"Living Words": Tracing Processes of National Subject Formation and Racialization in Japanese Canadian Life Writing

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Maggie Quirt
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to the required standard

[redacted]

Dr. Smaro Kamboureli, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Misao Dean, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. William K. Carroll, Outside Member (Department of Sociology)

[redacted]

Dr. John Lutz, External Examiner (Department of History)

[redacted]

University of Victoria

Supervisor: Dr. Smaro Kamboureli

ABSTRACT

In the process of being constituted as subjects, individuals respond to a variety of coterminous interpellations. Identification along lines of national affiliation is encouraged, in part, through diverse pedagogical strategies, while identification based on racial categories is developed through a process of racialization characterized by porous temporal boundaries. Both forms of identification are ambivalent; while they may be mobilizing processes, they can also serve to contain individuals within limiting fields of association.

In the World War II Japanese Canadian internment, identification based on national and racial affiliation became of paramount importance to displaced individuals. Japanese Canadian life writing narratives chronicling this event provide first-hand evidence of how such forms of identification operate. By exploring the discursive formation and content of these texts, I suggest that national subject formation and racialization can be understood as ongoing processes. This, in turn, invites us to re-visit and theorize anew the history of the internment.

Examiners:

[redacted]

Dr. Smaro Kamboureli, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Misao Dean, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. William K. Carroll, Outside Member (Department of Sociology)

[redacted]

Dr. John Lutz, External Examiner (Department of History)

[redacted]

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Introduction

> [P]ersonal accounts of [the] Japanese relocation express neither rancor nor bitterness. In many ways, each is a catharsis, a cleansing of the past, for the participants.
>
> M. Paul Holsinger, *Told Without Bitterness* (157)

> Yes, we are bitter, with a bitterness we can never forget, which will mark us for the rest of our lives, but we are not fools . . . We must survive this phase of our history to emerge stronger with the resilience of tempered steel.
>
> Muriel Kitagawa, *This Is My Own* (vi)

The notion of revisiting the past in order to come to terms with painful or haunting memories is often taken as evidence of a healing process in action. While this is undoubtedly an accurate portrayal of certain forms of memory work, positing historical narratives as cathartic or cleansing can also act as a form of containment. By projecting harmony onto accounts of the past that, in actuality, contain evidence of dislocation and disrupture, the radical potential of such narratives is undermined.

In Canada, one such haunting memory is that of the World War II Japanese Canadian internment. The uprooting of more than 21,000 Japanese Canadians, along with the fundamental abrogation of civil liberties that this act entailed, is a historic event not unknown to most Canadians. In some respects, the act of detainment experienced by these individuals for political and cultural reasons was not a unique occurrence. Around the time of World War I, 5,000 Ukrainian Canadians who had immigrated from territories controlled by the Austro-Hungarian empire were incarcerated by the Canadian

government in the country's first "national internment operations" (Luciuk 52). An additional 80,000 individuals of Ukrainian ancestry were registered as "enemy aliens" and monitored by police.[1] Similarly, Japanese Canadians were not the only individuals interned during World War II; Italian Canadians and German Canadians were also labeled as "enemy aliens" and, in some instances, incarcerated for years. Yet the sheer number of Japanese Canadians interned and the perseverance with which the Canadian government carried out its plan to disseminate the Japanese Canadian population across the country make the situation of these individuals exemplary.

The history of the Japanese Canadian internment has been remembered in a variety of different ways. In recent years, documentation detailing this event has ranged from historical monographs, including Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was* and Patricia Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masaka Iino and Hiroko Takamura's *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War*, to such political inquiries as Ann Gomer Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War*. Literary works have provided yet another forum for exploring this event; the most well-known of these is undoubtedly Joy Kogawa's 1981 historiographic novel *Obasan*. Almost two decades after its emergence onto the Canadian literary scene, *Obasan* remains the subject of a vast body of literary criticism and has received both national and international acclaim. The influence of this work has extended well beyond the boundaries of its literary domain; in fact, "the novel has played a considerable role in alerting Canadians to past injustices committed against the Japanese Canadians and contributed, along with Kogawa's own activism, to the redress sought by them from the

Canadian government" (Kamboureli, *Making* 120). The recipient of numerous prizes, including the *Books in Canada* First Novel Award, *Obasan* remains one of the most enduring narratives written about the Japanese Canadian internment.

In the shadow of this literary work reside a number of lesser-known Japanese Canadian life writing texts that explore themes related to the internment. Muriel Kitagawa's *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-1948* (1985), Keibo Oiwa's *Stone Voices: Wartime Writings of Japanese Canadian Issei* (1991) and Roy Kiyooka's *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka* (1997) are texts that offer personal representations of the uprooting and relocation of Japanese Canadians during World War II. *This Is My Own* is an account of the life experiences of a second-generation Japanese Canadian woman as evidenced by letters, essays and newspapers columns. In these documents, Muriel Kitagawa comments on how the politics of the day affect herself, her family, and the greater Japanese Canadian community. *Mothertalk*, the written record of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka's life stories, began as a series of oral narratives that Kiyooka told repeatedly to her children. In these stories, Kiyooka describes her experiences as a first-generation Japanese Canadian woman, and discusses her life as the daughter of a samurai, a picture bride,[2] and an occasionally reluctant wife. Keibo Oiwa's *Stone Voices* is an anthology featuring the work of various authors: Kaoru Ikeda's "Slocan Diary" describes the conditions at a relocation camp in Slocan, British Columbia, while Genshichi Takahashi's memoirs illustrate what life was like for men working in road camps. Koichiro Miyazaki and Kensuke Kitagawa's writings, also found in *Stone Voices*, detail the experiences of Japanese Canadian men incarcerated in prisoner-

of-war camps. Through detailed journal entries and letters, these imprisoned men express many complex emotions, including guilt brought on by being apart from their families, despair at not being able to see their children grow up, and conflicting loyalties with respect to Japan and Canada.

As literature written by first- and second-generation Japanese Canadians, the works by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka are connected to a larger body of Asian North American writing. This category of literature first gained mainstream recognition in the 1970s and 1980s as the result of the search for "an alternative identity to what was being offered in the dominant culture--the nonchoice between being either different and inferior or the same and invisible, between eternal alien and assimilated mascot" (Kim xi). Through the act of life writing--a category of literature marked by the fluidity of its conceptual and temporal boundaries--Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka are able to resist the dominant ideology that defined them as "eternal alien [or] assimilated mascot[s]" and present, instead, a version of Japanese Canadian identity that is at once multifaceted, dynamic, and complex.

While critical studies of *Obasan* abound, the field of Japanese Canadian life writing remains largely uninformed by detailed analysis.[3] Where criticism does exist, it tends to view the act of Japanese Canadian autobiography as little more than an exercise in coming to terms with the past for the purposes of blithely abandoning it. This is evident in M. Paul Holsinger's framing of internment narratives as historical accounts that possess "neither rancor nor bitterness."[4] I believe that this interpretation of Japanese Canadian and Japanese American life writing narratives is inadequate, for it doesn't sufficiently theorize

what is at stake in the process of remembering the internment. Far from "cleansing the past," Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka attempt to add greater complexity and texture to history--in short, to *engage with* the past--in order to challenge dominant narratives that have sought to contain the many different stories of a diverse community into the single narrative of the internment.

To counter the lack of theoretical engagement with Japanese Canadian life writing, I propose here an analysis of the ways in which convergent issues of identity formation, pedagogy and ethnicity are thematized through the discursive formation of life writing.[5] What I want to explore in particular is the process through which individuals are constituted as national subjects and the ways in which this phenomenon relies on the exchange and recirculation of dominant histories, myths and visions. I also want to examine the temporal dimensions of such a process to see how certain values are legitimated through time. In this endeavour, the importance of the various literary forms selected by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka becomes critical:

> Truth does not reveal itself in the voice of clarity and plenitude--so Asian Canadian and other minority writers, speaking out of the finitude of their subjectivities, have to be vigilant not simply to mime the given narrative, genre, and filmic forms through which dominant values are aestheticized . . . Formal disruptions, such as the generic crossing of fiction, history, autobiography, and documentary . . . , become strategies of resistance to norms . . . (Miki, *Broken Entries* 117)

As an interdisciplinary intervention into the various discourses of history, autobiography and political studies, life writing operates as a "strategy of resistance" that destabilizes the traditional articulations of personal and communal narratives. In the process of such disruption, questions pertaining to subject formation, the ideological import of nations and constructions of ethnicity emerge.

Based on the importance of life writing as a discursive site where dominant narratives are destabilized, my thesis attempts to address the following interrelated issues: How does life writing function as an alter-native form of historical discourse? What challenges does the discursive formation of life writing pose to the homogeneous notion of Canadian citizenship that existed during World War II? In other words, what are the ways in which Japanese Canadian life writing rewrites Canada's national imaginary? How does the speaking/writing "I" in these life writing narratives represent itself both in terms of its own internment experience and within the context of its racialization by the dominant society? What cultural and ideological inflections are inscribed in this "I"? How do these authors represent and contest, within their disjunctive narratives, "genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority" (Bhabha 157)?

In order to understand the radical potential of Japanese Canadian life writing, I will begin by examining in greater detail the diverse ways in which this type of literature, exemplified by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka's works, constitutes a departure from the more traditional realm of autobiography. If autobiography is, as critics have argued, the literary predecessor of contemporary life writing, then the movement away from this more

traditional genre suggests a concomitant rejection of certain ideological patterns and structures. Since the centrality of the author is intrinsic to both autobiography and the kinds of literature it engenders, I will critique life writing from a perspective that problematizes the emphasis placed upon the presence of the self within the text, an emphasis that often occludes the important work of the editor or scholar who mines the original author's writing and re/presents it for public consumption. Instead, by linking life writing with a notion of community, I will examine the ways in which this kind of literature contains a collaborative ethos and political potential, both in general terms and with respect to the Japanese Canadian community specifically. Highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of this category of literature, I will suggest that Japanese Canadian life writing texts pose questions for fields of inquiry that include, but are by no means limited to, history, politics, ethnography and sociology.

My discussion will proceed within a framework that will include a range of life writing and autobiographical theory, as well as postcolonial criticism pertaining to nationalism and minority discourse. My first chapter will theorize life writing as a discursive formation and situate my selected texts within this body of literature. Drawing on the work of feminist critics such as Marlene Kadar, I will discuss the generative potential of life writing as a literary form characterized by "irreverence" (Kadar 153). I will place particular emphasis on the ideological implications of life writing's resistance to traditional autobiographical conventions and discuss the significance of this literary form as an act of collaboration. My second chapter will explore the relationship between Japanese Canadian life writing and the question of national affiliation. Following Benedict

Anderson's notion that nations are "imagined communities" (6), I will discuss the ways in which the suspension of citizenship rights illuminated the impermanent nature of national belonging for many Japanese Canadians. In order to contextualize the depth of betrayal experienced and articulated by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka, I will explore how citizenship expectations are carefully molded over time through the nation's pedagogical sites and strategies. I will suggest as well that such teachings are intricately involved in the construction of a national mythology where certain narratives are remembered, while others are deliberately forgotten. In my third chapter, I will take up the question of race in order to discuss the profound discrimination experienced by Japanese Canadians during World War II. With reference to the work of Judith Butler, I will explore the notion of race as a construction that is "partially produced as an effect of the history of racism," and the ways in which such a concept is employed "not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism" (*Bodies* 18). In an attempt to move beyond identifying the Japanese Canadian community with the limiting master narrative of the internment, I will suggest that a process of racialization, and not a singular act of racism, defined the history of Japanese Canadians well in advance of December 7, 1941.

Issues of historiography, nationalism, pedagogy and the politics of identity/ citizenship represent the interdisciplinary range of concerns raised by these texts. My thesis will explore the ways in which life writing texts can be read in a number of different contexts: as social commentary, historical record, political testimony and personal narrative. By encouraging a reading that takes into account the different contours of life

texts, I hope to illustrate the ways in which boundaries that define disciplinary modes of inquiry are porous, shifting and, for this reason, always productive.

Notes

[1] For an account of the discrimination experienced by Ukrainian Canadians see Lubomyr Luciuk's contribution to Miki and McFarlane's *In Justice: Canada, Minorities, and Human Rights*.

[2] In the early 1900s in Canada many Japanese Canadian bachelors interested in getting married sent their photograph to friends, relatives and marriage brokers in Japan who then proceeded to find a match among eligible local girls. In many instances, all of the marriage negotiations, including a wedding ceremony "by proxy", were conducted solely on the basis of these photographs. Women, such as Mary Kiyooka, who then made the voyage to Canada to begin a new life as the wife of a man they had only met through photographs were therefore known as "picture brides." For first-hand accounts of the experiences of such individuals, see Tomoko Makabe's *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. North York: U of Toronto P, 1995.

