenzied city," and has not "made a single friend" (Itsuka 90). Worried by her niece's torpid existence, Emily drags her off to "a Toronto JC League meeting [to] meet people" (Itsuka 93). Naomi's exposure to community activism, however, only increases her feelings of isolation and she announces that she is "thinking of going back to Granton" where she has friends (Itsuka 96). In a final attempt to assimilate her niece into Toronto life, Emily gets Naomi a job with the Bridge, the multicultural magazine at "St. John's College" (96), where Emily herself works. When the narrative resumes, it is three years later, and it appears there has been slow, but definite progress. Naomi has moved into an apartment of her own, is contentedly still working at the Bridge and has befriended its staff, including "the quietly refined" Eugenia, the bubbly and mirthful Father Cedric, and the fast talking, very effective "Morty Mukai, [the] magazine's young new editor" (Itsuka 99-100). While Noami is by no means committed to public action, she has unquestionably been swept into the redress movement, and the narrative becomes almost solely "a breathless diaristic account of the eventually successful redress campaign" (Persky G 20).

As they did with Obasan, critics acknowledge the political power of Itsuka, but they emphasize the fictional aspect of the novel, largely overlooking its historically informational value. While most critics suspect that the novel is based on fact, they disregard the extent and accuracy of this factual information. Kathryn Barnwell, for example, ends her review by suggesting that "it would seem to have been Kogawa's intent to document the process

thorough which Japanese Canadians painfully moved themselves from the modesty of the background into the assertiveness of the foreground of Canadian political life, and finally received the long-awaited formal apology this country would, seemingly, have withheld indefinitely" (39). She gives no further consideration to this thought, however, virtually dismissing the documentary significance of the narrative. Even the two lengthy studies of Joy Kogawa's Itsuka, Rachelle Kanefsky's 1996 essay about the "Humanist Values in the Novels of Joy Kogawa," and Mason Harris's discussion of Itsuka in the Canadian Writers and Their Works, Fiction Series (1996), overlook the historical content of the novel. Kanefsky proclaims, but never addresses the specific historical moment that is portrayed in Itsuka. Harris views the novel primarily as a symbolic rather than a factual representation of history.

While she contends that Itsuka follows "Naomi's journey from a questioning to a confirming of history, from personal scepticism to political commitment to redress," Rachelle Kanefsky never discusses the story of the redress movement. Her endnotes, connecting events and impressions in Itsuka to actual historical events, illustrate that Kanefsky is aware that Kogawa's novel is based on fact, but overall she fails to acknowledge the presentation as a reflection of Joy Kogawa's personal experiences. She describes the strength of both Kogawa's novels as "interpretative authority and moral efficacy" that succeed to "re-establish the facts of history" (13), but she refers only to facts or events related to the evacuation, internment and dispersal of the 1940s. Kanefsky's interest in the redress movement is limited to her very specific social, historical and critical interests, which she outlines clearly toward the beginning of her essay:

> I feel that it is crucial to defend a humanistic faith in historical writing because, as a Jewish woman, I share with Kogawa a sense of the horror of history. Contemporary critics who assert the relativity of all literary expression and, by extension, all lived experience fail to examine the serious and very *real* implications of such an antiassertionist perspective. If experience cannot be formulated with any authority, and no worldview or theory can legitimately speak as truth, then we cut ourselves off from the concrete, rational knowledge that we require in order to resist repeating the mistakes of the past. Thus, while the postmodern conception of history as a subjective construct may be engaging in theory, in practice its consequences can be devastating. (12)

Kanefsky's study is primarily a denunciation of "the postmodern denial of historical veracity" (12), and while her enunciation of the measure of absolute truth in Itsuka supports her humanistic agenda, it disregards the prevailing historical story in the novel.

> There are, undoubtedly, many stories of the experience of internment. And . . . there is no one story of redress. . . . However, what is clearly conveyed in Kogawa's writing is that the sum of all these stories – including her own – constitutes one reality, a single truth: "During and after World War II, Canadians of Japanese ancestry, the majority of whom were citizens, suffered unprecedented actions by the Government of Canada against their community (formal "Acknowledgement," qtd. in Miki and Kobayashi 8; qtd. in Itsuka 289). (Kanefsky 30)

By limiting the truth value in Itsuka to the Canadian government's formal acknowledgement of injustices perpetrated against Japanese Canadians in the years following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Kanefsky vastly underestimates the significance of Joy Kogawa's novel. In the interview with Karlyn Koh, "Heart of the Matter," Kogawa refers to the redress activities of the 1980s as "a story [she] had lived through, . . . an important story that had to be written in some kind of way" (31). While the government's admission of wrongdoing was a triumphant moment for Japanese Canadians, Itsuka is first and foremost the story of the remarkable and lengthy journey leading up to this moment. The fact that Kogawa places this "Acknowledgement" as an afterword in her novel, rather than including it in the final chapter outlining the proceedings in the House of Commons on September 22, 1988, suggests that she views this event as a very small, albeit important part of a much larger story. By disregarding the specific historical content and context of Itsuka, Kanefsky essentially denies its informational value.

Mason Harris does acknowledge Itsuka as a symbolic representation of "crucial aspects of the inner life of the Japanese Canadian community between the early 1940s and the late 1980s" ("Kogawa" 139), but he declares that "Kogawa's representation of the redress movement is highly fictionalized" ("Kogawa" 200). Ironically, he makes a point of singling out Emily Kato and Nikki Kagami as fictional characters that "do not represent real persons in the movement but dramatize differing points of view" ("Kogawa" 200). In fact, while Emily and Nikki do indeed represent different viewpoints, they are undoubtedly based on real persons who played public roles in this historical event. Another critic also takes note of these two characters, but while discomfited by the mix of fact and fiction in Itsuka, she

discerns correctly that Kogawa's dramatization of the redress movement and her presentation of these two characters are based on reality:

> . . . perhaps the biggest problem with this book is the impression that it is fiction stretched a bit too tightly over fact; that one might, in fact, prefer to read the story of the Japanese crusade for justice as a straightforward documentary account, with all names named. There is an awkwardness about this overlay of fact by fiction. Sister Mary Jo Leddy, the activist nun, and John Fraser, speaker of the House of Commons, are appreciatively named, along with missionary Naomi Best. But who is Aunt Emily? Or Nikki Kagami, the insider enemy of community, who despite her importance to the novel, remains a paper dragon? One feels they too are actual Canadians whom we might recognize – and would like to. (Hancock, 50)

A comparison with historical evidence easily reveals the identity of the "actual Canadians" on whom these characters are based, confirming Kogawa's intent to present a realistic and informative account of the redress movement.

In the early chapters of Itsuka, reprising the story line of Obasan, Emily Kato continues to be based on Kogawa's real-life historical and personal muse, Muriel Kitagawa. Like her fictional counterpart, Muriel had relocated to Toronto during the evacuation, and along with other nisei was, from early on, actively involved in efforts to obtain justice for Japanese Canadians. In her history of the redress movement, Maryko Omatsu describes the nature of these efforts:

> As the years passed, the Japanese Canadians . . . tried to put the past behind them and slowly bury the trauma of the war years under successive layers of scar tissue. Still, at night around kitchen tables, angry voices debated the community's future. In the middle of the war, in 1943, a group of Toronto nisei, founded the Japanese Canadian Committee for Democracy. . . . After the war in 1947, this Committee was converted into the community's first national organization, the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (NJCCA), with chapters in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia. The NJCCA was formed by idealistic nisei in search of what seemed, at the time, to be as elusive as the holy grail: the end of racial persecution. (95)

Joy Kogawa provides a comparable, though more succinct, description of nisei pursuits when Naomi considers her aunt's years as an activist. "Back in the late forties she helped found the National Japanese Canadian League, the umbrella organization for all the local leagues across the country. She had big dreams then. 'Human rights is our responsibility,' she said" (Itsuka 94). One of Muriel Kitagawa's many contributions to the Japanese-Canadian cause was the following appeal for reparation, which appeared in a manuscript dated 1945-46:

> Many of my people . . . badly need the few hundreds or thousands of dollars that represent their loss, and it is only right that for their loss, since it was forced on them unjustly, they should be reimbursed.
>
> But more than the return of lost property, reparation is the outward symbol acknowledging the loss of our rights. . . . As long as restitution is not

> made, that knowledge will last throughout the generations to come . . . that a house, a home, was lost through injustice. (Kitagawa 229)

By the time Muriel Kitagawa wrote these words, "a Loss Claims Commission [had already been] set up, under Justice Bird" (Kitagawa 261), but another of her writings suggests that she was not optimistic about the outcome of this investigative commission: "Our material losses, such as can be inventoried on a dollars-and-cents list, are now before a Claims Commission, whose terms of reference are still so narrow as to exclude many legitimate losses caused by the evacuation" (Kitagawa 271). In Itsuka, Naomi remembers Emily carrying much the same message regarding compensation. She "told anyone who would listen, that we should be speaking up for our rights. We were Canadians. Our houses had been stolen. All our houses" (Itsuka 11). In an opinion that Muriel Kitagawa would have shared, Emily rendered a verdict on the effectiveness of the Bird Commission:

> Aunt Emily said that . . . as far as she was concerned, the Bird Commission had been a complete farce.
>
> Aunt Emily said the Commission, intended to get us fair compensation for the property the government stole from us, was a slap in the face . . . . Those who applied got ten cents on the dollar. (Itsuka 11)

The suspension of the Bird Commission put an end, not only to government action but to efforts within the Japanese Community to seek justice. As Maryko Omatsu explains: in the decades following the disappointing conclusion of the Bird Commission, fearing "a resurgence of racism," Japanese Canadians were reluctant "to criticize authority. . . . The NJCCA . . . abandoned its critical edge . . . [becoming] more or less irrelevant, largely

relegated to organizing summer picnics and Christmas bazaars" (Omatsu 95). In fiction, as in history, these idealistic nisei dreams were shattered. As Naomi recalls: "the will to action was killed over time and the League deteriorated into a social club" (Itsuka 94).

By the time redress efforts resumed in 1977, Muriel Kitagawa had died,[4] but Emily Kato continued to represent another "actual Canadian," and that Canadian is Joy Kogawa herself. As she explains in the interview with Karlyn Koh, the quiet, watchful Naomi Nakane of Obasan was no longer adequate to portray the public and political role demanded by Itsuka:

> . . . after writing Obasan and in a way being forced into public situations, the Naomi character that was within me, who basically could not talk, and which is really the way I used to be, got more and more transformed, and the Aunt Emily voice came out. I found myself being more like Aunt Emily. And I think in Itsuka I was much more like Aunt Emily, but since I was writing in Naomi's voice, I had a problem because I didn't want Naomi to be transformed too suddenly. I didn't know how to do that anyway because she didn't have a parallel experience to mine. I had had a public kind of attention that helped me to change and Naomi didn't have that. So Naomi had to remain the way that she was, more or less, although she could be changed a little bit through the redress activity. ("Heart of the Matter" 30-1)

Kogawa handled the problem of merging the Emily character that she was becoming with the Naomi character who was telling the story by casting Naomi as the introspective narrator and the compassionate and discerning observer of Emily the political activist. As Naomi

witnessed and described the events unfolding around her, her thoughts often reflect Joy Kogawa's political stance. In the novel, however, Naomi's contemplations would remain private; in real life Kogawa expressed these opinions publicly in articles or in interviews. In one such article, Kogawa condemns government bureaucracy for prolonging the suffering of the Issei:

> One by one, I have heard graphic and horrible stories of Issei in white nursing homes, who, unable to adjust to the radically different diets, die within days or an average of a month or two. Facilities and assistance are desperately needed but not one Japanese Canadian nursing home or hospital any longer exists across this entire country. What does this speak of? It speaks of a people who are weak, separated, broken and have not been able to unite on this most crucial need. It speaks of a governmental bureaucracy that has been unable to enter into substantial dialogue with that brokenness and to assist it. No single group in Canada has been so plundered and abused by officialdom as the Issei. ("Just Cause" 21)

In Itsuka, Naomi expresses similar sentiments in a moment of private contemplation when she accompanies her aunt to visit an old issei friend in a nursing home:

> How well I know the issei, who will never complain. It's their code of honour requiring them to gaman, to endure without flinching, that makes them the silent people of Canadian nursing homes. . . .
>
> This is where the issei have gone. Into their last days – one by one. They wait alone . . . in these permanent places of transition, their final

> internment centres, holding their tickets to a distant land. In wheelchairs and beds, with their day-long stares, they wait for the hour of their call. (Itsuka 124-5)

At other times, Joy Kogawa's experiences or reactions would be relayed through Naomi's description and interpretation of Emily's circumstances. Kogawa was both angered and disappointed in Pierre Trudeau's stance regarding redress. In one interview she explains: "During those few months I was in Japan, I heard Trudeau's remarks about an apology not being warranted, and I didn't really want to come back. But, on the other hand, where else is there to be? This is home" (Kogawa, "Trust" 30). In a later article she raised the subject again in relation to her efforts to convince a fellow Nisei of the importance of the redress movement: "I asked him what he felt when former Prime Minister Trudeau went to Japan and apologized there for what was done to Japanese Canadians here. Would he have gone to France to apologize for the wrongs against French Canadians?" ("Dilemma" 30). The matter is addressed in Itsuka during Naomi's account of Emily's futile campaign to enlist Stephen in their cause:

> Aunt Emily is intent on getting through to Stephen and she's being as patient and self-controlled as I've ever seen her.
>
> "Tell me, Stephen," she says, "you surely do not agree with the prime minister. Tell me that you don't agree."

While Emily asks the question, Naomi explains the political context and offers personal commentary:

> The prime minister's latest remarks have left people non-plussed. He, the man who speaks of "justice in our time," has dismissed our community, saying the "descendants of dead ancestors" are not deserving of either compensation or apology.
>
> It rankles people that the prime minister apologized to the Japanese in Japan for what Canada did to us Canadians. "Can you see him going to France to try to make amends to French Canadians?" (Itsuka 183)

Even more distressing to Kogawa than the political frustrations were the divisions within the Japanese-Canadian community that not only threatened to de-rail the redress movement, but caused her great personal anguish. In an article written in 1984, Kogawa describes Japanese Canadians as a "vastly and profoundly disparate and broken people," and she admits to being deeply wounded by personal attacks from opponents within the redress movement: "It has been one of the most painful experiences of my life to have been publicly vilified, lied about and identified by some Japanese Canadians as an enemy of Japanese Canadians because of my belief in the need for a democratic and open dialogue among us" ("Just Cause" 224). In Itsuka, a series of metaphors evokes a graphic image of a profoundly hostile and divisive community. Comparing the redress movement to a choir, Naomi explains:

> . . . no matter how ardently the choirmaster flails his arms, we sing out of tune. It's a cacophonous choir, howling its way through the redress movement. I expect that at any moment the curtain will thud at our feet.

> . . . derisive cries fill the air. Letters pleading for sanity and loyalty appear in the community papers. A few voices soar into prayer.
>
> One anonymous writer, like a rabid dog with its teeth in the laundry, foams his vitriolic abuse . . . attacking council members. From out of one person's poisoned pen there flows a steady stream of hurtfulness, and people who read the papers are dazed with embarrassment. (Itsuka 202)

Naomi's expression of concern for her aunt captures a sense of how painful this political in-fighting was for Joy Kogawa.

> It's the personal attacks against Aunt Emily I find unbearable. "Bet she's writing about all this. Yeah, anything for her own glory." We're accosted on the street by a woman who says, "Why are you bringing the past back again?"
>
> It's the workings of a culture of oppression," Aunt Emily says wearily, the darkening bags under her eyes showing her fatigue. (202)

As it happens, one of Emily's leading adversaries within the community and the movement is the other character singled out by Harris to be fictional, Nikki Kagami. President of the Toronto Japanese Canadian League, Nikki Kagami has been pursuing a course of action that incenses and horrifies Morty Mukai, the editor of Bridge.

> "She appointed herself head of a defunct League committee. Just like that!" He snaps his fingers. "Then ran off to Ottawa on all four paws. She's got no mandate. She represents no one and she's not accountable to the community. It worries the hell out of me." (142)

Indignant over "Nikki Kagami's exclusiveness, [a] Democracy group . . . is formed . . . to pressure Nikki for information" (154). United in "a passionate belief that Japanese Canadians everywhere should have a voice in redress," this democracy group sets out to make the league into a truly "strong grassroots national organization," sparking a brutal power struggle between, Mickey Hayashi, the president of the "National Japanese Canadian League," and Nikki (154). Contrary to Harris's declaration, Nikki Kagami represents a very real historical person. Like Itsuka's "National Japanese Canadian League," history's National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) faced a formidable intra-community opponent in the battle for redress, an individual named George Imai, who "had for years been holding behind-the-scenes discussions with government politicians . . . without the knowledge or authorization of the NAJC" (Omatsu 96). One of the most difficult tasks the NAJC and its president, Art Miki,[5] encountered was "the long and difficult process of trying to wrest George Imai from his position as the association's public spokesperson and to develop a truly representative position" on redress. Imai, like Nikki Kagami, faced frequent "angry exchanges" with those attempting to unite the Japanese Canadian community on this issue. And, comparable to Nikki Kagami's proposal that redress consist of "a lump group payment" rather than "individual payments" (Itsuka 154), George Imai "opposed individual compensation" (Omatsu 100). Ultimately, these two problematic individuals faced a similar fate: the dissolution of their respective redress committees. In Imai's case, this event took place "during a tumultuous NAJC Redress Conference held in Toronto" (Omatsu 100), while Nikki faced defeat during an equally volatile "emergency long-distance teleconference of the National Council" (Itsuka 199).

Numerous parallels can be drawn between characters and dramatic action in Itsuka and real people and historical events.[6] All these comparisons cannot be addressed, but two deserve attention as further illustration of both Kogawa's deep connection with the historical moment and her effort to create a permanent record to complement or rival alternative presentations. Some passages quoted above have been extracted from Bittersweet Passage, Maryko Omatsu's history of the redress movement. The similarities between the descriptions in Omatsu's book and Kogawa's novel are not coincidental. The two women clearly were compatriots in the struggle for redress. Omatsu acknowledges Kogawa's assistance in the writing of her book and on a number of occasions refers to Kogawa's involvement in the movement as writer and activist. For her part, Kogawa includes a photograph of Maryko Omatsu in her article about the redress movement, "The Japanese Canadian Dilemma" published in Toronto Life in 1985. The accompanying caption describes Omatsu as "legal advisor to the National Association of Japanese Canadians [who] sits on the negotiating committee [discussing] possible reparation settlements" (Kogawa, "Dilemma" 33). Clearly, Kogawa felt that Omatsu warranted inclusion in her historically based novel, for this description closely resembles the character Anna Makino in Itsuka. Like Itsuka's Anna, Maryko was born after the war, and joined the redress movement to avenge the injustices inflicted against her father who had been branded an "enemy alien' and "like so . . . many others . . . compelled to leave his roots in his beloved British Columbia" (Broadbent's "Foreword" to Bittersweet Passage 13). Both the fictional and the historical persons are lawyers, married to non-Japanese Canadians who enthusiastically joined their wives' quest for justice. Their mothers, on the other hand, were opposed to their daughters'

political activities. Itsuka's Mrs. Makino was worried that this fight against government could have severe consequences, including even the loss of her pension (201). Similarly, Maryko Omatsu's mother "had spent [decades advising] her [daughter] of the dangers of" her actions (Omatsu 157). Nevertheless, when thousands of Japanese Canadians and their supporters held a rally on Parliament Hill in April 1988, Itsuka's Mrs. Makino was there, as was Maryko Omatsu's mother, "at seventy-five years of age, . . . carrying a placard like so many others" (Omatsu 157, Itsuka 260).

Some of the slogans on these placards in Itsuka, which include "Justice for Canadian Citizens," "An 'enemy' of Canada at Age Four," "Guilty without Trial" (Itsuka 260), might seem like dramatic rhetoric, but as Jack Granatstein's 1986 article in Saturday Night revealed, some influential Canadians still believed that Japanese Canadians had posed a potential security risk to Canada during the war. In his article, titled "The Enemy Within," Granatstein, then professor of history at York University, discusses the demographics of people of Japanese ancestry in Canada, the alleged efforts of Japanese embassies and consulates in North America to recruit "Japanese Canadians as spies" (40) and refers to reports that Japanese nationals had "helped the attacking forces" in Hawaii, Hong Kong and Malaya (42). The only mention of defiance from Japanese Canadians pertains to a riot involving Nisei "confined in Vancouver's immigration shed," protesting the "unjust treatment of Canadian citizens" (42). Yet, Granatstein makes an outrageous allegation for a historian who is allegedly dedicated to ensuring that "the construction put on [the past] represents something as close as possible to reality" (Granatstein, 1986 34). Based solely on speculation, he contends that the loyalty of Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals was

questionable and he suggests that the Canadian government's actions might have forestalled treason had circumstances been different:

> What might have happened if Japanese forces had landed in Canada remains, happily, imponderable. So too does the question of how the Japanese Canadians might have reacted had they been left on the B.C. coast. . . . But there seems every reason to believe that support for Japan was also widespread among Japanese Canadians after the war began. (42)

Without providing any substantiating evidence, Granatstein ends his article by declaring that the government's decision on evacuation may have been warranted and he leaves little doubt as to his position regarding the matter of redress:

> It remains true that during and after the Second World War Japanese Canadians were the victims of brutal racism and that, in dealing with them, the federal government failed to defend the ideals for which its leaders claimed to have taken Canada to war. But the weight of historical evidence cautions against any hasty answers in the current redress debate. Military and intelligence concerns *could* indeed have justified the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the Pacific coast. In retrospect, *thanks to the evidence that is now available*, it even appears that the arguments in favour of evacuation were stronger than they seemed in early 1942. (Granatstein, 1986 42, italics mine)

Not surprisingly, Japanese Canadians and supporters responded angrily to Granatstein's article in letters to the editor in the January 1987 edition of Saturday Night. In one letter, Ken Adachi calls Granatstein's article "an unconscionably mischievous piece of

work" and characterizes the "new" evidence Granatstein offers to strengthen the "arguments in favour of evicting some 20,000 Japanese Canadians from the West Coast in 1942" as both "flimsy [and] bloated by innuendo" ("letter" 5). In another letter, Tom Kobayashi, "Chairman, Race relations and Human Rights Committee, National Association of Japanese Canadians," insists that "Granatstein has not provided any sound reasons to support his contention that 'the weight of historical evidence cautions against any hasty answers in the current redress debate'" (6). There are as well three letters from non-Japanese Canadians accusing Granatstein of racial prejudice and upholding the need for a government apology and compensation for Japanese Canadians. Despite this support, Ken Adachi is reasonably concerned over the long-term effect of Granatstein's article: "Unfortunately, Granatstein's rhetorical flourishes will linger in the minds of readers with little knowledge of the mainsprings of the federal government's evacuation policy and the subsequent issues of dispersal and deportation" ("letter" 5).