[3] An exception to this is the recent publication of Smaro Kamboureli's *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*. In a close reading of *Obasan*, Kamboureli analyses Muriel Kitagawa's writing as a source of factual and creative inspiration for Kogawa.

[4] It must be duly noted that Holsinger does not include any of the works by Kitagawa, Oiwa or Kiyooka in his analysis of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian autobiographical-type narratives. The texts that he does select to focus on are Shizuye Takashima's *A Child in Prison Camp* (Montreal: Tundra, 1971), Takeo Nakane's *Within the Barbed Wire Fence: A Japanese Man's Account of His Internment in Canada*

(Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980) and Joy Kogawa's *Naomi's Road* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1986). What remains relevant to my study, however, is the way in which this critic makes transcendent statements that emphasize acceptance and agreement as characteristics of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian autobiographical accounts in general. It is on this point that I question Holsinger's blithe reading of such texts.

[5] I should note at the outset that by proposing a study of Japanese Canadian writing, I do not mean to suggest that there is a body of literature with clearly identifiable characteristics and well-defined boundaries that can be named in such a fashion. This would be reductive, for it would encourage an engagement with literature premised on stereotypical expectations. While I conceptualize the life writing texts under analysis as Japanese Canadian works, I do so with the intent of exploring the multifaceted history of a unique community in a spirit that is directly opposed to any oppressive act of containment. Moreover, I believe that the life writing texts I explore speak for themselves of the rich diversity to be found in the Japanese Canadian community; in this manner, they resist being read as texts that speak for all Japanese Canadians.

Chapter 1

"Scattered Ranges": The Terrain of Japanese Canadian Life Writing

> Life writing is a way of looking at more or less autobiographical literature . . . [that] overtly resists a proof-positive reading [and] leads us to ask questions about our critical practice.
>
> Marlene Kadar, *Essays on Life Writing* (10)

> The process of editing Muriel's writing became a sustenance--an intellectual engagement that served to counteract the more demanding political and community work in the redress movement. Muriel came to signify the voice of the personal transformed, in the very act of writing, into a mouthpiece of lives so utterly affected by forces of malevolence beyond their control.
>
> Roy Miki, *Broken Entries* (27)

> . . . do did done on me
> & my kinfolk who
> meandered in yr realm
>
> spots on the horizon
> grey blue lines
> mountains in yr mind
>
> scattered ranges
> where waves peak
> & break. . . .
>
> Roy Miki ("victim's song" 69)

In his poem, "victim's song," Roy Miki describes the physical and psychological terrain traversed by a displaced people who meandered into a hostile realm and suffered

numerous consequences. Written as a reflection on the Japanese Canadian redress movement, "victim's song" memorializes the plight of individuals who were uprooted and interned during World War II. Miki's image of "scattered ranges" carries with it a wealth of metaphorical meaning. On one hand, it brings to mind Canada's Rocky Mountain range that was a nostalgic reminder of western Canada -- and therefore, home -- for thousands of Japanese Canadians displaced from BC during the war. But "scattered ranges" can also be seen as a metaphor for the growing and varied literary corpus of Japanese Canadian writing leading up to and stemming from the redress movement. The scope of this literature is expansive in both form and content, and presents a richly textured image of what our society has expediently collectivized as "the internment." Personal accounts of the uprooting written by individuals who were themselves interned are among the most notable examples of works in this field. These documents illustrate first-hand the lived repercussions of the Canadian government's decision to ban all people of Japanese ancestry from Canada's west coast during World War II. Because of this, the texts are valuable historical records. The personal perspective from which these narratives are told is important because it provides a degree of familiarity and immediacy to an event that has been historicized largely on the basis of quantitative facts, such as the number of people interned or the monetary equivalent of the property seized.

The various and enabling ways in which Japanese Canadian writers have archived the historical experience of uprooting, relocation and discrimination is precisely what I wish to focus on in this chapter. What specifically interests me here is the autobiographical signature of these works. Larger questions concerning national pedagogy and the

disciplining of national subjects in Canada can be engaged with by exploring the personal details and interplay between individual experience and societal influence that such autobiographical works thematize. The specific kind of personal narrative that I am interested in is life writing, that "wide variety of autobiographical-seeming texts, including journals, memoirs, letters, testimonies and metafiction" (Verduyn, *Lifelines* 5) where Japanese Canadian autobiographical writing is situated. The works that I have selected for analysis bear the mark of autobiographical inscription, yet each, in its own way, offers a nuance of style or form that positions the text within the more ambiguous and arguably more radical terrain of life writing.

Life Writing: Appropriating the Autobiographical Impulse

Although not a new concept in the fields of literary or historical studies, the notion of life writing has been reworked and advanced in recent years to serve as both an extension of, and amendment to, the more traditional concept of autobiography.[1] Literary texts located within this revamped category include "documents or fragments of documents written out of a life, or unabashedly out of a personal experience of the writer" (Kadar 152). Ranging from recipes to memoirs, life writing relies on a variety of material culled from the everyday aspects of people's lives.[2] Moreover, both the form and the content of life writing texts are often directly related as much to an author's personal situation and resources as to the larger political and social contexts within which the individual is situated. The editorials and letters that dominate Kitagawa's *This Is My Own* reflect the

author's individual perspective and experiences but they also function as documents that chronicle the conditions imposed on the Japanese Canadian community by the wartime internment. The author's involvement in the *New Canadian*, the only Japanese Canadian newspaper permitted to continue publishing during the internment years, provided a forum for Kitagawa's numerous fiery editorials calling for justice for Japanese Canadians. Her separation from her brother, Wes, who was studying medicine in Toronto when the call came for all BC citizens of Japanese ancestry to prepare for internment, created the conditions for a different type of writing, namely that of a series of panic-stricken letters seeking clarification and advice. The communication between the two siblings is instructive because it serves as a record of the ways in which the internment impacted on families who were separated at the time of the uprooting. Kitagawa's almost daily letters to her brother chronicle constantly changing plans regarding the details of the family's dispersal, while, in return, Wes' notes illustrate his efforts to find a spot in Ontario where the Kitagawas could be taken in. The emphasis throughout the communication is on keeping the family together, a concern that was shared by many Japanese Canadians at the time of the internment. Through written records ranging from personal letters to public speeches, Kitagawa thus maintains an extensive archive of the uprooting.

In a similar manner, the authors anthologized in *Stone Voices* employ literary forms that reflect each individual's personal circumstances while, at the same time, illuminating the plight of the Japanese Canadian community generally. What is distinctive about this text is that all of the authors are issei (first-generation Japanese Canadians), an element that contributes to the image of the Japanese Canadian community emerging from

these works, namely one characterized by ties to Japan and generational differences. Because many Japanese nationals were incarcerated in prisoner-of-war camps where labour conditions were not as rigorous as in road camps, individuals often had a great deal of spare time in which to write. Many issei kept journals in an attempt to come to terms with the diverse emotions they were experiencing as a result of their separation from family and home.[3] For many, the journal became a site where they could record an honest account of their doubts and anxieties that may have been glossed over in letters to family members. By articulating such thoughts in their journals and working through conflicting emotions, internees and imprisoned men could, in fact, gain a measure of solace and empowerment through their writing.

In contrast to both Kitagawa and Oiwa's written texts, Mary Kiyooka's life stories were, in their original incarnation, oral acts. As a result, the transcription of these stories contains little in the way of eloquent speeches and impassioned rhetoric so characteristic, for example, of Kitagawa's writing. Instead, Kiyooka's stories are spontaneous, free-flowing anecdotes that possess a distinctive tone borne out of the author's own unique way of talking. Because she had moved to Canada at such a young age, Kiyooka's Japanese was frozen in a 1917 version of her hometown regional dialect. As a result, her vocabulary and syntax represented a somewhat antiquated version of the Japanese language, a characteristic that her son, Roy, sought to preserve in editing the stories for publication. Mary Kiyooka's knowledge of English was rudimentary, and because her children were growing up in a hybrid world where English quickly supplanted the Japanese learned at home, oral stories provided the most effective means of communication

between the two generations. By verbally passing along stories of her life, Kiyooka was able to instil in her children a sense of their maternal heritage, replete with tales of samurai soldiers, haunted houses and the arranged marriage that eventually brought her to Canada.

As the texts that I have selected for analysis illustrate, different approaches and strategies to the act of personal narration are possible. Ranging from editorials and personal letters to oral stories and journals, Japanese Canadian life writing clearly resists categorization under the rubric of traditional autobiography. It departs from the conventional autobiographical focus on "a privatized itinerary, the journey toward something, the personal struggle toward God, the entry into society of the Bildungsroman [and/or] the confessional mode" (Smith & Watson, xx). That these Japanese Canadian texts are nonetheless self-conscious personal narratives raises questions about the limitations of autobiography. Part of the problem lies in the fact that autobiography has long masqueraded as a wholly accessible genre, available for recuperation by anyone capable of speaking or writing his story.[4] In fact, autobiography has enjoyed a history in which it was perceived to be "practised by almost everyone" (Olney 3). The ostensible widespread use of the genre has been premised on the notion that "there are no rules or formal requirements binding the prospective autobiographer--no restraints, no necessary models, no obligatory observances gradually shaped out of a long developing tradition" (Olney 3). Autobiography, according to certain traditional understandings of the genre, is an overwhelmingly accessible literary form open to any literate or articulate author.

This line of argument, however, fails to address the fact that there are indeed conventions implicit in autobiography. Moreover, these conventions are so ostensibly

commonsensical that they have been rendered invisible to certain critics. Recent theories of autobiography have attempted to expose these blind spots by problematizing both the history of the genre and the structure of its form. The recurring themes that emerge through such an analysis are numerous, and involve, in part, the following realizations. First, autobiography as it was originally conceptualized and practised in the late 18th and early 19th centuries relied on a coherent and rational narrator/author who is still very much the anticipated subject of autobiography today. Moreover, this autobiographical subject was often someone whose life was considered to be significant for any of a number of reasons. As a result, traditional autobiographers were usually men with some degree of public identity achieved through, for instance, political or military success. The autobiographical act was embarked on by these exemplary individuals as a means of chronicling the "greatness" of their life in order to inspire or instruct others. A second characteristic of the genre is its notable teleological tendency. This frequently takes the form of movement within a narrative towards an uplifting or morally reaffirming ending for both the author and the reader. Just as often, however, this teleological drive is evidenced not necessarily through happy endings alone but through the act of closure that neatly summarizes the text and attributes meaning to the contents of the autobiography. Other implicit conventions of the genre include the frequent reliance on a linear temporal structure and a concomitant emphasis on childhood memories as the quintessential starting point of the self-narrative. While these points by no means constitute a definitive list of the time-honoured practices inherent in autobiography, it is important to note that all of these generic elements have evolved in and out of a specific historical moment and a particular

literary tradition. To argue, as Olney does, that these implicit conventions are not "restraints" is to render normative a type of writing that has developed out of a specifically Eurocentric literary tradition and Western ideology in general.[5] The many assumptions inherent in autobiography, particularly the notion of a rational, cohesive subject who has the capacity to act as the exclusive agent of his own self articulation, do not necessarily reflect an individual's experience with language and agency in the postmodern world, a condition that is marked by "contradictions, discontinuities, repetitions, and complexities" (Lin 336). Thus, although autobiography might be ideally envisioned as an inclusive genre, some of its constitutive terms of reference are restrictive, and therefore problematic.

Contemporary life writing, as a revision of autobiography, refutes the importance of many of the conventions implicit in its literary predecessor and poses new ways of expressing a life story through writing. Such revisions stretch back to the autobiographical impulse itself, for life writing narrators are not typically concerned with illustrating the meritorious nature of their lives. In fact, many make mention of the fact that they feel undeserving of such an endeavour. Genshichi Takahashi in *Stone Voices* explains:

> My cousin had been encouraging me to write my autobiography, but I felt that I was not a person worthy of an autobiography . . . At that time I still thought I hadn't done anything worth writing about . . . Some time later I realized that my interest in this subject remained. After all, I thought, I was born and have lived this long. I have lived my own life, not anybody else's. I am not trying to write for somebody else; I am trying to gaze into my own life, disentangling all the old and

> weather-beaten threads to give some kind of shape to this reflection . . . So I began to dig into my memory without any intention of having someone else read it. (Oiwa 159)

As with Takahashi's realization of his ability to write an autobiographical type of text that goes against the grain of traditional autobiography, life writing narrators begin to subvert the authority of the genre and lay the foundation for further revisions. Changes in the movement from autobiography to life writing are at once playful, productive and necessary, for "autobiography proper requires too much unity of the narrative . . . too much 'objective' or reasoned thinking, too much author/ity of the author to be as irreverent as life writing can be" (Kadar 153). The "irreverence" characteristic of life writing occurs for different reasons and in a variety of ways that include revisions relating to the form a text takes, its temporal structure, the types of documents included within the narrative and the role of the author.

Perhaps the most obvious revision found in life writing involves the actual form of the text itself. In many instances, the creative and innovative elements of life writing are the results of political necessity. *Mothertalk*, for instance, emerged out of Roy Kiyooka's desire to get his mother's stories down in print: "It was Roy, feeling the inadequacy of his own Japanese, who asked his friend, the translator Matsuki Masutani, to interview his mother at length in her mother-tongue and then transcribe and translate her stories into English" (Marlatt 3). Roy then took the transcribed stories and began to rewrite them in accordance with his mother's style of speech, creatively refashioning the stories as he went

along. Though it was Roy Kiyooka who initiated the project, his mother was not an unobjective participant in the process. In fact, through the act of telling her stories, Mary Kiyooka practices a certain measure of agency as she selects which pieces of information to relate and which to keep hidden. As Carole Boyce Davies notes:

> By narrating her story, the [life writing narrator] enters history, names themes for the future, and seizes the authority of the teller of experience. The public space of discourse therefore becomes a contested space as she violates the established boundaries between silence and speech to reflect on experience, put shape and meaning to it . . . Life stories then become one facet of the public discourse of silenced groups that begin to find ways to engage in their history as subjects, to set themes of collective epic. (15)

The oral nature of Mary Kiyooka's original narrative is important because "thinking autobiography through [oral] life story puts into question the notion of standard autobiography . . . and invites instead more complex approaches to the text, discourse, author and narrative" (Davies 6). Traditionally, autobiographies are written works, penned at or towards the end of an exemplary life; by privileging instead the importance of the spoken word, oral life stories destabilize the form of conventional autobiography and call into question the notion of who might appropriately be considered an autobiographical subject.

In addition to textual innovations that make possible the documentation of oral life stories, other revisions of form occur in the movement from autobiography to contemporary life writing. *This Is My Own* represents a second type of life writing narrative that does not follow traditional autobiographical conventions. Consisting predominantly of letters, but including as well essays, newspaper columns, and an explanatory introduction by editor Roy Miki, *This Is My Own* contains a diverse representation of Kitagawa's wartime writing. While the essays and newspaper columns offer direct commentary on specific topics of concern to the Japanese Canadian community, the letters offer a glimpse into how the internment years were personally experienced by the author as a wife, mother and sister. In addition, because censorship of communication between Japanese Canadians was a common practice during the wartime years, it is more than likely that Kitagawa's correspondence would have been read by government officials, a fact that would not have been unknown to the author. Indeed, Kitagawa makes reference to the danger of openly criticizing the government, writing to Wes, "our letters aren't censored yet, but they might be any time . . . So let's you and I quit talking about what should be done" (111). Just three days later, however, Kitagawa once again records her dissatisfaction with the government through letter writing, saying to Wes, "I have faith in this land--not in any political group, not in any MP and their codes (or tricks maybe), not in any system of government--but in the land and the people on the land" (113). That Kitagawa remained critical in her discussion of the government's decision to intern Japanese Canadians knowing that her commentary would likely be read by government officials represents an appropriation of the presumably private voice of

letter-writing. Because these letters comment on a wide range of social concerns, they are "carefully constructed political epistles, locating the female epistolary genre within the public arena" (Malone 239). While Kitagawa could not have known that her collected letters would one day be published, there is nevertheless a public consciousness implicit in her commentary that has relevance for readers other than her brother Wes.

A further example of resistance to conventional autobiographical form occurs in Keibo Oiwa's *Stone Voices*. Diary excerpts, letters and memoirs make up this collection of writing by four first-generation Japanese immigrants. Rather than acting simply as a collage of anecdotes, this compilation points to similar and repeated stories of marginalization and discrimination. The presentation of these narratives together in one text is important, for:

> [Anthologies] necessitate the identification of the collective life story as a second mode of life story telling that moves beyond the sense of a dually authored text to a multiply articulated text . . . [T]hese narratives can be read as individual stories (corresponding more in length to the short story), or they can be read collectively as one story refracted through multiple lives, lives that share a common experience. (Davies 4)

If there is "one story refracted through multiple lives" in *Stone Voices*, it is that of the Japanese Canadian internment experience. Koichiro Miyazaki and Kensuke Kitagawa's journals illustrate the complexity of that experience for men who were labeled "prisoners

of war" and consequently separated from their families, in some cases for years. The desperation, uncertainty, sorrows and joy that constituted this experience are documented within the pages of the journals, a site that allows for "discursive resistance" (White, "Silenced Stories" 82).

By recording the criticisms that they couldn't voice aloud for fear of violent retribution--either from prison authorities or their own imprisoned comrades-- Miyazaki and Kensuke Kitagawa achieve a measure of opposition. Their act of keeping a journal becomes a site of resistance with respect not simply to the jailer, but also to the detainees themselves as their writing helps them maintain their individuality in the face of group interests. As White notes, "when it is made public, the journal emphasizes individual differences while simultaneously drawing others together as they recognize elements of commonality between themselves and the author" ("Silenced Stories" 82). Thus, the journal as life writing text acts as both a site for asserting individuality and an arena for coalition-building when the experiences recorded by writers are shared with members of their community.

In addition to these revisions pertaining to the form a contemporary life writing text may take, the content of new types of personal narratives represents a similar movement away from conventional autobiography. One such revision involves a subversion of the ordered linear progression characteristic of typical autobiographical texts. This subversion problematizes the formulaic structure of narration, making us wonder whether "the world really present[s] itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that

permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning" (White, *Content* 24). In contrast to the common autobiographical practice of moving from birth to old age, life writing texts often resist such a panoramic representation of the passage of time in favour of an emphasis on or articulation of more specific historical moments. In a similar manner, life writing exhibits a sense of temporal revision in that it is not given to the teleological preoccupation of traditional autobiography in which the life story results in a successful or morally uplifting end. Put another way, the life writing text is more concerned with steps along the journey than it is with the destination itself.

This characteristic is apparent in Mary Kiyooka's life stories, which drift from the present to the past and back again. Although the overall arc of the narrative is chronological (a structure that was imposed on the text by one of its editors to make the writing more readable), within each chapter of *Mothertalk* Kiyooka's narrative covers a vast temporal terrain of memories, associations and references. In addition, at the close of the text, which leaves the reader at the present-day within the span of Kiyooka's life, a brief autobiographical sketch written by the author's husband moves the narrative back to 18th century Japan, thereby subverting, in part, the chronological structure of the text. Muriel Kitagawa's collection of writings also exhibits revisions of a temporal nature. Although the letters in this text have been arranged in chronological order, the "other writings" that comprise the second half of the work represent various moments in the author's life. While the letters are written within the time-frame of the internment and focus substantially on the repercussions of this event, the essays speak to a number of different issues affecting Canadians across the country. Similarly, in the diary entries that

comprise *Stone Voices*, temporal revisions are also evident in the way in which the authors depict camp life on a daily basis but subvert its regimental structure by filling the pages of their narratives with memories and plans for the future. Although these journal accounts are ordered chronologically, their content does not sustain a similar line of progression. On the contrary, the diary passages often reflect wistfully back to happier times and some barely mention the contemporary circumstances of prison life at all.

The decline in emphasis on a linear temporal progression in life writing allows for the inclusion of multiple details, culled from memories, reminiscences or random thoughts, that may not have fit within the chronological framework of a traditional autobiography bent on projecting the life story as a teleological narrative. This is particularly crucial with respect to interned Japanese Canadians because conflicting loyalties to Japan and Canada during World War II, experienced most acutely by first-generation Japanese immigrants, were often the result of a disjunction between past associations and present-day affiliations. The employment of narrative forms that allow for a disjunctive understanding of time enables the life writing authors to articulate mixed emotions more fully to their readers, thereby shedding light on the complex situation of many interned Japanese Canadian citizens. An example of this experience of divided loyalties is evident in *Stone Voices* as Kaoru Ikeda discusses the ramifications of December 7, 1941:

> What bewildering and confusing days we have been living since Pearl Harbour. With the great mission to establish world peace, Japan is fighting with great success to the amazement of the world. As Japanese we feel proud of our country

> and pray that our advances continue until our final victory . . . The year before last, after Canada joined the war in support of England, we Japanese contributed all the resources we had: buying Victory Bonds, making donations for national defence and the Red Cross. (120)

By describing how she prayed for a Japanese victory but supported the Canadian war effort, Ikeda brings to light the ambivalent nature of her wartime experiences in Canada. This type of sentiment was common for many Japanese Canadians with divided loyalties. While ambivalence is not generally considered to be a hallmark of traditional autobiography, the more flexible nature of life writing allows for the fluid articulation of memories and thoughts as they occur, showing how certain contradictions and complexities may be sustained in the life of one individual.

The disjunctive nature of life writing is also important because it destabilizes the possibility of closure within a text. This concept is potentially problematic because it imposes a sense of finitude on a work belying the fact that lives are not as neat and tidy as narratives, particularly autobiography, would suggest. The autobiographical convention of achieving closure is therefore not always maintained in life writing texts, arguably because this is not necessarily the way a life story ends for individuals who are not penning memoirs detailing triumphant lives or exemplary experiences. In addition, with respect to the internment, the notion of closure is particularly problematic because the end of the war did not signal an end to Canada's discriminatory policies against Japanese Canadians. In fact, "restrictive measures were maintained for almost four years after the end of World

War II, denying the right of Japanese Canadians to live and work where they chose" (Adachi xii). Moreover, because the redress campaign seeking compensation for interned Japanese Canadians only achieved its goal in 1988, four decades after the end of World War II, a sense of closure with respect to internment narratives is additionally problematic.

Resistance to closure is apparent in the works by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka. Kitagawa's collection of letters, for instance, ends abruptly right before her family's relocation to Toronto. As a result, the reader is left hanging, wondering what happened to the Kitagawas and whether their reception in Toronto was favourable. A similar effect is achieved in *Stone Voices*: Koichiro Miyazaki's diary ends abruptly when the author leaves the Angler P.O.W. camp because of his wife's illness; Kensuke Kitagawa's journal simply stops *in medias res* while the author is still a prisoner at the same camp. But closure can happen in more subtle ways as well. At the end of *Mothertalk*, for instance, Mary Kiyooka expresses melancholia at the thought of never returning to her beloved Tosa (Kochi City). Even more instructively, she voices bitterness, observing that "when I pass away there won't be a soul left to tell how the heart-of-Tosa sang in our home behind an English facade" (172). Rather than ending on a satisfactory note, this passage emphasizes loss, nostalgia and resentment towards "the English facade" underlying life in Canada. By refusing to cover up her true feelings, Kiyooka resists any imperative to gloss over insufficiencies in the society around her and, by doing so, provides insight into life in Canada.

Revisions and innovations pertaining to the physical composition of the text itself represent another type of subversion found in numerous life writing texts. Photographs are

one of the more common additions to such works. In this respect, life writing, at first glance, appears to be similar to both autobiography and biography, genres that often rely on a collection of personal pictures to substantiate the narrative. However, whereas photographs in traditional autobiographical texts typically parallel the story being told in that they provide a visual representation of the autobiographical subject's progression from childhood to old age, their inclusion in life writing has a different function. Most conventional autobiographies contain photographs of the author, along with photographs of people who were influential in that person's life. Often these photographs remain separate from the written text in that they are not specifically referred to by the writer.

In life writing texts, however, photographs may be used differently in at least two ways. First, as evidenced by both *This Is My Own* and *Stone Voices*, photographs included in life writing narratives do not always have the author as a main focus. Both of these works contain photographs documenting different aspects of the internment, for example, images of impounded fishing boats and of Japanese Canadians preparing for their forced relocation. In one instance, photographs of the temporary tents that housed the first individuals who arrived at camps in the BC interior are almost identical from one text to the next (Figure 1). This overlap points to the intertextual nature of these works, and illustrates that the experiences of Kitagawa and those of the authors in Oiwa's anthology were not necessarily exemplary or unique. The repetition reiterates the common story of the internment articulated by authors caught up in similar circumstances, and thus contributes to a sense of collectivity not commonly found in traditional autobiographical texts. The second way in which photographs may be used differently in life writing works

Fig.1. Photos of tents housing interned Japanese Canadians at Slocan, B.C.