Kogawa responds to Granatstein and those who might share his view in her portrayal of "Dr. Clive Stinson, vice-president of St. John's, fellow of the Royal Military Academy and consultant to the Multicultural Directorate" (Itsuka 141). With biting irony, she exposes the hypocrisy in Granatstein's lofty notion of "the business of historians" (Granatstein 34). When Stinson objects to the publication of Morty's "capsule history" of wartime persecution in Bridge magazine, Naomi is bewildered: "It didn't occur to me that this special Japanese Canadian issue might meet with the disapproval of Dr. Stinson. As a fellow of the Royal Military Academy, he has a special interest in the history of the Second World War" (Itsuka 144). As Stinson continues his argument, it becomes apparent that it is not the subject, but

the source, that concerns him. Referring to the article as "rabble rousing" and criticizing it for representing "personal bias," Stinson reminds Morty: "Bridge magazine is not your personal newsletter" (Itsuka 144). When Cedric defends Morty's article, insisting that "it was time the Japanese Canadian story was better known," Stinson characterizes Morty's version of history as unreliable as well as subjective. "'Yes indeed,' Dr. Stinson said. 'But from what point of view, Cedric? What point of view? Surely not that of a young firebrand like Morton'" (Itsuka 144). A little later, though, Clive Stinson reveals that there is a reliable version of history; based on evidence as elusive as that gleaned by Jack Granatstein, he reaches a similar conclusion on both the events of the past and the matter of redress. Stinson makes his position abundantly clear when he advises Emily against demanding individual compensation:

> "Well, Emily, let's be realistic. I can tell you there's not enough money to go around." He lowers his gaze. "And you should understand this – your movement is headed for quite a backlash. If it was ever revealed – if what Nikki tells me is right – now I personally believe the majority of you were loyal Canadians, but there was a sizeable number – Nikki says it was a majority – that were loyal to the enemy. . . ." (Itsuka 222)

Naomi's reaction to this allegation is designed as much implicitly to rebuke Jack Granatstein as to enlighten the reading public.

> There is shocked silence as I glance at Aunt Emily and catch her eyes. A majority of Japanese Canadians loyal to the enemy? A majority?

> Aunt Emily doesn't say a word but I know what she's thinking. The lie is alive in the world. It was there in Nazi Germany. It's in South Africa. In Latin America. In every country in the world. This is why redress matters. Because there are many many people intent on defending the oppressor's rights no matter what the truth, and they are in places of power. Not one of us, not a single one of us, was ever found guilty of a disloyal act against Canada. But the accusation remains. (Itsuka 222)

Fortunately for the redress movement, such opposition as Granatstein's/Stinson's did not prevail. After a long and sometimes rancorous struggle, the government and the NAJC reached an agreement on the matter of redress and compensation, the details of which are provided in the final chapter of Itsuka. Contrary to the opinions of Rachelle Kanefsky and Mason Harris that the historical information at the end of Kogawa's novel is limited to the statement of "Acknowledgement" by the government, this final chapter is a close recreation of history. In her first chapter, entitled "The End," Maryko Omatsu describes the "hush-hush meeting" at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Montreal between "Gerry Weiner, the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship, . . . government staffers" and the NAJC negotiating team (20). While "the draft agreement was signed on August 27," concern "about a [possible] backlash [from] war veterans," prompted the government representatives to warn the NAJC "that a leak from either camp could endanger the whole settlement" (Omatsu 20). As Naomi explains, the tide changed swiftly for the redress movement in Itsuka as well, and because negotiators were sworn to secrecy, the news of a settlement came as a surprise to "the rank and file" (Itsuka 272):

> The strategy team, unlike most of us, had felt something would have to happen following the American resolution, but over the many years they'd grown wary of false optimism. They did not communicate a word of hope to the rank and file. There had been so much debility and loss of morale when repeatedly, after promises of negotiations, there'd be a collapse in talks. Then suddenly, three weeks ago, the team was called to a Montreal hotel, and after a weekend of non-stop negotiation, the unbelievable happened. An agreement was reached. . . .
>
> The team was sworn to secrecy. They were told that if the news leaked out in any way, and if the Legion, for instance, objected, the whole thing could be jeopardized. Even now, everything could be stopped. (Itsuka 272)

But in the fictional account, as in history, these fears did not materialize, and like Maryko Omatsu and Joy Kogawa, Itsuka's Anna Makino, Emily Kato and others received the telephone call telling them to be in Ottawa on September 22. The details provided in the closing pages of Itsuka accurately describe the events on and around Parliament Hill on September 22, 1988. Kogawa outlines the financial settlement and presents excerpts from the speeches of various members of parliament. The words of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Sergio Marchi, representing the opposition party, are direct quotes from that morning's proceedings in the House of Commons (Itsuka 274-5, House of Commons debate, September 22, 1988, 19499-19500). In a particularly moving passage in the closing pages of Itsuka, from her vantage point in the visitors' gallery, Naomi describes Ed Broadbent's address to parliament:

> . . . as I look down I can see Mr. Broadbent, who was married to a nisei and knows our story from the inside. I'm glad to be on this side, facing him. He appears agitated, his hands shuffling papers, his eyes glancing up to where we sit. And then he rises and speaks and fighting to control his voice. "They, as Canadian citizens, had done no wrong," Mr. Broadbent says. "They had done no wrong. . . ." (Itsuka 275)

In the historical story, Ed Broadbent then read a passage from Obasan, and concluded by declaring Kogawa's novel to be "a true story" (House of Commons debate, September 22, 1988, 19501). As the comparison with historical evidence illustrates, this final chapter of Itsuka, along with the fictional dramatization of events leading up to it, also constitutes a true story.

Yet, despite the wealth of historical information provided in Itsuka, exposure of the story of the redress movement has been curtailed by the disappointing critical reception. Another unfortunate outcome of the mediocre assessment of Itsuka is that Kogawa's revised novel, which is a vast improvement over the original text, has largely been ignored. The reviews cited earlier as well as Rachelle Kanefsky's 1996 essay consider solely the first edition of Itsuka.[7] Only Mason Harris's analysis of Itsuka considers the second version of Kogawa's novel. At the same time, in his critical overview of Itsuka he discusses only reviews of version one. While Harris responds to these reviews in his own critique, he does not refer to the differences between the two versions of Kogawa's novel. Because the revised Itsuka has not been discussed independently of, or compared to, the original text, the

reading public has not been formally apprised of a historically informative and entertaining work of literature.

Kogawa herself seemed to be aware of the problems in the first version of Itsuka. Even before Itsuka was published, Kogawa expressed concern that her involvement with the redress movement might affect her artistry. In response to Janice Williamson's question about "how [she balances] the writing and political activism," Kogawa conceded it was a difficult balance and admitted to a dissatisfaction with the novel in progress:

> I've become so political, and in some ways very one-dimensional, that I'm afraid of destroying the poetry, the richness, of realities other than the political realities. . . . I don't know what this novel's going to sound like, I may decide not to let it into the light of day because it'll seem so banal, the answers will seem like pills, not rich, real food. (151)

Yet, Itsuka did see "the light of day," and the reviews confirmed Kogawa's concerns. Admitting that she is affected deeply by criticism, Kogawa explained in the Koh interview how one particular review prompted her to take a second look at the novel:

> There was this one really devastating review in the Globe and Mail that said basically Itsuka was an unpublishable book and that it was published simply because I had had one successful book, and it said – this is the phrase I remember – "pages and pages of painfully embarrassing writing." That's what he said. It was really a devastating review, it just knocked me dead. Anyway, I tried to go back to rewrite the book and basically cut down as much as I could. The paperback edition is somewhat different from the hardcover. (30)

Kogawa's efforts in the original version to make it less political and more poetic included, unfortunately, the use of awkward and implausible anecdotes. These incongruous, sometimes irritating, fictional episodes, combined with tedious political didacticism make the first version of Itsuka neither convincing historiography nor entertaining fiction. In the second version of Itsuka, Kogawa has considerably reduced the rhetoric and eliminated the irrelevant anecdotal fiction, improving both the informational and aesthetic qualities of the text.

One of the most significant and effective changes between the first and second version of Itsuka is the elimination of the fictional character Mitzi, who figures prominently in the Slocan portion of the background narrative and is a recurring element in Naomi's adult consciousness. While life in Slocan, the ghost town in the interior of British Columbia, is an important component of Obasan, it does not include Mitzi. The character first appears in Kogawa's adaptation of Obasan to a children's book, Naomi's Road (1986). As Mason Harris explains:

> In Naomi's Road, Kogawa leaves out both Emily and Naomi as adult narrators and tells the story from the point of view of Naomi the child . . .
>
> Kogawa handles the problem of racism by adding a new character in Slocan, Mitzi, a girl of Naomi's age who first scorns Naomi and Stephen as enemy aliens but later becomes a good friend, frequently inviting Naomi to her house and giving her a doll to replace the lost one. Thus, Kogawa lets the reader know what it feels like to be the object of racial prejudice, yet

> emphasises friendship between children of different backgrounds. ("Kogawa" 188)

This strategy may have been effective in Naomi's Road, but the continuation into Itsuka gives the book an element of immature implausibility. The experience of racism, the anguish of separation from her parents, the loss of comfort and stability that characterize Naomi's life in Slocan are illustrated in Obasan primarily through reflection, imagery and allusion. In the first version of Itsuka, Kogawa attempts to describe these experiences through narrative vignettes involving Mitzi. Naomi first experiences racism when Mitzi calls her and her brother Stephen "dirty little yellow Japs" and again when some boys try to take away Stephen's Union Jack, demanding, "'Hand it over or else, ya gimpy Jap'" (Itsuka 1992 13). What follows is a brief and unconvincing scenario in which Mitzi's mother becomes a champion for racial tolerance. In an attempt to "to rescue" Stephen, she pleads:

> "Be a good boy. You shouldn't have our flag, you know."
>
> Stephen cried and said, "But I'm a Canadian. My dad gave it to me."
>
> Mitzi's mother said, "Oh?" She frowned at us strangely as if trying to understand. "But aren't you Japanese?"
>
> "No," Stephen said vehemently.
>
> After that, when Mitzi called us Japs, or chinky chinky Chinamen, her mother would bend over and take Mitzi's hands and say, "Mitzi, you look right at these children. Now say, 'Canadian. Canadian.'" (Itsuka 1992 14)

Once Mitzi is convinced of Naomi's Canadian heritage, the children inconceivably begin a friendship based on jarring mutuality. The two girls were the same age and "both missed

[their] fathers. [Mitzi's] was away at war. [Naomi's] was in a hospital. [Mitzi's] mother made tea biscuits like Obasan. Mitzi's house reminded [Naomi] of [her] house in Vancouver," compelling Naomi to "tell [Mitzi] about the dozens and dozens of dolls [she'd] once had" (Itsuka 1992, 14). The ensuing description of the two children pretending to be "with [their] fathers in the playroom or in the living room" of Naomi's former home is completely contrary to the image of the solitary Naomi of Obasan, whose longing to return to this home in Vancouver verged on desperation and whose denial of her father's death endured well into the Granton years.