From Muriel Kitagawa's *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-1948*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1985.

From Keibo Oiwa's *Stone Voices: Wartime Writings of Japanese Canadian Issei*. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1991.

has to do with the presentation of the images themselves. *Mothertalk*, for instance, includes a section entitled "Pictures from the Old Family Album," in which fourteen photographs are followed by fourteen separate entries of narrative gloss by Mary Kiyooka. These prose passages explicating each photograph individually create an aura of familiarity. The reader may even feel that she and the speaker are sitting side by side, flipping through the "old family album" together. At times, Mary Kiyooka's gloss of each photograph points out details that may not have been readily apparent to the reader. For instance, a picture of Kiyooka's daughter, Mariko, dressed in Japanese clothing reminds the author of the time when she was forced to send two of her children to live with in-laws in Japan because of poverty and war. Contextualized by this narrative gloss, certain photographs from the "old family album" become unsettling; they exhibit what Roland Barthes calls "punctum"--"sting, speck, cut, little hole--and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) . . . (27). Barthes goes on to explain that punctum is "a 'detail' [that] attracts me. . . . its mere presence changes my reading" (42). Whereas, for Barthes, the notion of "punctum" is a phenomenon that can occur independent of any narrative gloss, Mary Kiyooka's text shows that life writing's flexibility permits a photograph's "punctum" to be brought to light and shared by the narrator. The traditional Japanese clothing worn by

Fig. 2. Mariko Kiyooka, as depicted in *Mothertalk*

Mariko is the "punctum" that disturbs the complacency of the photograph for Kiyooka, reminding the author of her daughter's fate, and causing her to note that "as [Mariko] grew up her photos reflected an unspoken sadness" (94). By sharing in Kiyooka's sense of the photograph's "punctum," readers learn details about the life story behind the picture that may not have been apparent at first glance.

The inclusion of photographs in Japanese Canadian life writing texts takes on added significance since cameras, along with radios and other electronic devices, were among the articles confiscated by government officials in the months leading up to the internment. Because of this policy, certain pictures taken during the war years and included in Japanese Canadian life writing texts are not only visual reinforcements of the written text; their very existence represents a defiant act on the part of the individual participating in the picture-taking. Two months after the birth of her twins, Kitagawa tells Wes, "if I can get the boy next door to lend me his camera, I could take pictures of the twins to send to you" (95), and adds that "life is rather dull without radio or night life" (95). The fact that Kitagawa has to borrow a neighbour's camera for an act as innocent as taking a photograph of the newborn babies is ironic, for it is hardly the type of subversive action anticipated by the government with respect to Japanese Canadians.

In addition to photographs, other documents may be included in life writing texts. In *This Is My Own*, letters, poems, copies of government orders-in-council--even a sketch of a proposed home to be built by the Kitagawa family in the ghost town of Kaslo--form part of the primary written text. Structural additions in *Stone Voices* include editorial interjections, photocopied samples of diary entries written in kenji script, and excerpts of

haiku and *tanka* verse.[6] In *Mothertalk*, the text contains writing from three different members of the Kiyooka family--Mary, her husband Harry and her son Roy--including the transcript of a speech presented by Roy at a Japanese Canadian/Japanese American symposium, an open letter excerpted from one of his own books, and a number of poems.

The revisions that characterize life writing are important because they help to destabilize any singular understanding of what an autobiographical-type text should look like and, just as significantly, what it should contain. This leads to an opening up of the genre of autobiography, characterized as it is by implicit guidelines and restrictions, and introduces the notion of hybridity as an integral component of a textual work. With respect to Japanese Canadian life writing narratives, structural diversity is significant because it creates a space for the inclusion of other cultural forms of expression, such as *tanka* or *haiku*. In this way, different cultural voices are valorized while the preeminence of any one correct form of expression is refuted. In addition, alternative forms of literary expression have the potential to connect with different readers in ways that prose may not. The following poem, for instance, written by Kaoru Ikeda and included in *Stone Voices*, eloquently sums up one internee's feelings of despair:

> I thought
> It would be just temporary
> In this mountain country
> Accumulating another year
> As snow deepens (Oiwa 145)

The sparseness of the *tanka* line permits Ikeda to convey her thoughts with a directness that reflects her resignation and frustration. By juxtaposing this short verse with a longer

memoir describing in detail life "in this mountain country", Ikeda details the internment experience through a variety of artistic forms. In doing so, the author increases the potential of having her writing connect with a number of different people.

In addition to these revisions of form and structure, a further critical subversion common to life writing involves a resistance to the notion of the author as a unified subject in favour of a more fluid, destabilized sense of the narrator's role in detailing her life story. In *Mothertalk,* Mary Kiyooka problematizes the notion of the rational, cohesive subject of autobiography by acknowledging and playing with the many and varied subject-positions that constitute her identity. As a young picture bride in Canada, matriarch of several children, mother of esteemed artist and writer Roy Kiyooka, widow and single parent traveling alone and falling in love, Kiyooka represents herself in non-essentialized terms. This, in turn, allows her to step in and out of different roles as points of reference repeatedly shift. At some points, it is Kiyooka's Japanese ancestry that is the focal point of the narrative, while at other times it is her role as a young mother raising a family in the Canadian prairies that achieves prominent status.

A similar sense of multiplicity is evident in Muriel Kitagawa's writing. At times, the author appears as an eloquent writer and public speaker who is well aware of the fact that she inhabits different subject positions. As Kitagawa notes in one public address, "I was born in Vancouver, and am therefore a Native Daughter of BC. I speak to you, then, not only as a Japanese Canadian, but as a Canadian woman" (268). By introducing herself in this manner, Kitagawa acknowledges that there are not only different ways in which an individual can be perceived by other people, but also ways in which that same person can

position herself with respect to the people she associates with. In contrast to this public address, Kitagawa's personal letters shed light on her various roles as a mother, wife and sister. At the height of the internment, the confidence displayed in many of Muriel's editorials and speeches is mitigated by the frustration and bitterness she articulates in the letters to her brother. In relating the news of her family's impending separation and internment, Kitagawa tells Wes, "it's been the awfullest time in our life so far . . . I think it was fated for me to taste the dregs of this humiliation that I might know just what it is that all the women and children must endure through no fault of their own" (141). The difference in Kitagawa's public and private writing is intriguing because it illustrates the ways in which subjectivity may shift depending on external factors--including, for instance, the audience of the speech or the conditions that spurred the writing on--and internal imperatives, such as the state of mind of the individual in question.

In *Stone Voices*, a resistance to the notion of the author as a unified subject is also evident in the texts written by Miyazaki and Kensuke Kitagawa. The diary entries compiled by these two writers illustrate the ways in which the experience of incarceration in prisoner-of-war camps robbed many young men of their ability to provide for and protect their families, and stole from them as well the very freedom that, as Canadians, they took to be an inherent right. Confronted with a mixture of feelings, emotions and concerns, including the question of whether or not they should maintain their unceasing loyalty to Japan, Miyazaki and Kitagawa do not present themselves as unified, rational subjects. On the contrary, dislocation is a prevalent sentiment running through their diary entries; as Koichiro Miyazaki notes, "I felt I was in the shadows of normal society" (37).

By refusing to accept unconditionally the role of a unified autobiographical subject, the life writing author subverts the authority traditionally ascribed to this narrative act. As a result, life writing makes room for the possibility of narratives from the margins of society where certain individuals who have experienced dislocation and a lack of mastery may nevertheless tell their life story. Although a reader may not be able to relate first-hand to the life writing author's experience of internment, connections may nevertheless be established on the basis of, for instance, Kiyooka's perpetual homesickness or Kitagawa's experience as a busy female writer and public figure. Such associations make the writing more accessible, familiar and poignant for readers of the life writing text, and help to establish points of commonality that may increase the possibility for coalition on a larger level.

Beyond Self: Collaboration and Coalition in Life Writing Texts

By now, it should be clear that contemporary forms of life writing reconceptualize autobiographical writing in general. What remains unaltered, however, in the movement from autobiography to life writing is the importance of the personal perspective from which the narrative is told. Many life writing studies and, indeed, definitions of the literary form itself, place an emphasis on self-awareness which, in turn, informs the process of textual construction. This is due, in part, to life writing's roots in feminism and postmodernism, fields of inquiry that have traditionally sought more widespread recognition of personal experience as a legitimate form of scholarly knowledge.

The centrality of "experience" to the notion of life writing is both helpful and potentially problematic. Incorporating "experience" into any text is beneficial, for it acknowledges diverse forms of knowing and understanding that, at one time, were considered inadmissible and irrelevant in the face of traditional epistemological regimes. On the other hand, any uncritical embrace of the notion of "experience" must be tempered with the realization, *pace* Joan Scott, that:

> The project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, and of its notions of subjects, origin, and cause. (778)

"Experience", in other words, is not an innocent category of knowing, for it comes to pass through systems and structures that are not themselves value-free. Thus, in order to proceed with a discussion of life writing as a radical form of literary expression, it is important first to contextualize "experience" as that which is "at once always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political" (Scott 797). Because life writing works foreground personal experience, they must be analyzed keeping in mind the very categories of representation, alluded to by Scott, that may be misconstrued as "fixed, immutable identities."

In the texts by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka, the personal experiences of individuals recognized as "Japanese Canadian" remain the focal point of analysis. This term, however, constitutes the kind of representation that Scott would caution us to examine carefully. The notion of "Japanese Canadian" and, in a broader sense, "Asian Canadian" is complex, representing a range of associations that has fluctuated over time. As Roy Miki notes:

> The 'asian' inside 'canadian' has a long and painful history, marked as it is by the spectral evidence of voices gone awry, of intentions distorted, of subjects maligned and excluded. The colonial legacy manifested the 'not-white' body as a sign of the monstrous 'asiatic,' then later as a deviancy to be assimilated, and more recently as a variance that is scripted as the 'multicultural'. (*Broken Entries* 208)

In a certain sense, any term or label used to describe a group of people represents a type of management. As Miki's passage points out, categories of representation such as "asian canadian" and "Japanese Canadian" are often manipulated from beyond the boundaries of the community being described towards dubious and, at times, destructive ends.

Life writing projects, in their scope and diversity, challenge the external imposition of labels designed to contain and order a group of individuals. This is not to say, however, that points of commonality are absent in communities of writers. On the contrary, by linking together individuals with similar political concerns, life writing may in fact provide a means of reworking the ways in which ideological categories of representation operate.

While the notion of personal experience is certainly intrinsic to the creation of this type of writing, an emphasis on the self narrating the text elides the way in which life writing often represents the combined efforts of at least two writers. Many studies in life writing involve a type of co-authorship in which a critic or scholar mines the work of another writer in an effort to uncover recurring motifs or thematic concerns.[7] To the extent that this mining is successfully carried out, life writing may be seen as a multi-authored venture that contains a latent coalition-building potential. This dynamic has a great deal to do with the individual who assembles the life writing work for publication. No longer a silent presence in the construction of a text, the editor of a life writing venture often clearly stakes out his or her own investments in the work by penning an explanatory introduction to the text. This commentary allows the reader to situate the second author in relation to the first, and uncover points of affiliation or disjunction between the two individuals that illustrate particular theoretical or communal investments on the part of both authors.

In many instances, both writer and editor are recognizable members a specific community or movement,[8] and the presentation of the edited life writing text reflects the spirit of that community. The editor of each of the works that I am examining, for instance, is not a disinterested member of the production process. Roy Miki, editor of *This Is My Own*, is a second-generation Japanese Canadian poet and scholar who played an integral part in the redress campaign of 1988. The project of editing Muriel Kitagawa's writing was closely associated with Miki's own political work, and fed into a larger movement seeking compensation for the treatment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. Similarly, as a native Japanese scholar embarking on a life as a *Nikkei-Kanadajin*

(Japanese Canadian), Keibo Oiwa's decision to compile *Stone Voices* represents an attempt to "penetrate that silence which is presumed to surround the Issei" (18) in order to "restore the lost pages of history" (18). Oiwa's intent in putting together an anthology of Issei writing was to give a different and arguably more accurate representation of the internment experience by showcasing personal narratives. *Mothertalk* is similarly the product of collaboration. Daphne Marlatt, who took over the process of editing the text at the time of Roy Kiyooka's sudden death in 1994, has called the project "a creative retelling that has been carefully worked, a blend of mother's and son's vision and voices" (7). Both Roy and Mary Kiyooka lived through the internment era, and though they were not incarcerated in camps, they were nevertheless fingerprinted and registered as enemy aliens. By soliciting and then beginning the process of editing his mother's work, Roy Kiyooka was instrumental in bringing to light his mother's perspective on the internment and the ways in which it affected their family. While he did not live to see the final published copy of his mother's life stories, *Mothertalk* bears the mark of Roy's influence. In addition, the text was further shaped by the second editor, Daphne Marlatt, who had to make editorial decisions taking into account both Mary and Roy Kiyooka's involvement in the project. Thus, the end result, *Mothertalk*, is a narrative that represents a collaborative effort on the part of several individuals.