In the revised edition of Itsuka, Naomi's experience of racism and the longing for her former home and life in Vancouver are portrayed in a manner more reminiscent of Obasan, where these childhood feelings are recaptured through memory and introspection. As was so often the case in Obasan, in the second edition of Itsuka, Aunt Emily is the catalyst for Naomi's recall:

> She reminds me from time to time that she carried me home from the hospital when I was a week old. Her memory is altogether better than mine, although I do remember the beautiful house we had in Vancouver, the playroom, my dozens of dolls, the living room with the tall gramophone whose wind-up handle I could barely reach, and the velvety curtains, the Indian rugs. And I remember, as a child in Slocan, how I ached, how I longed to go home. (Itsuka 12-13)

Also, the pain of racism emerges through poignant contemplation rather than implausible melodrama. As a lonely middle-aged woman, Naomi realizes that a life-time of seclusion

has not spared her from hatred and bigotry: "I have only a few friends in the world and even fewer enemies, although my childhood was filled with a kind of dread. I'd be skipping down the path through the woods in Slocan, and there, startling as a snake, was the enemy. I was the enemy. A creature to look at in swift sideways glances" (146).

Finally, if the portrait of Mitzi in Slocan is superfluous and unconvincing, the references to Mitzi long after Naomi's move to Toronto border on absurd. At one point, reflecting on her advancing age, Naomi wistfully compares her vacuous existence to Mitzi's accomplishments:

> One thing that I regret is that, unlike . . . Mitzi, I have no children or grandchildren growing out of their clothes, reminding us how long it is between Christmases. Mitzi's newest grandchild discovered the tin box where she's kept my childhood letters with my slabs of black hair and toenails. Lucky Mitzi, granted another journey into childhood. (1992 105)

The notion of the intensely private Naomi, who "can't be direct [and] whose heart beats erratically when she has something to say" (Itsuka 4), carrying on life-long communication with someone she separated from at the age of six, or of the painfully inhibited Naomi, "one of the good, the boring and the limbless" (Itsuka 28), sharing parts of her anatomy with another human being is quite simply ludicrous. In the revised text, Naomi bemoans the passage of time and reflects on her paltry legacy by comparing her indolence to Emily's untiring energy. Attributing her aunt's effectiveness to "her unshakeable conviction that she can do anything," Naomi observes that "more often than not she'll do it all, like the little red hen planting and harvesting the wheat, carrying the sack to the miller and baking the

bread" (99). By comparison, Naomi feels "like a piece of driftwood at the edge of her whirlpool" (99), and resignedly reflects: "I'd hardly lived and here I was ready for Time's compost heap" (99). By replacing the inane Mitzi vignettes in the second version of Itsuka with eloquent and metaphorically precise expressions of contemplation and reflection, Kogawa's revised novel begins to take on some of "the highly poetic and allusive style of Obasan" that Kathryn Barnwell claims "is nowhere to be found in Itsuka" (39).

Father Cedric is another character whose contribution to the first version of Itsuka is somewhat nebulous. While suggesting that "Cedric . . . seems to come to incarnate what is good about multicultural Canada," Linda Hutcheon also claims that as a "character . . . [he] is just too good to be true. He must carry a heavy burden in Naomi's story: teacher, and companion, love interest, moral guide, symbolic sheltering 'kindly tree'"(Hutcheon, "Someday" 179-80). In a similar vein, Janice Kulyk Keefer contends that "Naomi's involvement with Father Cedric seems . . . rather unconvincing" (35), and Stan Persky, even less impressed, suggests that "Father Cedric is hauled in to provide middle-aged romance and animistic metaphysics" (C20). The revised text provides a much more cogent portrayal of Cedric. A major improvement to the love story involves the elimination in version two of passages that seem lifted from a second-rate romance novel. In one instance, for example, lamenting that "there has to be more to life at my age" (1992 7), Naomi considers the following possibility: "I could be one of Father Cedric's – Father Cedric's what? One of the dilapidated cushions on his couch, perhaps. Or one of the crickets in his stairwell, chirping out the weather" (Itsuka 1992, 7). The idea that the forty-seven-year-old Naomi, who as a young woman was stricken with "nauseous dizziness" by the touch of a man, would overtly

contemplate an intimate relationship with her aunt's clergyman friend is inconceivable, and is happily dropped in version two. In both texts, as the mutual interest grows, Naomi wonders about the nature of her friendship with Cedric, admitting, "If I had the courage, I would ask outright, 'Cedric, who am I to you?'" (Itsuka 170, Itsuka 1992, 176). In the original text, however, Naomi exhibits an aura of anticipation and expectant intimacy that doesn't correspond to her innocence and simplicity: "I know I have fears. I trust and mistrust him. He has other women friends, no doubt" (Itsuka 1992, 176). The chapter presenting the beginning of their physical relationship also includes a single comment from Naomi in version one that seems utterly incongruous to her character. Surprised by Stephen's appearance on television accepting an award and disturbed by the implication of his failure to advise his family of this honour, Naomi telephones Cedric. In version one of Itsuka, after explaining her agitation, Naomi tells Cedric, "I am in need – Cedric" (1992 259). In version two, this uncharacteristic appeal is omitted. Cedric simply understands her need and comes to her. In the first edition of Itsuka, Kogawa seems compelled to articulate Naomi's blossoming intrigue through expressions of adolescent-like longing and desperation. In version two, the progress of Naomi's relationship with Cedric seems more natural as Naomi's introspective observations of Father Cedric reveal an irresistible sensitivity, wisdom, compassion and playfulness that lend their eventual union an authenticity not evident in the original novel.

The changes that most render Cedric's role in the second edition of Itsuka more tenable pertain to the circumstances of his ancestry and his childhood experiences. In both versions, Cedric's father is a priest, but there the comparison ends. In version one, Cedric's

father, an Anglican priest, is a mixture of "English, French and Eastern European" descent (1992 114). "His mother was an Ontario Francophone," and as the daughter of a Metis mother, part Ojibway. Cedric remembers his mother's discomfort at his father's insistence that she adopt European customs: "She hated English etiquette – drinking tea and making small talk" (1992 114). Given the obvious allusion to racial oppression, as might be expected, Cedric's mother dies "of pneumonia and tuberculosis" (1992 114). The effectiveness of Kogawa's portrayal in version one of Canada's multicultural composition and the effects of forced assimilation of the natives by European conquerors is weakened by overstatement and predictability. The presentation of multiculturalism and racial oppression in version two is significantly more poignant and sententious. Cedric's father, a parish priest, falls in love with "a young novitiate" whom Cedric believes was "the great grand-daughter of a Metis woman" (1993 106-7). In the revised text, Cedric never knew his father. Before Cedric's birth, he "was sent far away to work among the Haida of Northern B.C." (108). Although Cedric's father was forbidden "to communicate with his young lover," Cedric knows that "occasionally he did" because Cedric still possesses a "Japanese-Haida rattle . . . the only gift [his father] ever sent" to his mother (108). The story of the Haida rattle adds both a symbolic and an artistic dimension to the revised novel that are lacking in version one. Cedric's father obtained the rattle from one of the Japanese who had been sheltered by the Haida after fleeing to "the Queen Charlotte Islands . . . at the time of the Japanese-Canadian round-up in 1942" (108). Close bonds had developed between "the isseis and their protectors" and soon there were "moon-faced children . . . with Japanese eyes" (108). According to Cedric's mother, one issei father had carved this rattle for his child

before returning to Japan. Cedric explained that for his mother, the "rattle told her sad stories about children who lose their fathers" (108). Naomi's reaction to the story of the Haida rattle gives universal significance to the theme of racial oppression in the revised Itsuka: "I think about the Japanese Haida child and about the child Cedric, about his parents and my parents and about families that are destroyed by various decrees" (109). And, with the realization of their shared experience – the son without a father compared to the daughter abandoned by her mother – it seems more plausible that Naomi would "tell him, haltingly, about the high hillside grave [in Japan]," that she would admit, "I can't think when I have spoken so freely" (109). In the original novel, it is Emily who gives Cedric the rattle, telling him the story of the issei who lived with the Haida during the war. As Naomi's explanation demonstrates, the rattle has none of the emotive and symbolic power it assumes in Kogawa's revised novel: "Father Cedric doesn't know anything more about the rattle except that it was given by some missionary to Aunt Emily. Aunt Emily in turn gave it to Father Cedric as gift for this mother when she was ill" (1992 115).

Kogawa's narrative prowess re-emerges in this way throughout her revised text. The story lines are more intriguing, the symbolism more precise, the messages more poignant and the writing exceedingly more eloquent. Occasionally even the most subtle change has an enormous effect, as when Naomi's realizes that she is unlikely ever to return to her home in Vancouver. In both versions, she explains that she had "begged Obasan and Uncle to take [them] back" (Itsuka 1992 14, 1993 13). In version one, the outcome of her plea is: "'Itsuka,' they'd say. Someday. But in 1945, when I was nine years old, we were sent to the beet fields of Alberta and we were even farther from home than before" (1992 14). While

the result is the same in version two, the language is far more expressive, with the result that Naomi'sense of permanent dissociation from the comfort and the security of the past is more profound. As Naomi recalls: "But in 1945, instead of going home, we found ourselves in Granton, Alberta, blowing in the dust of the sugar-beet fields" (13).

Virtually each page of Kogawa's revised text consists of editorial changes where economy and precision of expression create more vivid images, more touching sentiment and present ideas that are more precise. The changes that most benefit the historical narrative, however, involve a softening of the political rhetoric. One of the most contentious issues within the redress movement concerned the manner of compensation When she learns that Nikki Kagami has requested a lump sum payment of "twenty-five million dollars" from the government, Naomi is bewildered that this "huge sum of money" is deemed inadequate by Nikki's opponents, until Emily reminds her of the magnitude of the injustice it is intended to redress. The explanation in the first edition is overstated and unnecessarily didactic.