One benefit of collaboration is that it brings together the resources of members of a community and synthesizes common concerns and types of experiences. The texts by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka, for example, work with a notion of experience that assumes the presence of some type of a Japanese Canadian identity. The collaborative work

conducted by editors of these texts puts this category of representation to productive use, articulating, with respect to the internment, a communal sense of betrayal that binds an otherwise potentially disparate community together towards a common goal. This phenomenon is evidenced most concretely by the redress movement itself. The label "Japanese Canadian," at one time considered to be a negative term because it signified potential incarceration in a road camp, relocation site or prisoner-or-war facility, became, with the act of redress, the condition upon which financial compensation from the government could be achieved. By working within categories of representation as prescribed by ideological systems but expanding the field of meaning associated with such terms and resisting any fixed identity, life writing editors and scholars illustrate the ways in which experience gleaned within ideologically determined subject positions can be reworked to their community's advantage.

Interdisciplinary Form, Undisciplined Potential

Resisting easy closure and definition, and giving voice to individuals previously denied access to the realm of self-articulation, life writing is a genre with a great deal of potential, particularly for subjects traditionally excluded from the more formal practice of autobiography. The interdisciplinary importance of this category of literature is illuminated by the range of concerns introduced in the works by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka. As a site for personal reflection, political analysis and social commentary, life writing crosses and re-crosses boundaries between the various fields of politics, sociology and English

literature.[9] In the case of personal narratives detailing the internment, life writing is a particularly important interdisciplinary intervention for it acts as an alternative form of history that is different from more statistical accounts of the uprooting and relocation. By presenting personal narratives as history, Japanese Canadian life writing texts focusing on the internment expose details about the climate of racial hostility and discrimination that was prevalent in Canada during World War II.

While life writing is a hybrid genre, its radical potential, I would argue, lies in its efficacy as an overwhelmingly *un*disciplined form of literary expression. By subverting dominant representations of Japanese Canadians as "fixed immutable identities," life writing texts provide an example of resistance to the disciplinary function of ideology itself and its concomitant categories of representation that serve to order society. Such unruly and irreverent behaviour represents a capacity to unsettle that goes beyond the critical potential of interdisciplinary interventions. Instructed by the government to accept the blanket label of "Japanese Canadian" as synonymous with "enemy alien," interned individuals denouncing this treatment in turn question the pedagogical tactics of a nation that circulated such damning identity positions for individuals it categorized as "other." Turning now to a discussion of nationalism and pedagogy, I will explore the ways in which life writing texts problematize the construction of Canadian identity by offering both interdisciplinary and undisciplined insight into the work of an ostensibly democratic nation.

Notes

[1] As Marlene Kadar points out, the concept of life writing has a substantial history; often, it is associated with personal writing, particularly that which was penned by women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An anthology such as Linda S. Coleman's *Women's Life-Writing: Finding Voice/Building Community* works with life writing in this historical sense of the term.

[2] Until recently, I would have been hard-pressed to seriously consider the historical importance of a group of documents as seemingly banal as a recipe collection. While going through some of my late grandmother's possessions, however, I began to reassess my understanding of what constitutes a noteworthy archival record. In the process of my explorations, I came across a carefully preserved and meticulously organized collection of recipes. Tucked within the many scraps of well-worn paper was a handwritten chronological list of family deaths, as well as a newspaper article featuring my grandmother as a participant in a beauty pageant. The fact that both documents were carefully hidden within the recipe box intrigued me, and I speculated about the reasons why my grandmother would have selected a recipe box to store information that may have scared, thrilled, depressed or embarrassed her. While a more in-depth creative or critical analysis of this discovery is beyond the scope and intent of this paper, the realization that such a collection of documents -- hiding, as it did, layers of other historical records -- could offer insight into how my grandmother chronicled and organized various aspects of her life, suggests something of the importance of the many and varied texts that constitute life writing.

[3] Many of the imprisoned Japanese nationals were sent thousands of kilometres away from their homes in western Canada to Ontario prisoner-of-war camps in Angler and Petawawa.

[4] Because the genre of autobiography has traditionally been dominated by men, I use the masculine pronoun here deliberately.

[5] For instance, the concept of time unfolding in a linear fashion, a crucial concept for most traditional autobiographical endeavours, is not a universally accepted truth. As John F. Campbell (Cambridge University) notes in his paper, "The Search for Historical Imagination in Caribbean Historiography," (presented at the 1999 Atlantic Graduate Student History Conference), Caribbean historiography relies on a cyclical notion of time that represents a definite departure from a Western emphasis on linear progression.

[6] As Leatrice Nakane observes in her preface to *Within the Barbed Wire Fence*, *tanka* is a type of Japanese poetry consisting of "thirty-one syllables arranged in five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven respectively . . . [*haiku* has] seventeen syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five" (Nakane ix).

[7] The notion of an individual "mining" the work of another writer in order to ascertain particular themes inevitably raises the thorny question of appropriation: Are the subtexts gleaned by the editor of the life writing text really what the primary author herself would have put forth as recurring concerns in her writing? I believe that this question can be at least temporarily laid to rest by examining the motivations behind the editorial impulse to produce a life writing text. Lynn Z. Bloom has described this initiative as "a collaboration between the author of an autobiographical document and the scholar who

completes the original text with a complementary and equivalent text of her own" (Bloom, qtd. in Goodman 770). The modifiers Bloom uses to describe the additional text--"complementary" and "equivalent"--point to the spirit of the life writing project, which is meant to be an astute and carefully compiled critical study of another individual's work. Such a conscientious and thorough endeavour would seem to work against the construction of unfounded assumptions that characterizes the act of appropriation.

[8] Think, for instance, of the many life writing and autobiographical studies stemming out of feminist scholarship.

[9] Anyone who doubts the interdisciplinary character of life writing has to look no further than most graduate student history conferences for evidence to support this claim; the number of history students at both the Qualicum Beach History Conference (February 1999) and the Pacific Rim Literary Conference (February 1999) who presented papers on the importance of memoirs, diaries and letters as historical documents was impressive, underscoring the cross-disciplinary potential of this category of literature.

Chapter 2

"A Bitter Pill to Swallow": Citizenship, Pedagogy and the Politics of Forgetting

> The people are the historical "objects" of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*.
>
> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (145)

> For the very reason that our Grade School teachers, our High School teachers, and our environment have bred in us a love of country, a loyalty to one's native land, faith in the concepts of traditional British fair play, it is difficult to understand this expression of a mean narrow-mindedness, an unreasoning condemnation of a long suffering people.
>
> Muriel Kitagawa, *This Is My Own* (180)

Life writing's undisciplined nature represents a resistance to dominant narrative conventions. Consequently, it permits an opening up of the discursive space where various viewpoints, including those minority voices "repressed or marginalized by a society that espouses universalistic, univocal, and monologic humanism" (JanMohamed & Lloyd 1), can be articulated. In the years surrounding World War II, Japanese Canadians constituted one such oppressed group of individuals whose location at the margins of mainstream society was intrinsically related to concepts of ethnicity and national security. At war with Japan and provoked by the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the Canadian state in the 1940s adopted a defensive stance whereby anyone of Japanese ancestry was considered a

possible threat to the safety of the country. Through the act of life writing, the authors in this study challenge the ways in which the Canadian government conflated members of a diverse and vibrant group of people into a monolithic enemy "other." By affirming their commitment to Canada through personal narratives, these authors question the assumptions made about their loyalties and reveal a story of Canadian citizenship that challenges dominant experiences of an unproblematized sense of belonging. These texts then open up for analysis the issue of Canadian nationalism, and subtly question the content of what constitutes the notion of "Canadian" in the rhetoric of the nation.

The entrenched nature of the relationship between nations and their literature has led critics such as Simon During to observe that "it is becoming a commonplace that the institution of literature works to nationalist ends" (138). In a similar vein, Doris Sommer acknowledges the complex relationship between literary works and the development of nations, and argues that writers have traditionally enjoyed an important proactive role in the development of nations:

> [I]n the epistemological gaps that the non-science of history leaves open, narrators could project an ideal future . . . [W]riters were encouraged both by the need to fill in a history that would increase the legitimacy of the emerging nation and by the opportunity to direct that history towards a future ideal. (76)

The life writing works by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa support During and Sommer's view that nations and their literature are intricately intertwined. In particular, these texts

provide insight into the pedagogical tactics of the Canadian state by underscoring the importance of the nation's schools as a training ground where fundamental beliefs are instilled in the process of national subject formation. More instructively, these texts illuminate the degree to which basic tenets of Canadian nationalism, such as justice and freedom, were adhered to and upheld by numerous Japanese Canadian citizens. That this was so even as these principles were being unevenly applied to members of ethnic and racial minorities illustrates the power of Canada's pedagogical institutions to discipline national subjects and maintain authority within society. Because the notion of discipline constitutes an integral part of how nations function at the level of pedagogy, the process of producing a specific kind of loyal, law-abiding national subject was successful. Life writing texts, with their tendency towards inter- and un-disciplinarity, provide evidence of the ways in which such order is both maintained and challenged.

Essential to my discussion of national subject formation in Canada is Benedict Anderson's argument that nations are "imagined communities" that achieve ontological fullness only in the minds of the people they seek to define. Japanese Canadian life writing narratives support this assertion by providing evidence of the illusory and impermanent nature of "citizenship," the legal manifestation of the nation's presence in the lives of everyday people. Using the works by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa to contextualize the far-reaching repercussions of the World War II internment, I will discuss the relationship between the dissolution of citizenship rights and crises in identity. Because images of classrooms and teachers come up frequently throughout the texts under analysis, I will discuss the ways in which the school system acts as a discursive site where "good" citizens

are formed through rhetorical and pedagogical strategies that constantly reinforce the legitimacy of the Canadian nation. Part of the long-term impact of a successful national pedagogy is the creation of a national imaginary where certain narratives are remembered and others deliberately forgotten through the careful construction and monitoring of history. I will suggest that the act of life writing disturbs the nation's tendency to remember and historicize selectively, allowing for a wider variety of experiences to be recognized under the aegis of Canadian literature and history.

Imagi/Nation: The Fragile State of Canadian Identity

In an attempt to understand how a democratic country like Canada could have carried out such a gross violation of civil rights in interning thousands of its own citizens, it is important to begin with the realization that nations in general are not fixed political and social entities with immutable terms of reference. On the contrary, nations are constructs, largely envisioned into existence, whose very cogency depends upon an intangible sense of belonging. While beliefs held by members of a nation may be as specific as, for instance, democracy, freedom of speech and multiculturalism, communal forms of affiliation may also result from little more than a fundamental shared sense of existence within the same country. When numerous individuals share this basic notion of affiliation, the nation they inhabit can be seen as "an imagined political community . . . [;]it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion"

(Anderson 6). Although the specific content of what it means to be, for instance, "Canadian" will no doubt change from one person to the next,[1] the mutual recognition of the term itself is the critical factor in the emergence of communities on a level of identification that is largely imagined.

At the most fundamental level of the imagined community, a sense of affiliation is what brings people together as members of the same country. This concept is so intrinsic to the notion of the imagined community that "defining a nation by its members' consciousness of belonging to it is tautological" (Hobsbawm 7). Affiliation is the process "by which men and women . . . create social bonds between each other . . . through institutions, associations, and communities" (Said 17). Comprising multiple levels of government, numerous special interest groups, an expansive bureaucracy and an extensive range of local groups and organizations, the Canadian state offers many different opportunities for affiliation, resulting in its success as an imagined community. Because of the largely fabricated nature of such forms of belonging, however, a crisis in affiliation, as experienced by Japanese Canadian citizens who were labeled "enemy aliens," is possible. More importantly, because of the tautological nature of the definition of nations--in which the act of belonging to a country constitutes the essence of the nation itself--the crisis experienced by Japanese Canadians during World War II was twofold, involving both the question of belonging and the problematic notion of what these Canadians were aspiring to belong *to*.