> "Sure it's a lot for one person," Aunt Emily said, "but how many of us do you think there are? And how much do you think we lost? We had factories – bathhouses – what about the churches? What about the hospital? The farms? The newspaper? How many of us, like your uncle, never built another boat or fished again? You know, Nomi, we all believed we'd be going home, back to our communities. We left everything in 'safekeeping.' All these years, Government has been covering up? Now – tell me – are we going to collaborate in another cover-up?" (1992 108).

The passage in the second edition is just as informative but the expression more concise and less tedious. Furthermore, the writing is simply much better:

> "Sure it's a lot for one person," Aunt Emily said, "but, my stars, how many of us do you think there are? We were a people once and we had a life. Everything was entrusted, everything was stolen, and everything's been covered up ever since. Now – tell me – are we going to collaborate in another cover-up? (1993 101)

One of the best examples of improved economy and precision of expression in version two occurs when Stephen brands Japanese Canadians working for the redress movement as exclusive and self-interested. Calling their plight trivial compared to other examples of global injustice and suggesting that their energy would be better spent fighting real oppression, he refers to Emily and her colleagues in the redress movement as "a bunch of myopic crybabies" (1992 190, 1993 186). In version one, Emily delivers a lengthy and indeterminate response that falls short of depicting the far-reaching significance of the redress movement. As Naomi explains:

> Aunt Emily is taken aback for a moment, but she will not be dismissed by her nephew. "Myopic? What an outsider's point of view that is, Stephen. Listen to me. We're creating vision. Long distance vision. And what's more, redress won't deplete the economic pie. Why? Because we're creating hope and energy and power. I'm telling you, Stephen, if we get justice, some of us – maybe one out of ten – will do something for others. Redress isn't just about

> what happened forty years ago. It's about today. And it's about our prime minister, who still, by the way, doesn't know we're Canadians. (1992 190)

In version two, brevity and clarity make Emily's argument far more effective: "Aunt Emily is taken aback for a moment, but she will not be dismissed by her nephew 'What an outsider's point of view that is. I'm telling you, Stephen, whether it's in suburbia or Ethiopia, when we fight oppression, we're fighting with the oppressed'" (1993 186).

Kogawa reduces rhetoric in version two, as well, by replacing the didactic dialogue with contemplation, making the political story both more comprehensible and palatable to the reader. In the revised text, Naomi's political consciousness emerges through personal reflection rather than through persuasion by the many political crusaders that surround her. During her first planning meeting, being held in Anna Makino's home, Naomi confronts the social stigma that has stalked Japanese Canadians since the war years. Ollie Oliver, a neighbour and a war vet, arrives at the door. According to Anna, Ollie has "been objecting to 'all the Japs coming and going in the neighbourhood,' and drops by, especially when he's drunk, to complain" (147). Ollie strongly opposes the redress movement, pointing out that "forty thousand Canadian kids died and did'na get puking cent" and referring to the atrocities committed by the Japanese during the war (148). Ollie's diatribe and the reaction of the participants at the meeting are effectively rendered in version one, but the revised text includes a passage more characteristic of "Kogawa's gift as a writer [of] the intimate, the close-up view" (di Michele G17), an element lacking in the original Itsuka. In version two, Ollie's appearance evokes an excruciating recollection from Naomi's childhood:

> Here, out of nowhere, out of the clear blue autumn air, comes this horrible stab of memories. It's been so long since I felt the sudden chill of that slithering shadow under foot. I can remember, as a child in Slocan, hearing about the war and the sickening atrocities – the beheadings, the barbaric slave camps – the totally unthinkable evil called the Yellow peril. How I prayed that we would win the war. I prayed, walking home from the Orange Hall at night where the war movies raged. I prayed for Mother and I prayed for our soldiers as Ollie's daughter must also have done. And here's Ollie to this day, in his own liquid way, seeking surcease. (148)

Kogawa makes a similar transformation in the chapter describing the meeting that results in the formation of a national council to represent Japanese Canadians in discussions with government officials. In the first version of Itsuka, this chapter is almost exclusively an account of the proceedings of this meeting, provoking one critic's complaint that "through too much of the novel the reader is lost at the back of the room in meetings where characters are not people but a show of hands" (di Michele G17). In her revised novel, Kogawa maintains the key elements of this political forum, but she replaces much of the commentary from delegates and the description of political posturing with Naomi's personal reflections. In both editions, reminding the assembly that the "sympathetic" Liberal government may not be in power much longer, Nikki Kagami warns the participants of the implications of pursuing the formation of a national council: "We've waited forty years. If you want more time, more consultations, questionnaires – I'm telling you, you'll just open up a can of worms and everything will be dropped" (171, 164). The first edition of Itsuka provides an

account of the ensuing political debate. The revised text includes Naomi's personal reaction as she sits silently watching and listening to the drama unfolding before her. Her thoughts, both amusing and symbolic, effectively deflate Nikki's argument by turning the metaphor for chaos into one of productivity: "What can of worms, I wonder, is there to worry about? I don't in fact mind those pink squiggly, least threatening of all creatures. If we did drop some here and there, they would do the soil some good" (164). A little later, with another consideration that doesn't appear in the first edition of the novel, Naomi extends Nikki's analogy to expose the greatest threat to redress movement. When Nikki argues that to forestall current negotiations might "rouse the rabble and stir up the past, . . . reopen old wounds," Naomi considers: "She must be correct on that point at least. Who in their right minds would want to waken the Ollie Olivers of Canada? Now, that would open a can – not of worms, but of vipers, rattlesnakes, deep bitterness" (165). In the second edition of Itsuka, Naomi's impassioned ruminations on the proceedings and the outcome of the meeting transform a chapter described as "a clunky succession of public meetings, demonstrations and office-bound strategy sessions" (Persky C20), into a vivid and moving personal interpretation of a political milestone.

Kogawa achieves a comparable transformation in the other chapter that recreates a crucial moment for the redress movement: the "emergency long-distance teleconference of the National Council" that results in the dissolution of Nikki Kagami's committee (193). In what is truly a figurative metamorphosis, Kogawa turns a lackluster recitation of the debate that leads to Nikki's demise in version one into a dazzling series of metaphoric images that inject vivid imagery and a heightened sense of emotion befitting what was to be a critical

turning point for the redress movement. From an unobtrusive position, curled up in a chair, Naomi compares the dynamics of the teleconference to a fishing expedition:

> We are the fishes in the deep blue sea and we are the fisherfolk standing on the shore. We have been hoping against hope that Nikki would swim with us. Now we see she is not swimming at all. She has been hooked by a shining lure and is being pulled as a lure herself. Uncertain of nets and snares, we are peering into the waters and the fish darting here, there, seeking safety, seeking each other. (193)

She likens Emily and Dan, "Toronto's council members," to fishermen "standing by, their lines ready to cast," while "the rest of [them wait] . . . anxiously on shore," wishing them a safe and successful journey. A memory from Naomi's early childhood extends the metaphor, linking the present to the past in this lengthy and elusive quest for justice:

> I'm thinking of the schools of little grey fish moving like shadows in a stream in Slocan. As a child, I stood on the bridge and watched them, and here we are now, forty years later at *Bridge*, watching the shadowy council struggling through the murky waters of Canadian politics. (193-4)

By replacing the didactic preaching of the original novel with exquisitely figurative prose, Kogawa creates a more compelling, engaging and comprehensible portrayal of the political intrigue leading up to the decision that "Nikki's team . . . be dissolved," allowing the struggle for redress to become a united national venture (1992 204, 1993198).

Yet, in the only lengthy study of the second edition of Itsuka, Mason Harris makes no mention of the revisions to Kogawa's original text, not even the most blatant changes – the

elimination of the Mitzi character and the changes to Cedric's circumstances. Despite his failure to acknowledge the differences between the two versions of Itsuka, Harris's critique attests nonetheless to the superiority of Kogawa's revised text both as literature and as effective historiography. Harris is impressed with the literary value of Itsuka, declaring it to be a novel of "impressive vision" with "the verbal richness of Obasan" ("Kogawa" 204, 192). At the same time he acknowledges its important historiographic achievement when he claims that "Kogawa's second novel, Itsuka, tells us . . . about her involvement with the Japanese Canadian redress movement . . . Together, [with Obasan] these novels enable us to experience crucial aspects of the inner life of the Japanese Canadian community between the early 1940s and the late 1980s" ("Kogawa" 139). The prevalence of passages he cites in his discussion that have been altered from, or that do not appear in version one verifies that his favourable assessment relates specifically to the second edition of the novel.

Harris seems at times nonplussed by the negative criticism of Itsuka, attributing it to the untenable inclination of critics to compare it to Obasan:

> Itsuka grows out of unresolved problems in [Obasan], and because of the new subjects that it undertakes, could not employ the methods used in its predecessor. . . . In the first novel, Naomi reviews her past in an attempt to repossess it in memory. . . . Itsuka seeks to break this pull of the past so that time can flow forward, eventually carrying the narrator into political commitment in an urban present. (Harris, "Kogawa" 193)

Unlike most critics who fault Itsuka for "its relative inferiority to Obasan," Harris, on more than one occasion, compares it favourably to its predecessor (Harris, "Kogawa" 204). In one

such comparison he maintains that a passage depicting "the sensibility . . . [of] Uncle and Obasan . . . seems to combine a Buddhist sensitivity to nature with the 'attentive silence' that [is] . . . a central value in Obasan" (Harris "Kogawa" 96). The passage Harris cites, however, is changed considerably from version one to two. Neither the circumstances nor the prose in version one warrants Harris's complimentary comparison with Obasan. In both texts, Naomi likens her uncle and aunt to the "creatures [of] the underground, the moles and earthworms" who can hear "the gossiping of the grasses and the electronic night music of the bluebell roots" (1992 57, 1993 53). The ensuing description of her uncle and obasan's modest vigilance and generous compassion in version one, however, is surely an example of what one critic characterizes as "too much overstraining for effect" (Hancock 50):

> My non-combative Uncle and Obasan, whose hands never once strike out in anger, direct me to small tunnellings. What matters, they teach, is the toil of the fallen leaf making the ground fertile. A humble labour. What matters is the unseen bearer of the light – a child, a kitten, an old woman. What matters is access to the light from the underground.
>
> Often it's a troubled light.
>
> When I'm in Granton on weekends, Obasan sends me over to the scraggly little house on Main Street where Crazy Alex [the recidivist alcoholic] lives with his ageing mother. I usually take a loaf of Uncle's almighty home-made bread, which swings like an anchor in the green woven handbag. Uncle is getting known for his "stone bread." His basic brick is full of sunflower seeds. (1992 58)

In version two, the prose comes closer to "the extraordinary structural economy" of Obasan (Harris, "Kogawa" 193). By removing Naomi's participation and with fewer, but better-chosen words, Kogawa more precisely imparts the notion of the humble but sincere humanitarianism that characterizes her uncle and obasan:

> My non-combative Uncle and Obasan, whose hands never once strike out in anger, are engaged in small tunnellings. A humble labour.
>
> Obasan rarely leaves her shack, but when she does, she goes over to the Alexes' scraggly little house on Main street, a loaf of Uncle's almighty "stone bread" swinging like an anchor in her green woven handbag. (53)

The harshest criticism of the first edition of Itsuka is reserved for the second part of the narrative when it leaves the retrospective of Naomi's childhood years and "moves into the public and political realms" (Barnwell 39), where, as one critic claims, "Kogawa indulges in so many one-line sermons as to give the constant impression that this is a tract rather than a novel" (Hancock 51). Harris, however, never faults the text for its "historical-didactic strain," and he specifically defends an element of the novel that proved particularly discomfiting to some critics, the tedious and detailed account of political meetings: "I would argue in reply that political meetings are unfamiliar territory for fiction, and in a novel as low-key as this one their significance to the narrator might easily be overlooked" (Harris 191). In contrast to the opinion that the novel fails when it enters "the arena of the documentary" (di Michele), Harris applauds Kogawa's intent and success in relating the political story of the redress movement:

> In the second half of Itsuka, the scenes of organizational infighting fitfully illuminated by a sense of higher purpose effectively depict the atmosphere of the "political work" that sustained the redress movement through dark times. This kind of experience and the good work that can be done through it are certainly worth recording, though an unusual subject for fiction. (Harris 199)

In his discussion of the political story, Harris again refers to circumstances and cites passages that have been revised or added to version two. Unaware of the less pithy portrayal of Cedric in version one, for example, Harris firmly disputes the criticism pertaining to the characterization and the role of Cedric in the novel when he declares, "Linking the political and spiritual through a clerical lover might seem to make things a bit too easy for Naomi, but this expedient at the level of plot does not affect the validity of her experience in each realm, or of the novel's vision as a whole" (Harris 199). Harris unquestioningly accepts Cedric's political influence over Naomi:

> Naomi's transition to political involvement takes place in the fall of 1983, beginning with a talk with Cedric (chapter 17) and culminating a month later when Naomi becomes convinced of the significance of the redress movement during a struggle for leadership at a meeting of representatives of the national organization (chapter 28). (Harris, "Kogawa" 199)

Harris contends further that the talk with Cedric in chapter 17 "is the beginning of an intimate relationship in which Cedric replaces Emily as the dominant influence on Naomi" (Harris, "Kogawa' 200). Notably, Harris is referring to the conversation in which

Cedric reveals his ancestry and his childhood experiences. Harris reaches this conclusion because the changes to Cedric's circumstances in version two, as discussed previously, render his role in Naomi's personal and political development exceedingly more tenable.

Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests that the political story in Itsuka would have been both more convincing and more interesting if Kogawa had put less emphasis on Cedric and more emphasis on "the failure of Naomi's relationship with her brother Stephen, and the crucial question raised by his abdication from any involvement with family or community" (35). In Mason Harris's estimation, regardless of Cedric's relevance, Stephen's character, on its own, plays a significant role in Naomi's personal and political evolution. In the first place, Harris contends that Stephen symbolizes those Japanese Canadians who put personal gain ahead of community interests and who view their Japanese heritage as an inherent liability. Referring to the meeting when Emily fails "to enlist [Stephen's] support" for the redress movement, Harris claims:

> [Naomi] places him among those Japanese Canadians who . . . have sold out to "Mammon" (173, 178). Naomi contrasts his posh hotel to her favourite Chinese restaurant and the effective Pidgin English of its waiter. "It's absurd that Stephen associates the broken English of the issei with lack of intelligence." (Harris "Kogawa" 201 quoting Itsuka 1993 173, 178 and 180).

Harris could have reached this assessment only through a reading of the second version of Itsuka. Firstly, the metonymy of "Mammon" does not appear in Kogawa's first text. Furthermore, the comment about "Pidgin English" is not attributed to Stephen in the first edition. There, the Pidgin English of the waiter in the Chinatown restaurant causes Naomi to

consider: "Pidgin English is so efficient. . . . I've never understood why some people associate it with a lack of intelligence" (1992 184). With this slight but portentous change in wording in version two, Kogawa turns an interesting thought into a crucial detail depicting Stephen's self-interest and his contempt for his cultural heritage. Harris credits Stephen, as well, with accelerating Naomi's political commitment. He claims that following Stephen's final rejection of "the redress movement," when any "possibility of reconciliation . . . seems permanently ended, . . . Naomi moves rapidly toward involvement with an enlarging public" (Harris, "Kogawa" 201-2). Harris's perception arises from the more precise articulation of the alienation between Stephen and Naomi in the revised Itsuka. During the infamous dinner meeting, Stephen, in a rare display of levity, remarks to Anna Makino: "You can take the girl out of Granton, . . . but you can't take Granton out of the girl" (1992 186, 1993 182). In version two, this comment prompts a more serious exchange between Stephen and Naomi which in turns evokes an observation from Naomi that together portray a sense of Stephen's profound and enduring compulsion to disassociate himself from family and community that does not occur in the first edition:

> "And you?" I ask. "Is Granton still in your veins too?"
>
> "Not a drop." He flicks a non-existent piece of lint off his jacket.
>
> When Stephen left Granton, he left. But his leaving goes with him. He's in perpetual flight. His eyes, even now, are wandering around the room. (182-3)

As well, in version two there is a more distinct sense of Naomi's estrangement from her brother. In version one, as Stephen's position on redress becomes obvious, Naomi considers: "Has Stephen ever thought of anyone but himself. I wonder if he has even a

twinge of feeling about my screaming two years of telephone calls" (1992 187). In version two, rather than reflecting on Stephen's motives, Naomi recalls instead her own reaction to him earlier in the day, admitting to a void of any feeling for her brother: "For just an instant when I first caught glimpse of him waiting in the lobby, I felt a flicker of something. I hardly know what that feeling was. But the sensation disappeared as swiftly as it arrived" (183). It is Stephen's final rejection of the Japanese-Canadian community's political pursuit, however, that cements the rift between brother and sister. As the failed dinner meeting comes to an end, Stephen's parting words are "Well you three musketeers can take care of the community. I'll go on being the minstrel" (191). Naomi's displeasure is effectively presented in version one, but the narrative expression is inept, the metaphor being inappropriate and the conclusion imprecise: "He's made his position totally clear. He won't get involved. He'll fiddle while Rome burns. He's as bad as Nikki. Maybe worse" (1992 191). Naomi's reaction in Kogawa's revised text more definitely illustrates her contempt for, and estrangement from, her brother:

> He's made his position totally clear. He won't be involved. Somewhere in all these truths lies a failure of love.
>
> "I'm a minstrel," he says and shrugs. "I'll put the story to music if you want. Don't expect anything else from me."
>
> He may well write a ballad, but the tune will be wrong. Stories without love are words without song. (1993 186)

The acknowledgement that she and her brother belong to different stories and sing different songs makes it seem more plausible that Naomi can now move beyond a preoccupation with

"the loss of connection with the family past," to become involved in "a larger sense of community than family history can provide" (Harris 198-9).

Finally, in addition to lacking this indication that Naomi can begin "looking forward rather than backward in time," version one does not include the passage that Harris cites as her crucial moment of epiphany, when she realizes a sense of community attachment and "becomes convinced of the significance of the redress movement" (Harris, "Kogawa" 199). As Harris explains:

> When an old friend (Uncle Dan) proposes the formation of a new "national council" to represent "all Japanese," she discovers a meaning in the redress movement that she can share with others: "Ah. All Japanese Canadians. The dream of touching every single one of us wherever we were flung. . . . The Sparks would leap and glow, leap and ignite the people, 'my people,' across the country. This dream I begin to see is one I could share with . . . everyone" (166). At this moment, Naomi sees that the real object of the movement is to re-create a sense of community and self-esteem for all Japanese Canadians through involvement in the movement itself. She feels for the first time that the Japanese Canadians scattered across the country are "my people." (Itsuka 166 as quoted in Harris "Kogawa" 200)

This chapter in the first edition of Itsuka is limited to a description of the proceedings of the teleconference. It does not include the personal reflections leading to Naomi's realization that she could share this national dream. In fact, in version one, despite the lengthy political sermonizing, it is not apparent that Naomi's political conversion has taken place at all. It is

unlikely, therefore, that Harris would have reached a similar conclusion on the portrayal of Naomi's political and personal transformation had he considered version one of Itsuka.

Harris's praise for Itsuka is not unqualified but any criticism he expresses reflects his insistence upon assessing the novel primarily as a work of fiction and overlooking the fact that certain narrative strategies on Kogawa's part specifically serve her historiographic intent. Often his dissatisfaction with the fictional achievement is inadvertently accompanied by a commendation for the value of the historical information, confirming the success of the historiographic presentation. Although admitting disappointment with "the ecstatic mood of [the final chapter]," which he perceives as an attempt at "the closure . . . provided by a traditional happy ending," Harris still maintains that this chapter "combines a mystical sense of unity with the success of the redress movement" ("Kogawa" 203-4). As I have illustrated earlier, this chapter entails a close recreation of the final, extraordinary days of the redress movement, and Harris's choice of words, "a mystical sense of unity," seems an apt depiction of the quiet disbelief and indescribable joy that Kogawa and her colleagues must have experienced that "miraculous" day in September 1988 (Fulton B1).[8] And while he concludes that Itsuka "does not approach the complexity of Obasan and sometimes seems to impose a strain on the novelist's imagination," and that "Kogawa's need to complete the history of the redress movement caused a swing toward . . . bare narrative," he still declares it a "novel of considerable interest in both content and motive" ("Kogawa" 205). I daresay if Harris had considered the first edition of Itsuka, his assessment, like Kogawa's original novel, would have been "somewhat different," both as fiction and as history ("Heart of the Matter" 30). Mason Harris's assessment illustrates that the revisions Kogawa made to her original novel,

make the second version of Itsuka a more engaging, informative, convincing, and intensely more moving story of a personal and public history.

In an interview conducted while she was writing Itsuka, Kogawa expressed concern over the impact her involvement with the redress movement might have on the novel. "What worries me is the smaller-mindedness of conscious political activity which informs . . . me now. It worries me because I think my work will be far less as art" ("In Writing" 155). At the same time, Kogawa admitted that she was "unable to stop" writing ("In Writing" 155). While it might have been more expedient for Kogawa to write about her experience in an autobiography, a memoir or as a documentary account, she chose what she knows best, the world of literary figuration. When the resultant novel disappointed not only the critics but Kogawa herself, she significantly edited her text, refining the prose, softening the tendentious rhetoric, reducing the political didactics and increasing the imagery and tropological explication, creating a text that is superior to the first as both literature and historiography. In effect, the second edition of Itsuka comes closer to achieving what one critic describes as "the highest function of art: to represent by means of affective images what critical thought attempts to convey through a recounting of the facts" (Thomas 105). At the same time, Kogawa's revised novel achieves the "fundamental purpose of the genre [of history], which is not . . . to tell stories and legends without significance or purpose but to communicate a just understanding of the past in relation to the present and the future" (Levin 5-6). Or to return to the hypothesis on which this comparative study of the two versions of Itsuka is based, because the improvement, artistically and informationally, of the second edition of Itsuka over the first "is carried out by discursive techniques that are more

tropological than logical in nature," it stands as a powerful illustration that "figurative language can . . . refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do" (White, Figural Realism 8, vi).