The suggestion that nations are imagined communities is particularly apposite with respect to states with histories as settler colonies, such as Canada, that at one point in

history had to create a sense of national identity for the specific purpose of connecting a disparate--and often divisive--population.[2] With people from many different ethnic, linguistic, racial and religious backgrounds spread out across a vast land, the establishment of a common ground of affiliation for Canadians became increasingly desirable in the eyes of individuals attempting to manage the new territory. In order for the fledgling colony to succeed on its own terms, the nation had to project a cohesive image of itself to all members of the emerging population; hence, a version of the nation was self-consciously manufactured. This phenomenon was, perhaps, inevitable in a place like Canada for a number of interrelated reasons:

> [I]n countries where the climate, the landscape and the native inhabitants did little to foster any sense of continuity, where the sense of distance, both within and without was so great, the feeling that a new definition of self--metaphysical, historical, cultural, linguistic and social--was needed, was and is, overwhelmingly persuasive. (Lawson 168)

In the process of defining itself, Canada had to take into account such factors as defense issues, settlement concerns and the growing ideological cleft between New and Old World realities. Based on concerns such as these and "faced with their 'mosaic' reality, [settler colonies such as Canada] have, in many ways, been clear examples of the *constructedness* of nations" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 152). Over time, the conspicuous nature of such construction is made less apparent by the development of a number of state institutions, systems and controls that lend legitimacy to the evolving nation.

Citizenship, as the institutional recognition of an individual's affiliation with a particular country, is an integral part of the legal, social and political discourse of the nation. In Canada, the institutionalization of citizenship emerged relatively recently with the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947. Up until this point in history, the "imagined community" that was Canada relied heavily on its historic ties with the British Empire to give legal definition to its citizens. After the Canadian Citizenship Act was passed, however, "instead of promoting unity, it continued to encourage diversity by retaining British-subject status as an element of Canadian citizenship" (Kaplan 7). For individuals, such as French Canadians, First Nations peoples and members of certain ethnic minorities who had experienced discrimination at the hands of English-speaking Canada, the persistence of the presence of the Empire in the notion of Canadian citizenship reduced the efficacy of this form of belonging. Thus, while it is offered as a privilege, depending on the specific instance of its application, the notion of citizenship can be ambiguous at best, and, in the worst instances, a problematic terrain to navigate.

The question of what citizenship means and, perhaps more importantly, how it is negotiated, varies from person to person and, indeed, from country to country. In a discussion of what it may indicate for members of the Canadian state, Robert Fulford suggests that "for many individuals, Canadian citizenship carries symbolic and cultural power . . . Most people have little trouble making an emotional connection with Canada for themselves" (106). By introducing the realm of emotive understanding into the discourse of citizenship, Fulford touches on what it is that makes such a bureaucratic notion so remarkably poignant for numerous individuals:

> Citizenship is both a legal and an emotional concept. It is a means of categorizing individuals and of giving them an identity. Citizenship defines an individual's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities; it also implies loyalty and commitment to a national entity. A citizen can claim the protection of his or her nation, and, by the same token, is compelled to contribute to that protection. (Morton 50)

Caught up in questions of identity, rights, responsibilities, loyalty and commitment, citizenship is constituted by diverse fields of association that cannot be read in strictly legal or political terms. Because of its complexity, citizenship is at once the site of rich possibility and potential heartache, a reality experienced by individuals who have endured dislocation and disrupture at the hands of the nation.

For the entire length of the war and beyond, the notion of Canadian citizenship remained of paramount importance to individuals who were discriminated against not only by their fellow citizens, but also by their government. Many Japanese Canadians assumed that their citizenship status automatically protected them from any discriminatory treatment at the hands of the Canadian government. As quintessential corollaries of Canadian citizenship, democracy and freedom were so entrenched in the national identity at the time of World War II that the possibility of un-democratic action on behalf of the state itself seemed not only unlikely, but impossible. In the days leading up to the internment of Japanese Canadians, the suggestion that a democratic country such as

Canada would incarcerate its own citizens was treated as absurd by members of the Japanese Canadian community:

> The *New Canadian* was voicing a common perception when readers were told that the rumoured 'proposal that Japanese be removed somewhere east of the rockies is regarded simply as silly,' and that the 'idea of camps equivalent to internment camps is also branded in the same light' . . . . (Miki, Introduction 3)

Thus, when the internment did, in fact, proceed apace, individuals throughout the Japanese Canadian community were faced with the dismaying realization that the ideals they held about citizenship and national belonging were not incontrovertible.

For Japanese Canadians who believed, as a result of their citizenship, that the nation signified by the term "Canada" included them, being interned or branded as an enemy alien destabilized their assumption. Such a sense of betrayal occurred regardless of whether the subject in question was a naturalized citizen or a Canadian by birth. As Mary Kiyooka notes, "it was dismaying to be called a JAP just when we were beginning to feel Canadian and most of us had Canadian citizenships and passports . . . Twenty-five years after coming to Canada and becoming citizens we were stripped of everything. Boy it's been a bitter pill to swallow" (136-7). For individuals of Japanese ancestry not born in Canada, becoming Canadian was not a singular action achieved with the conferring of citizenships and passports. On the contrary, as Kiyooka's observation illustrates, becoming Canadian was a long process achieved through incremental, emerging moments in which

individuals "began to feel" a part of the nation. For many naturalized citizens, the lengthy process that was involved in feeling Canadian, coupled with the dissolution of citizenship rights at the end of the long journey, led to a crisis of personal identification. This feeling of dismay was not unique to individuals who had adopted Canada as their new home: Canadian-born individuals of Japanese ancestry also had their rights as members of a democratic society suspended indefinitely and, as a result, experienced crises of both personal and communal identity.

The intensity of Japanese Canadian responses to their treatment during the war years, as displayed through the act of life writing, suggests the extent of the identity crisis that may occur from losing citizenship rights. Many individuals were so crushed by their wartime persecution that they simply never recovered. As Kiyooka admits, "it's an awful truth but there were many Issei who were beaten to death by the furies unleashed by war. Let's say we were scarred for life" (139). Echoing his mother's sentiments, Roy Kiyooka notes that the wartime treatment of Japanese Canadians which, for him, resulted in an end to schooling and the gradual dropping away of childhood friends, was "a loss I've never fully recovered from" (qtd. in Kamboureli, *Making* 91). Certainly, the extent to which an individual self-identified her or himself as a Canadian influenced the degree of betrayal experienced. As Mary Kiyooka explains it, "Papa who had staked everything on becoming a good Canadian got hurt by the war more than I did" (Kiyooka 138). Muriel Kitagawa, who was born and educated in Canada, and who clearly defined her love for her native country time and again in the various public articles that she wrote was, like Mary Kiyooka's husband, devastated by the Canadian government's actions:

> For a Nisei such as Muriel, who had never before had occasion to doubt her intimate roots in her native land, Canada, and who believed in the sanctity of democratic principles, this moment of separation cut deeply into her consciousness . . . What was considered impossible in a democratic country such as Canada had occurred with a swiftness that stunned people like Muriel. (Miki, Introduction 2)

The government's decision to intern its own citizens was so spurious that Japanese Canadians took for granted their right to challenge this undemocratic proposal. In response to a government order permitting the scattering of families in the process of interning Japanese Canadians, the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group (NMEG), an organization devoted to keeping uprooted families together, reminded the government of their rights as Canadian citizens. In a letter to the chairman of the B.C. Securities Commission, a provincial organization that was responsible for overseeing the Japanese Canadian internment, NMEG clearly stated its position on the potential separation of families:

> [W]e are firm in saying "NO" to your last order which calls for break-up of our families . . . When we say "NO" at this point, we request you to remember that we are British subjects by birth, that we are no less loyal to Canada than any other Canadian, that we have done nothing to deserve the break-up of our families, that we are law abiding Canadian citizens . . . Incidentally, we are entitled as native

> sons to all civil rights of an ordinary Canadian within the limitations of Canada's war effort. (Miki, Introduction 37)

The argument put forth by NMEG reveals a number of complex issues relating to the state of Canadian citizenship in 1942. To begin with, the reference to "British subjects by birth" situates this document prior to the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947 and evokes a legacy of British imperialism as the basis for recognition and rights. At the time of the 1947 Citizenship Act, Canada's connection with Britain was strong; as Canadians, "we misunderstand our history if we forget the tremendous appeal of citizenship in the greatest empire the world had ever seen" (Morton 55). The rhetoric employed by the authors of the NMEG letter suggests that this lesson was not lost on a generation of Japanese Canadians. By referring to themselves as "British subjects by birth" who are "no less loyal to Canada," the authors illuminate as well the hybrid nature of pre-1947 Canadian citizenship. In referencing themselves as "law abiding Canadian citizens," the suggestion of discipline is also brought to the surface of the discussion. The letter points out that, as Canadian citizens, Japanese Canadians respected the laws of the nation, and therefore logically expected that they would receive fair treatment through the legal system in return. As the months passed, however, and the proposed internment was carried out, many Japanese Canadians had little choice but to accept the reality that both their citizenship in general and the laws, histories and ideals it represented were not beyond reproach.

Japanese Canadian life writing narratives detailing the internment years expose the inconsistencies inherent in the Canadian nation's constitutive concepts of citizenship, democracy and freedom. The dissolution of citizenship rights and the undermining of democratic principles that the uprooting entailed illustrated to affected individuals across the country how nebulous their sense of nationhood really was.

National Pedagogy and the Disciplining of National Subjects

Because nations are, in large part, imagined, a certain amount of instruction and discipline is necessary to permit such entities to exist across space and through time. While such discipline sometimes takes the form of outright physical force, order is always also present at the level of ideology. This is particularly true in the case of the Canadian state; as an ostensibly free and democratic society, the bulk of the power of the nation is achieved through ideological means. One of the most ubiquitous ways that discipline exists is through the process of interpellation. Following Althusser, "ideological state apparatuses"--institutions such as legal, political and educational systems, the family, and cultural and communicative networks--interpellate subjects as, say, Canadian or Japanese and, in doing so, organize and contain diverse members of a society.

As the texts by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa illustrate, one of the most important sites for the interpellation (and therefore disciplining) of national subjects is the educational system with its constitutive classrooms, curriculum, teachers, peers and broad

concepts of pedagogy in general. The influence of this ideological state apparatus is far-reaching. As Mohanty argues,

> [T]he academy and the classroom itself are not mere sites of instruction. They are also political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies. Thus teachers and students produce, reinforce, recreate, resist, and transform ideas about race, gender, and difference in the classroom. (147)

With the educational system as its means of enforcement, the nation's pedagogy represents "the practical synthesis of the questions 'what should be taught and why' with considerations as to how that teaching should take place" (Simon 130). By controlling these vital aspects of the learning process for students, the school system of a nation is able to reinforce and recirculate a particular kind of knowledge and, in doing so, discipline its subjects.

As integral components in the structure and functioning of nations, pedagogy and the discipline it engenders work in tandem to ensure that certain histories and concepts of what it means to be, for instance, "Canadian" are perpetuated time and again. While the impulse behind a nation's pedagogical initiative may be to strengthen the country, the teaching process itself is necessarily exclusive (some values are reinforced, others are not). As the texts by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa illustrate, Canada's national imaginary--that confluence of myths, histories, stories and suppositions that together achieve recognition

as something quintessentially "Canadian"--is not a pregiven, natural fact; rather, it is something that is carefully constructed through the disciplinary and pedagogical work of the nation that turns "scraps, patches and rags of daily life . . . into the signs of a coherent national culture" (Bhabha 145). A glimpse into the Canadian classrooms detailed in the texts by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka will provide a helpful way of beginning to determine how certain values within Canadian society have been carefully constructed and reinforced for generations of students.

Images of teachers, classrooms and schools as a site of learning and socialization pervade the life writing texts that are the focus of this study. Many of the authors of these works and the characters that they introduce are defined in some way through their place within the nation's educational system: Mary Kiyooka's son, Roy (a future art teacher), is depicted as a thwarted student whose academic career ended with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour; Koichiro Miyazaki is remembered as a compassionate principal of a Japanese language school; and Muriel Kitagawa is described as having been an "enthusiastic learner and an excellent student" during her high school years (Miki, Introduction 22). In a poem that provides intertextual commentary to *Mothertalk*, Roy Kiyooka notes the profound impact that the Canadian school system had on him:

> my grade 10 teacher fought with the brits at vimy ridge and taught 'me' his brand of History as if he had co-authored it. 'pearl harbour' was inadmissible if not invincible - til it went up in smoke harry truman never lost a wink of sleep over his

> decision. i never got to finish high school and kept that fact from myself and others, longer than i care to recount. don't ask 'me' how it felt working night-shifts on the swift edmonton plant 'killing floor' during those thwart years . . . don't ask me how it really felt to be fingerprinted and duly registered as an enemy alien ask - if you can locate him, that dumbfound, yellow kid. ask his mother. (Kiyooka, "looking down" 23)

The mention of fighting "with the brits at vimy ridge" connects Canadian history to a legacy of imperialism while, at the same time, the emphasis on "History" with a capital "H" underscores the authority that the teacher's "brand" of history enjoyed. That this individual imparted his knowledge to his students "as if he had co-authored it" suggests the degree to which pedagogues can be complicit with the systems in which they teach. As Lawrence Grossberg observes, teachers, as key figures in "the technology of the humanities," are "part of a larger system of disciplinization which produces the 'civil-ized' subject" (17). By imparting knowledge, such as the supposed facts of history, without questioning the structure and function of that knowledge, teachers play a vital role in the construction of national subjects and the disciplining of citizens from an early age on.