Endnotes

[1] A repeat of the note in the previous chapter, outlining the terms of reference and methods used by the Bird Commission seems warranted. Following is the description provided in Justice In Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement:

> . . . the Bird Commission's terms of reference . . . were deliberately restricted to economic losses from the sale of properties in the care of the Custodian of Enemy Property. The Commission could not raise the issue of compensation for civil rights violation, . . . or other damages. . . [Losses were] calculated from the difference between the sale price set by the Custodian of Enemy Property, and the fair market value of the property at the time of sale. The losses were even more unfairly diminished because many properties deteriorated once vacated, and prices were depressed during the war. To make matters worse for the claimants, the onus was on the property owner to prove the "market" value. Even within these constricted parameters, the Commission eventually decided that proceeding with individual cases was too time-consuming, and ended up treating losses in broad general categories. (Kodato 58-9)

[2] Unless specifically cited as the first edition of Itsuka, published in 1992, all references to Itsuka in this discussion pertain to the 1993 text, which I strongly maintain is superior to the original novel. In fact, all citations from the 1992 edition are made in reference to my comparative analysis of the two versions of the novel.

[3] As I argue in the previous chapters, other critics have erroneously included Kogawa's work, as well as Dorothy Livesay's theory of the long poem, within the category of historiographic metafiction. It is noteworthy that Linda Hutcheon has not discussed these works in the presentation of her theory. That fact and her favourable assessment of Itsuka as a text that effectively imparts historical information suggests that she does not hold the opinion that all recent literature dealing with history fits the definition of historiographic metafiction, that some historical literature can indeed be concerned primarily with, and effective in reclaiming "the past" (Hutcheon "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction" 236).

[4] "Muriel Kitagawa died on March 27, 1974, a week before her [62nd] birthday on April 3" (Miki 55). Although they never met, Muriel was a powerful influence on Joy Kogawa. As discussed in an earlier chapter, Kitagawa's writings served as a catalyst in evoking Kogawa's childhood memories of the evacuation and dispersal as presented in Obasan. As Kogawa explains in a 1986 article, Kitagawa's loyalty and perseverance "in spite of all the treachery . . . [and] the bleatings of the critics in the community" stood as an inspiration to Kogawa as she faced opposition from members of the Japanese Canadian community during the battle for redress (Kogawa, "Dilemma" 32).

[5] That Kogawa's presentation of Nikki Kagami's exploits are intended to be a figurative representation of history is suggested in the inverted alliteration in the names of the president of history's NAJC, Art *Miki*, and his literary counterpart, the leader of Itsuka's NJCL, *Mickey* Hayashi.

[6] In addition to representing history through characterization and dramatization, Kogawa often replicates official documentation related to the redress movement in her novel. A

prime example occurs in Chapter 39, which includes a chronological summary of activities that had taken place between November 1984 and July 1987. Morty Mukai had published this list when negotiations were suspended by the minister of multiculturalism following the NJCL's rejection of the offer of "an apology and a $12 million community fund" (Itsuka 232). This list, described as "the NJCL's official litany" (Itsuka 232), corresponds closely to a list produced by the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) in 1988 in a booklet entitled Justice In Our Time. Frustrated by the failure of negotiations to achieve redress, the NAJC published this "educational pamphlet" in an attempt to increase public support for their movement. Though Kogawa's fictional list is abridged, the information corresponds accurately to the facts provided in the NAJC's document, including events, dates and financial data (Itsuka 232, Kadota 10, 11).

In 1991, the National Association of Japanese Canadians produced another publication also titled Justice in Our Time, but subtitled: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement. This publication tells the story of the redress movement through to its successful achievement of a settlement in September 1988. As explained in the Acknowledgements of this later publication, there is little similarity between the two texts, but the NAJC decided to retain the title:

> Although this Justice in Our Time bears few traces of the earlier pamphlet, the title itself has been retained. Thirty months after the historic settlement, the dream of "justice in our time" has remained the most compelling force behind the long years of struggle. Today, this phrase captures the significance of

> Japanese Canadian redress as a celebration and affirmation of human rights. (Miki and Kobayashi 157)

[7] I determined this fact by comparing the citations in each review and in Kanefsky's essay with both versions of the novel. All page references and quotes correspond to the first version.

[8] In an article in the Vancouver Sun, September 24, 1988, Kaye Fulton discusses the impact of the announcement of the redress settlement on Joy Kogawa personally and on her novel in progress. Claiming that only five days earlier, Joy Kogawa had envisioned and was writing a very different ending to her second novel Itsuka, Fulton explains:

> It was past noon on Wednesday as the Japanese-Canadian author and poet wrote of the hopelessness and exhaustion that engulfed her heroine, Aunt Emily.
>
> By chapter 33, the inescapable ending began to swallow the book's creator as well.
>
> It was futile to dream of an agreement to compensate Japanese-Canadians falsely branded as enemies during the war, Kogawa wrote. It was futile, perhaps, to dream at all.
>
> In the midst of that passage, the telephone rang.
>
> A friend told Kogawa to be in the visitors gallery in the House of Commons by 11 the next morning. The impossible had happened.

> Thursday morning, as NDP leader Ed Broadbent fought to contain his emotions in the House as he read from Obasan, . . . the dreamer listening in the gallery above quietly wept. (Fulton B1)

Conclusion

History is . . . the news . . . about the past. Even the worst . . . of it.

It keeps us on our toes in the present.

(Findley, Spadework 63)

Joy Kogawa claims that there is a sentence from each of her books that "matters more than any . . . other" because it embodies "insights that [she] experienced and continue[s] to live by" ("A Matter of Trust" 29). The line from Obasan is this: "Perhaps it is because I am no longer a child I can know your presence though you are not here" (267). This passage, which occurs after Naomi learns the truth about her mother's disappearance and her horrific fate at Nagasaki, signals Naomi's commitment to recuperate and preserve her past. Similarly, for Kogawa, her novel, Obasan, represented in a "personal . . . [and a] public sense" the fulfillment of her responsibility as a Japanese Canadian ("A Matter of Trust" 31). Kogawa said that in her early years of publishing she had not written out of her Japaneseness. Though she claims that her poetry stemmed from "raw emotion," she conceded that she did not "associate [her] suffering as the suffering of a person who was a minority human being" ("Heart of the Matter" 21). And she once admitted that she considered her "silence about Japanese-Canadians in World War II [as] tantamount to a betrayal of [her] people" ("A Matter of Trust" 31). This silence ended when she encountered

the papers of Muriel Kitagawa in the late 1970s. Inspired by Kitagawa, whom she once described as a "dear unrelenting ghost," Joy Kogawa not only recovered her own past in Obasan but she also created a lasting legacy for, and a tribute to all "those passionate Niseis and Isseis . . . warriors who have died" ("Dilemma" 32). Asked what is the most important line from Itsuka, Kogawa replied: "When we follow the light, we extinguish the night, and we do this through politics as much as through art" (248). In Itsuka, this is the moment that Naomi understands that Emily's writing had to be sacrificed to her politics. For Kogawa, it represented her coming full circle as both an artist and a political activist. Having artistically recovered her own past and a people's history in Obasan, Kogawa was thrust into the forefront of the long and painful struggle for redress. The strain and demands of politics stilted Kogawa's artistry, as it did Emily's, but Joy Kogawa realized that political action was as important, publicly and personally, as was her writing:

> . . . if you are a minority writer and you're in Canada, you either have to get politically involved, because it's so overwhelming, or you have to write. . . . I have been trying and trying and trying to write this novel, but the phone rings all the time and I can't say no. If you love people and they're hurting, you just don't. You wake up at night thinking how crazy it is that they're hurting so much, and you have to talk to this person, talk to that person, rally here and rally there. You get involved and don't have time to write. So I find that I can't write. If I want to be a writer, I'm going to have to get out in some way. . . . There are thousands of realities, but the political reality is so overwhelming in the world, I get drawn to it now. My involvement in this

> small political reality has opened an avenue to see the other analogous realities; it's like looking into a prism. It's been valuable to me as a writer to simply get involved and get my hands dirty and discover that I had to do that in order to be clean, or cleaner. ("In Writing" 151)

Kogawa continued her "involvement in . . . political reality" until the Japanese Canadian community, with her help, emerged from the darkness of forty years of injustice. The political battle won, Kogawa appropriately returned to her art to memorialize this remarkable political journey.

Dorothy Livesay had been a long-time political activist. It was a "new sort of poetry" that she encountered in Greenwich Village in the 1930s – "documentary [poetry] dominated by themes of struggle: class against class, race against race. . . . [p]oetry that was crying out" – which she used to express her politics. Outraged by the Canadian government's treatment of Japanese Canadians in the late 1940s, she naturally turned to this art form to honour the courage and fortitude of this persecuted community and to attempt to raise "the wrath of the [Canadian] people" (Journey with My Selves 173).

As enduring as the political purpose and accomplishments of Kogawa's novels and Livesay's long poem is their achievement as reliable and comprehensible historical records. Yet, the historically informational value of these works has largely been overlooked by critics who approach them primarily as fiction that is representative of, rather then demonstrative of, historical events, or who, by subsuming these works under the postmodern category of historiographic metafiction, view the historical element as a self-conscious denial of the potential for historical truth. What sets these works apart from either fiction or

historiographic metafiction, however, is the overt expression of historical intent on the part of the authors and their discernible effort to attempt to recover an accurate and fair representation of events of the past. Neither author suggests that her work is a definitive or authoritative portrayal of history, only that it is the most reliable given her individual perspective and experience. Both Dorothy Livesay and Joy Kogawa admit that theirs is a personal and subjective interpretation of available evidence. Livesay declared that her alliance was with the Japanese-Canadian community and she condemned the actions of the government and its representatives as unnecessary and unusual cruelty. In an effort to present a reliable account of events, she complemented her own impressions with significant research, most of which, she admits, represented the viewpoint of the Japanese Canadian experience. Joy Kogawa's story of the events of the evacuation and dispersal is admittedly based on the personal writings of Muriel Kitagawa and Kogawa's own childhood memories. She describes the story of the redress movement as something she, personally, had lived through. By openly admitting the political purpose of their messages, and by foregrounding the subjectivity of their information and interpretation, Kogawa and Livesay provide both a reliable and a comprehensible version of the past that is clearly understood to be in support of the Japanese-Canadian community's quest for justice.