The importance of the role of the teacher in educating national subjects is also stressed in Koichiro Miyazaki's diary entries, included in *Stone Voices*. What is different here, however, is the fact that the teacher in question is the principal of a Japanese language school and a diehard Japanese nationalist who "chose to become a 'beautiful prisoner' rather than take up arms against his native country" (Oiwa 29) during World

War II. Miyazaki's writings illustrate the sense of uncertainty and despair that took place in the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, as evidenced by the temporary closing of the Japanese school:[3]

> It was the last day of the Japanese Language School. "The school will close today. Please continue to study Japanese little by little at home," I said. Three hundred pairs of eyes were looking at mine intensely. I tried to stop my voice from trembling. "The day when Japan and Canada are good friends will come again. You are all Canadians. Please become good Canadians. I can not tell you when I'll see you again, but it might be very soon. So let's wait for that day." It became difficult for me to contain my tears so I quit speaking. (Oiwa 36)

Miyazaki's statement is instructive because it projects a seamless image of the relationship between Japan and Canada that belies that growing antagonism between the two nations which were, after all, at war with one another. The impulse here seems to be towards smoothing over, and perhaps even denying, the fissures and ruptures that were emerging in the daily lives of Japanese Canadians. This is instructive because it suggests, in part, how national affiliation may be managed through pedagogy. Miyazaki's unproblematized approach to the injustices that were being experienced by Japanese Canadians (such as the closing of the language school itself) suggest that a certain amount of co-optation may have occurred. The point of view adopted by the principal is also telling, for it speaks of conditions that do not include him ("You are all Canadians" . . . "Please become good

Canadians"), thereby highlighting the different experiences of first- and second-generation Japanese Canadians.

In addition to the role that teachers play within the pedagogy of a nation, the curriculum that students learn is of fundamental importance as well. As Japanese Canadian life writing texts show, the nation's schools were a place where liberal notions of democracy and freedom were presented as normative, incontrovertible aspects of life in Canada. Nowhere in these teachings was there an admission that such liberal notions could be in any way negative or illusory--a fact that was discovered by Japanese Canadians only through their experience of wartime discrimination. While the notion of democracy had great appeal for Canadian citizens, particularly in light of the well-publicized human rights atrocities carried out by Nazi Germany, it was a concept that often went unchallenged by members of the Canadian state. As Grossberg notes:

> In the abstract, 'democracy' is a useful basis for a critique of existing political relations, but it often remains vague and unspecified . . . We not only need to rethink the meaning of democracy and the possibilities of its relocation from the domain of the state to that of culture, but even more we need to think about whether democracy is sufficient by itself, or whether there are in fact limits that have to be thought through in its relations to questions of liberty, justice, and other forms of equality. (Grossberg 23)

An engagement with the positive and negative aspect of liberal concepts such as democracy was not the mandate of the Canadian state during World War II. As Muriel Kitagawa points out in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, Canadian children in the early to mid-twentieth century were taught "love of country, a loyalty to one's native land [and] faith in the concepts of traditional British fair play" (180). Enforced at school and rearticulated through wartime propaganda, these liberal principles were presented as unquestionable aspects of a Canadian sense of identity. That Kitagawa sees these teachings as being "bred in us" suggests the depth of pedagogy's reach. The importance of schooling can also be ascertained through the way in which Kitagawa places "teachers" on the same continuum as the environment--"our Grade School *teachers*, our High School *teachers*, and our *environment*" (180; my emphasis)--in effect creating the impression that teachers--and pedagogy itself--are as organic as the land. In this manner, the knowledge that teachers impart is positioned as irrefutable and based on an unerring affiliation with the land itself. Such a construction also takes away the possibility of agency on the part of the teachers, positing them instead as instruments of the national pedagogy, mere conduits through which knowledge passes unaltered and unchallenged.

The level of success experienced by the pedagogical teachings of the nation may be read, in part, through the degree to which the objects of the national pedagogy subscribe and aspire to the beliefs they have learned. Throughout her writing, Kitagawa staunchly defends the ideals that she has been taught in school and passes these on to her own children, saying that "we are Canadians and can expect decent treatment from decent people" (74). As the act of internment illustrated, however, the "decent treatment" that

Canadians were taught to expect was not an *a priori* aspect of national identity. Kitagawa, along with countless other Canadian citizens, developed "an understanding of Canadianness as embodying unity, but a unity adumbrated by differences that the historical constitution of the nation cannot accommodate" (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 294). Because she learned the lessons taught to her in school so completely, taking the notions of democracy and fair play for granted, Kitagawa's sense of identity was intimately caught up in the rhetoric of her native country. For this reason, her loyalty to the land of her birth was deeply entrenched:

> Who would have thought that one day I would be unable to stand up for my country's government, out of sheer shame and disillusion, against the slurs of the scornful? The bitterness, the anguish is complete . . . It is because we *are* Canadians, that we protest the violation of our birthright. If we were not we would not care one jot or tittle whatever you did, for then we could veil our eyes in contempt. You . . . have sought to sully and strain our loyalty but, I'm telling you, you can't do it. You can't undermine our faith in the principles of equal rights and justice for all, with 'malice towards none, and charity for all.' (184-5)

While Kitagawa's unflinching dedication to the ideals she has been taught may be read as an instance of one Canadian citizen being totally taken in by the pedagogical project of the nation, the history and achievement of the Japanese Canadian community suggests that there is room here for a more empowering reading of pedagogy that subverts its

substantial authority. This empowerment is based on the fact that the lessons taught to Japanese Canadians in the process of their formation as national subjects were, in fact, learned so well that they became the basis of a quest for justice that grew to national prominence.

As many Japanese Canadian narratives seem to suggest, the pedagogical work of the nation achieved its goal of persuading old and new Canadians alike that liberal concepts were noble aspirations of the Canadians state. At the very least, these concepts came to be understood by citizens as important aspects of Canadian identity as it was depicted in the midst of wartime propaganda. The process of national pedagogy doesn't take into account, however, what happens when citizens learn the lesson they have been taught too well. Over the course of post-World War II Japanese Canadian history, this has been precisely what has happened to a community once immobilized by the rhetoric and concepts that they have since employed against their oppressors. Two examples of the way this has been achieved may help to illustrate the point with greater clarity.

One of the lesser known details in the history of the internment involves the question of repatriation. In the spring of 1945, with the war coming to a close and thousands of individuals waiting to be released from internment camps, the Canadian government presented Japanese Canadians with two options: they could either agree to move east of the Rockies or be "repatriated" to Japan. The term " 'repatriation' was a euphemism for what was, in actuality, a forced exile; the 'patria' or country of birth for the majority of these citizens was Canada, so they could not, in this sense, be 'repatriated' to Japan" (Miki & Kobayashi 49). While 10,000 Japanese Canadians originally signed up for

repatriation, most eventually changed their minds, preferring to remain in the country they knew rather than risk a uncertain future in war-torn Japan.[4] When the government attempted to invoke the powers of the state to gain the legal right to deport individuals who had originally selected repatriation, Japanese Canadians contested this action, appealing to the public for support. Evoking concepts of fair play and legality--in short, the very notions that constituted the backbone of the national pedagogy that they had been taught in school--Japanese Canadians and their supporters successfully lobbied the government to first downgrade their repatriation plans and then abandon them altogether. While attempts made by Japanese Canadians to use the ideals learned in Canadian schools to contest their discrimination were not always successful (they did not, for instance, stop the internment from occurring in the first place), it is important to note that there were times when the pedagogical teachings of the nation were used to successfully defy the Canadian government. Through such a practice, a measure of subversion was achieved.

A more contemporary example of Japanese Canadians asserting the rights they had been taught to expect as Canadian citizens may be found in the act of redress achieved by the Japanese Canadian community in 1988. By challenging the government on the legitimacy of the act of internment using notions such as democracy, freedom, and civil liberties, Japanese Canadians seeking redress used the government's own rhetoric to gain financial compensation for their past suffering. While the redress movement cannot be characterized as an unmitigated success (it was a process, according to many, that devastated the wider community)[5] it is nevertheless significant to note what it represents with respect to the pedagogical teachings of the nation and questions of identity. As Miki

observes, "the parliamentary acknowledgement of the 'citizen' in Japanese Canadian' is evidence that identity formations are never fixed and determinate, but can be re-configured through transformational processes" (*Broken Entries* 196). Putting concepts that were instilled through the pedagogy of the nation to the test proved to be just such a "transformational process" that shifted the history of Japanese Canadians towards a narrative that included moments of justice.

One of the forums through which the Japanese Canadian community subverted the pedagogical power of the nation was print culture. While the print resources of a nation are generally perceived as a supplement to the nation-building agenda of the state,[6] this may not have been the case for Japanese Canadians in World War II. The significance of Japanese-language newspapers among the issei, few of whom could read or write English, was instrumental. As Koichiro Miyazaki notes in *Stone Voices*, these individuals were "completely dependent on the Japanese-language newspapers . . . [and] would be lost in darkness without newspapers, like a ship without a captain. Groundless rumours and lies could push the people into a state of panic" (36). The importance granted newspapers was not due only to their content; in the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, such publications were banned on the grounds that their very presence would upset an already hostile public. The one paper that was permitted to continue publishing was the *New Canadian*, an English-language newspaper run by nisei members of the community. The pages of this publication provided a space where loyal Canadian citizens, such as Kitagawa, could point out the inconsistencies of the government's policies, building strength within the community on the basis of democratic rights that were by no means

deviant in terms of the nation itself. Roy Kiyooka once observed that "the *New Canadian* was for many years the only community newspaper, and what I knew of my fellow nisei I only knew in and through that kind of source" (qtd. in Miki, *Broken*; 66-7). During the internment years, this publication regularly published the whereabouts of uprooted members of the community, thereby working at odds with the government that was attempting to permanently disperse Japanese Canadians across the country. By using one of the nation's most effective pedagogical tools to inform their community and keep it relatively connected, and by explaining the nature of their betrayal using the logic and language of the nation, Japanese Canadians like Kitagawa illustrated to their entire community how defying the government with its own concepts could be a very real possibility.

Remembering to Forget

One of the most powerful ways that nations maintain a particular version--and vision--of themselves is through the act of memory. As far back as Renan's well-known treatise on the ontology of nations, the notion of "forgetting" traumatic national events that will be forever remembered in the national mythology has been a central and somewhat paradoxical question in the theoretical discussion of nations. According to Renan, "the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things . . . every French citizen *has to have forgotten* the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century"

(11; my emphasis). In *Imagined Communities* Anderson pays particular attention to this passage:

> Renan saw no need to explain for his readers what either "la Saint Barthelemy" or "les massacres du Midi au XIIIe siecle" meant . . . nor did [he] find anything queer about assuming "memories" in his readers' minds even though the events themselves occurred 300 to 600 years previously. One is also struck by the peremptory syntax of doit avoir oublie (not doit oublier)--"obliged already to have forgotten"-- . . . Having to "have already forgotten" tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be "reminded" turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies. (200)

The ambivalent notion of forgetting and remembering has important consequences for Canada's national imaginary. I would argue that the Japanese Canadian internment has achieved, for Canadians, something of the status of what "la Saint Barthelemy" or "les massacres du Midi" mean to the French--recognizing, of course, crucial differences in the scope and severity of the abuses inflicted. In Canadian elementary schools, right after the lesson on the exile of Acadians, students learn about the World War II internment of Japanese Canadians. As a result of this perfunctory history lesson, the evocation of the seizure of fishing boats or the image of ghost-towns in the BC interior will have some relevance for Canadians possessing even the most limited grasp of their nation's history. Relatively few individuals, however, will have a clear sense of the materiality of history as

evidenced through the lived repercussions of the uprooting of more than 21,000 Canadians--what it was like to spend endless nights in maggot-infested horse stalls that reeked of manure, or how it must have felt to contemplate suicide in the face of interminable incarceration miles from family members and loved ones. As one internee detained at Hastings Park[7] remembers:

> I will never forget the scene in the Livestock Building where the women and children were being housed. There was that indescribable smell of manure and disinfectant, the cries and whimpers of children desperately hanging on to their mothers' skirts, the bewildered looks on many faces, the pathetic attempts to create some privacy between the rows of army cots. (Miki & Kobayashi 29)

As this passage illustrates, the Hastings Park accommodations were primarily for women and children; many Japanese Canadian males had already been sent on to road camps or prisoner-of-war facilities where the conditions were similarly harsh. Looking back on his time in a P.O.W camp, Takeo Nakane remembers that "the issei then was haunted by anxiety about his future, contingent upon the duration of the war and its outcome. Even the immediate future was unknowable. The uncertainty was such as to force thoughts even to the point of pondering death" (21). Details such as these, gleaned from diary entries and personal memoirs, have seldom constituted the nation's official narrative of the internment. This, in part, is due to the ambivalence of forgetting and remembering that constitutes the memory of the nation.