In contrast to these works of literature and the candid and self-conscious approach of these literary artists, Jack Granatstein and his colleagues contend that their presentation of this history in Mutual Hostages is based on objective and empirical research. Disavowing any particular political agenda, they nevertheless concentrate their efforts on what are clearly very pointed political pursuits: justifying the actions of the federal government against the

Japanese Canadians in the 1940s and establishing the possibility of disloyalty among Japanese Canadians. While their arguments, which amount to speculation, hearsay and personal opinion, lack substantiating evidence, they nevertheless declare their presentation to be a dispassionate, objective, comprehensive and 'truthful' account of history. What the works of Kogawa and Livesay emphasize, and what Mutual Hostages attempts to camouflage, is the relativity of historical knowledge.

But more important for literary and historiographic theory than the notion of the relative historical reliability of these works is what they illustrate about the relationship "between good literature and serious history, between literary effects and factual accuracy" (Levin 3). As has been shown throughout the present study, Kogawa's novels and Livesay's poem demonstrate quite clearly that "good literature" is critical to "serious history," because it is more engaging, more precise, and more comprehensible. Whether "literary effects" are used to enhance or to mask "factual accuracy," they are equally effective in creating a "knowledge-effect" (White, Figural Realism 7). The authors of Mutual Hostages, faced with a void of evidence, effectively employ figurative devices to further their arguments. Comparing the attitude of British Columbian politicians toward Japanese Canadians to that of the Nazis toward German Jews might amount to "irresponsible manipulation" (Levin 26), but it creates a powerful impression. While the suggestion that Japanese Canadians may have been coerced into acts of espionage or sabotage out of concern for family members in Japan is little more than "fabrication" (Levin 26), it lends support to the argument that the loyalties of Japanese Canadians may have been mixed.

Joy Kogawa and Dorothy Livesay also use manipulation and imagination as part of their historiographic method, but their efforts clearly serve to enhance the informational value. Even more important to Kogawa than recounting the facts of the evacuation and dispersal was the need to explain how it felt to be a Japanese Canadian during this time. And Livesay, along with attempting to illustrate the injustice and inhumanity of the events following Pearl Harbor, wanted her documentary poem to attest to the "endurance and tolerance of the Japanese-Canadians" (The Documentaries 32). In effect, both Kogawa and Livesay wanted to render "the unfamiliar, familiar," and they do so through "a troping that is generally figurative. . . . [proceeding] by the exploitation of the principal modalities of figuration [which are] metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (Tropics of Discourse 5). Facts, figures and personal testimony can describe the effects of the forced evacuation on Japanese Canadians, but the sense of betrayal is far more powerfully evoked in Obasan in the image of a man, who previously had sexually molested his neighbour's young child, promising to protect his neighbour's property. At the same time, the efforts of a recluse to save a child from drowning illustrates the importance of even the most random acts of kindness and concern. The irony in the name of the custodian of the seized property of Japanese Canadians – "B. Good" – adeptly accentuates the vile nature of this action. In Call My People Home, the power of a repetitive refrain, "after thirty years," loudly signals the fallacy in the notion of the Isseis as aliens. The image of the sun as beaks tearing at the backs of the labourers in the beetfields superbly captures both a sense of the oppressive heat on the prairies and of the suffering of the Japanese Canadian labourers. The various expressions symbolizing home – "uprooting," "separation," "fear," "despair,"

"watching," "waiting" – strongly elicit the sense of dislocation and despair that characterized the experience of evacuation and dispersal. In Itsuka, the comparison of the "emergency long-distance teleconference of the National Council" (193) to a fishing expedition adeptly denotes the vicarious nature of redress negotiations. The depiction of opponents to the redress movement as "vipers [and] rattlesnakes" acutely illustrates the sense of subversiveness and "deep bitterness" that characterized relations between Japanese Canadians and the larger Canadian community (Itsuka 165).

These literary works are proof that figurative representation is necessary and appropriate to historiography. Despite the different authorial perspectives, methodologies and genre formats of the primary literary texts, they all constitute reliable and comprehensible representations of history, thereby illustrating that narrative, to be effective historiography, does not have to be restricted to third-person presentation of facts or explanation of events. It can consist of lyrical imagery, creative metaphoric explication, and intensely personal and imaginative introspection. At the same time, they illustrate that historiographers have an obligation to present a fair and accurate portrayal of the past. There is room for speculation, subjective interpretation, even invention in historiography as long as it serves to enhance the clarity of the information and does not contradict available evidence or masquerade as absolute truth.

The subject of Kogawa's and Livesay's works is relatively recent history and the facts are familiar to much of the Canadian public. Another area to be explored would be works that consider events from a more distant past that would involve strictly documentary research.

One subject that has perhaps been reconsidered more than any other in Canadian history is the story of Louis Riel. Executed for treason over one hundred and fifteen years ago, Riel continues to be an enigma, having been characterized over the years as villain, hero, saint, lunatic, traitor, and loyal Canadian. In the summer of 1999, the government of Canada entertained debate on whether Riel should be pardoned and declared "a Father of Confederation" (Ottawa Citizen, July 4, 1999). Around the same time, the Dominion Institute and the Canadian Council for national Unity conducted a poll over the internet to choose "Canada's Top 10 Heroes" (Ottawa Citizen, July 11, 1999). When Louis Riel was included on this list, it provoked a mixture of reaction from readers, some applauding and some condemning this result, illustrating how his story continues to provoke lively debate. As the present study is being done, CBC television has scheduled "a mock 're-trial' of Louis Riel . . . 'in the context of today's law'" (Boswell A3). Not surprisingly, this latest dramatization is creating further controversy as opposing sides argue whether it constitutes "a legitimate examination of history or a hurtful re-opening of old wounds" (Boswell A3). In addition to being the subject of numerous conventional historical texts, Louis Riel has been the subject of poems, novels and plays throughout most of the last century. Further analysis could survey the changing face of Louis Riel in works of literary figuration over the years in the context of discourse and ideology.

Another recent and alarming trend related to the justice system is the number of past criminal prosecutions that have been overturned due to more accurate investigative techniques or the revelation of new or revised evidence. The stories – past and present – of people such as Stephen Truscott, Donald Marshall and David Milgaard are likely to be the

subject of both literary and historical rewritings for many years. Rather than considering cases such as these that are still so fresh and unsettling, there is merit in examining the rewriting of earlier criminal cases. James Reaney and Margaret Atwood reassess brutal crimes committed in the last century, too long ago to be helped by new witnesses or DNA testing. They attempt to answer questions from the past through extensive research and careful restructuring of documentary evidence. At the same time, they present their cases as highly figurative and imaginative works of literature.

Reaney's interest in the Donnellys, which began in 1967, continues to this day.[1] Early on, he stated that his primary objective was to sift through the conflicting attitudes and therefore conflicting representations of the Donnellys: "I kept seeing all the Donnelly events in terms of two viewpoints that cross – *some tell it this way / some tell it this way:* the Donnellys were at heart decent people who were persecuted / the Donnellys were mad dogs who *had* to be destroyed" ("Ten Years at Play" 61). In the Foreword to The Donnellys (1983), James Noonan alleges that Reaney's "intention in his trilogy was to correct the false impressions created by" Thomas P. Kelley in his "sensational, melodramatic account" titled The Black Donnellys (4-5). While Noonan declares that "precise historical fact becomes the occasion of moving drama," he says that "some of the historical details are altered" (6). The examples Noonan cites, however, do not amount to misrepresentation of evidence. As Noonan explains, Reaney changes names "for humanitarian reasons" (277) and in the absence of evidence provides speculative explanations that, Noonan contends, are highly probable. For his part, Reaney has little doubt over the value of his efforts. The outcome of his work, he confidently declares, is that you no longer "have people asking *Why* [the Donnellys] got

killed" (Reaney, 14 Barrels 11). Reaney's desire to correct perceived misconceptions of the past, his alleged success in doing so, and his apparently highly figurative and imaginative interpretation and explication of the past make his work on the Donnellys another intriguing subject for the kind of analysis that is performed in the present study.

Margaret Atwood first encountered Grace Marks in Susanna Moodie's Life in the Clearings. Based on Moodie's version of the story of Grace Marks, her involvement in the murders of Thomas Kinnear and Nancy Montgomery and her subsequent incarcerations in prison and in a "Lunatic Asylum," Atwood wrote a screenplay for a 1974 CBC television play ("In Search of Alias Grace" 31). Although she was asked to "turn [her] television script into a theatre piece," Atwood admits that this project never got very far ("In Search of Alias Grace" 31). In the 1990s, however, she again considered Grace Marks as a possible subject for a novel, but as she explained, her approach was to be very different for this later endeavour: "This time . . . I did what neither Moodie nor I had done before: I went back to the past" ("In Search of Alias Grace" 31). Atwood conducted extensive, often frustrating, archival research for her novel. While she quickly surmised that Susanna Moodie's version of the Grace Marks story contained a multitude of inaccuracies, she also realized that the documentary evidence was incomplete, often ambiguous and conflicting. She explained her solution to the impasse this way: "Confronted with . . . discrepancies, I tried to deduce which account was the most plausible" ("In Search of Alias Grace" 33). In her Afterword to Alias Grace, she describes her novel as "a work of fiction . . . based on reality" (463), but she contends that her rendition is as reliable as those categorized as history:

> I have of course fictionalized historical events (as did many commentators on this case who claimed to be writing history). I have not changed any known facts, although the written accounts are so contradictory that few facts emerge as unequivocally "known. . . ." When in doubt, I have tried to choose the most likely possibility, while accommodating all possibilities wherever feasible. Where mere hints and outright gaps exist in the records, I have felt free to invent. (467)

At the same time, Atwood is under no illusions as to the ultimate "truth value" of her, and indeed of any historian's, accomplishment. Speaking about her novel during a lecture on "Canadian Historical Fiction" given at the University of Ottawa in 1996, she declared:

> Nor did it escape me that a different writer, with access to exactly the same historical records, could have – and without a doubt would have – written a very different sort of novel. I am not one of those who believes there is no truth to be known. But I have to conclude that, although there undoubtedly was a truth . . . truth is sometimes unknowable, at least by us. (In Search of Alias Grace 37)

A more extensive tracing of the evolution of Atwood's interpretation and presentation of Grace Marks' story would provide another opportunity to see in a heightened way the role that research, documentary interpretation, speculation, imagination and figuration play in the historical narrative.

Riel, the Donnellys and Marks are but a few suggestions of subjects for future consideration of the role that figuration plays in historical representation. Given the

Canadian public's apparent inadequate knowledge of our own history, it is encouraging to see that literary artists continue to consider Canadian history as an appropriate subject of their writing. It is more important than ever that literary critics acknowledge the importance of recuperating the past, that they include a consideration of the value of the historical information in assessments of literary works that are intended to enrich the historical field, and determine that they are "as accurate and as just as possible" (Levin 5-6). At the same time, the historiographer must concede the relativity of historical knowledge, and view historical research, not as the pursuit of absolute truth, but as an infinitely variable and dynamic "dialogue with the past" (LaCapra 27).

Endnotes

[1] Given my interest in Reaney's work on the Donnellys, I obtained the finding aid for his archival collection at the University of Western Ontario. There are over thirty-seven pages listing research material on the Donnellys. My request to view some of this material was denied by Reaney, because he is currently working on another book about the Donnellys.

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