What I want to suggest here is that Renan's formulation of the various acts of remembering and forgetting that characterize the modern nation alludes to the subtle way in which society may be regulated not simply through the archives of history, but also through the very ways that we remember and forget. For instance, mythologizing an event into the annals of national history represents a way in which that episode may be "re/membered," in other words reconstituted or reconfigured in a selective fashion. In the process of mythologizing, which, I would argue, bears idealistic connotations, events may be re/membered as larger-than-life, dramatic, heroic or exemplary. What is often (deliberately) forgotten in the course of such mythologizing through, for instance, denial or disavowal, is the specificity of the event, while what is remembered is an increasingly displaced notion of the episode as it actually happened. An example of this process of selective memory at work is evident in the rhetoric surrounding the Japanese Canadian redress movement. As Miki notes, "no longer the outsider wronged by the state, the 'Japanese Canadian' subject is redressed--in metaphoric terms, dressed anew--in the garment of reconciliation and resolution--in the garment of citizenship. In the process, the nation to which this redressed subject belongs is redeemed" (*Broken Entries* 197). Thus, although the internment is "remembered" in the process of redress, it is reconfigured in terms of redemption and reconciliation that elide more brutal details of the specificity of the event. In order to resist such a selective framing of historical incidents, presenting memories and narratives from a variety of different perspectives is necessary. Through such a process, the negative power of forgetting can be mitigated.

As Bhabha notes, "to be obliged to forget--in the construction of the national present--is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that *performs* the problem of totalizing the people and unifying the national will" (160). In the case of Canada, the act of taking the individual trauma of thousands of Canadian men, women and children and expediently collectivizing this as "the internment" or, worse still, as a wrong that has been blithely "redressed" is, I would argue, problematic. With the passage of time, the event, through relegation and containment within the national imaginary, becomes precisely that which we have been obliged to forget, but which, nevertheless, shall be remembered through the pedagogical address of the nation as a part of our national identity. Through such a phenomenon, the ambivalence of forgetting and remembering acts in a deceptive way to order, structure and regulate the past. However, despite such nefarious evidence of the controlling aspect of memory, this process does not have to be seen as exclusively negative or discouraging. As Bhabha sees it, "being obliged to forget [can be constructive because it] becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew [and] imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification" (161).What is needed in the face of the over-generalization of history is therefore the specificity of individual stories of the uprooting, written out of experience and told from a point of view that has not been co-opted by the leveling voice of national mythology.

Japanese Canadian life writing texts disrupt the ambivalence of forgetting and remembering by detailing specific, lived stories that cannot be subsumed in an idealistic gloss of the past. Not content to have their persecuted history relegated to the status of an

insufficiently articulated memory, Japanese Canadian authors of internment narratives work to redefine that which has been committed to national mythology. In the process of relegating the internment to national memory, the specificity of the occurrence has often been compromised. This has been effected through a privileging of statistical memory over more qualitative accounts of the event. In the case of the Japanese Canadian internment, a substantial amount of documentation has tended to rest on facts: the number of people interned, the monetary equivalent of the property seized, the number of fishing boats impounded. Through such a quantitative rendering of history, forgetting and remembering coexist in the problematic ambivalence that characterizes nations.

Notes

[1] In a critique of Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities, Partha Chatterjee questions the homogeneity of what is collectively imagined by members of a nation, noting that "Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on [behalf of the postcolonial world] not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized" (Chatterjee 5). While Chatterjee is certainly right to question the content of what is "imagined" in the construction of national identity, I am not convinced that Anderson meant to suggest that this is always uniform among individuals. On the contrary, what is "imagined" by individuals in the formation of the nation, is simply that other individuals exist who are also Canadian, Indian, Japanese, etc.

[2] It should be noted here that, on a certain level, the suggestion that such an identity was created is problematic because it could be seen as an indication that identification with the land that has come to be known as Canada only began with the arrival of settlers to the New World. While the relationship of Canada's aboriginal peoples with the land obviously preceded any European claims to settle and control--ideologically or otherwise--the region, what I suggest here is that the construct of national identity was a means of grafting a sense of cohesion onto an overwhelmingly incoherent population.

[3] Following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, many Japanese language schools and newspapers voluntarily shut down in the interests of helping the Japanese Canadian community maintain a low profile in the face of growing discrimination and opposition.

[4] For a discussion of the repatriation proposal, see Miki & Kobayashi 52.

[5] In an interview in *Other Solitudes*, Joy Kogawa notes that the redress movement made it so hard to be Japanese Canadian that, at the time, she wanted to leave Canada.

[6] See, for instance, Benedict Anderson's seminal discussion on print capitalism in *Imagined Communities.*

[7] Located on the grounds of the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, BC, Hastings Park was used as a "clearing site" for Japanese Canadians en route to the BC interior. In some instances, accommodation was provided in livestock buildings which still carried the stench of manure and animals. For more details, see *Justice In Our Time* by Roy Miki & Cassandra Kobayashi.

Chapter 3

"A Long Suffering People": Japanese Canadians and the Process of Racialization

> The symbolic--that register of regulatory ideality--is also and always a racial industry, indeed the reiterated practice of racializing interpellations . . . [R]ace is partially produced as an effect of the history of racism . . . its boundaries and meanings are constructed over time not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism.
>
> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (18)

> Strange how these protestors are much more vehement against the Canadian-born Japanese than they are against German-born Germans, who might have a real loyalty to their land of birth, as we have for Canada. I guess it's just because we look different.
>
> Muriel Kitagawa, *This Is My Own* (72)

In exploring the ways in which the Canadian state was able to foster the development of a homogenous set of associations and ideals across a citizenry comprised of diverse bodies, a notion of "regulatory ideality" (Butler, *Bodies* 18) is helpful. "Regulatory ideality" refers to the conceptualization of difference in ways that rely on contrived categories of identification. The system is "regulatory" because it helps to contain individuals within specific categories of representation; its "ideality" results from the fact that such forms of intelligibility are not necessarily the way things are, but rather how they have been configured or idealized through social processes. By offering an explanation for the ways in which certain normative modes of identification operate within society, "regulatory ideality" provides insight into the various ways in which individuals are interpellated along,

for instance, class, gender, ethnic or racial lines. Crucial to this concept is the notion of complicity: symbolic affiliations are successful precisely because they serve as generally accepted truths among individuals who self-identify as, say, "women" or "Japanese Canadians." It is important to note as well that "regulatory ideality" is not a simple concept, for the ways in which we respond to the hailing that is implicit in different acts of interpellation are many and varied. At any particular moment in time, we respond to different forms of identification that may be positioned in complementary, ambivalent or antagonistic relation to one another. While the imbrication of such fields of association may prove fruitful or, alternatively, act as a site of dislocation, it remains crucial to keep in mind the interconnected nature of forms of identification. Moreover, the effectiveness of the act of interpellation can be destabilized when the identification evoked (for instance, "citizen") does not match, in full or in part, the reality experienced by the individual thus named. Like a forgery in which one minute detail gone awry alerts the beholder to the artifice of the entire work, thwarted interpellations expose the presence of "regulatory ideality" at work, and help to illuminate the constructed nature of systems of identification that serve to order and contain people in a diverse society.

For individuals of Japanese ancestry living in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century, a notion of "regulatory ideality" can be ascertained through the ways in which such individuals were subject to "racializing interpellations" on the part of the dominant society. The concept of racialization is important here because it emphasizes how identification comes to be structured and maintained over the course of time in an ongoing process. As "the construction of images of ourselves or of others [that relies] on

the loaded and biased ideological definitions of racial categories, [racialization is] one of the processes that leads to racism" (Kamboureli, *Making* 15). By the time individuals, well-meaning or otherwise, reach the point of talking about "racism," racial categories have already been mobilized. While such concepts are not completely without use--they do, for instance, provide a way of talking about difference--racialization helps us see the ways in which these types of categories are, above all else, constructions.

The texts by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka confront, to varying degrees, the injustice of the internment and denounce it as a act of unmitigated racism. At the same time, however, these works contain various subtexts alluding to the presence of racialization at work in the years prior to World War II. This additional layer of narrative poses questions about Canada's history of discrimination against Japanese Canadians and illustrates as well the ways in which the process of racialization encourages individuals to become complicit with the very categories of naming and classification that result in their discrimination. By exploring the notion of racialization and juxtaposing it with conventional and historic articulations of the Japanese Canadian internment as an episodic act of racism, I hope to suggest a more complex way of looking at this increasingly mythologized event in Canada's national imaginary.

A History of Discrimination

Within the context of Japanese Canadian history, the intertwined notions of racism and racialization are evidenced by the dominant majority's fluctuating response to the growing

number of individuals of Asian ancestry in BC in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As Japanese immigrants established themselves in such industries as fishing and farming, resentment began to build from people who saw the new Canadians as a threat to the economic livelihood of native-born Canadians. Asian immigrants at this time were characterized "through yellow-tinted glasses [as] robots, operating with cheap, machine-like efficiency, not only possessing those qualities which undermine the existing standards of white workers, but posing a threat to the future of the white race" (Adachi 65). By attributing essential qualities such as automaton-like self discipline to an entire race of people, and by circulating the belief that such rigour was part of a larger plan of cultural genocide, opponents of Japanese immigration in the early 1900s reductively characterized Asian individuals along lines of racial affiliation. By the time World War II broke out, racialized Japanese Canadians had already experienced a substantial amount of discrimination. One of the most vivid examples of such treatment was apparent in the Vancouver race riot of the early 1900s:

> Older Japanese Canadians remembered well the Vancouver riot of September 7, 1907, when a crowd at an anti-Asian rally suddenly turned into a mob, stormed through Chinatown breaking store windows, and were finally beaten back at Powell Street by a group of Japanese Canadians. (Miki & Kobayashi 18)

Evolving out of a meeting of the Asiatic Exclusion League, an organization that boasted the presence of both Conservative and Liberal provincial association presidents at its first

meeting on August 12, 1907, the mob that descended on Chinatown and Little Tokyo was protesting in defense of a "White Canada."[1] The incident is instructive because it provides an unequivocal example of the pre-World War II discrimination experienced by Japanese Canadians. Moreover, the fact that so many individuals participated in the raid on Powell Street suggests that the vilification of Japanese Canadians through the process of racialization was widespread decades before December 7, 1941.

One testimony to the history of discrimination in Canada occurs in *Stone Voices*. On the morning of the attack on Pearl Harbour, prior to the act of internment that would soon follow, Koichiro Miyazaki examines the motivation behind his growing feelings of disenchantment with Canada:

> For a while I thought about nothing but Japan. I must have forgotten about Canada. It might have been an instinctive reaction nurtured by the many years of discrimination I had suffered here . . . That night I could not sleep. All the years I had spent in Canada came flooding back to me. They were all dry, dark and tasteless, like dead leaves. I realized that I had accumulated years without achieving any of the goals that I had set when I left Japan. (33)

The seemingly speculative nature of this passage, in which Miyazaki ruminates on the cause of his disassociation with Canada is, I would argue, belied by the clear conviction with which the author remembers his experiences of discrimination. Instead of happy, formative memories of his time in Canada, Miyazaki regards the years spent here as so

many "dry, dark and tasteless . . . dead leaves," robbed of life and vigour, and left to decay on the ground. While Miyazaki's thwarted goals may be interpreted by some as an indication of personal failure, such a reading fails to take into account the context of the times. In a province that excluded Japanese Canadians from the franchise, thereby also preventing them from holding public office or becoming pharmacists, lawyers, chartered accountants and government employees, Miyazaki's apparent lack of achievement is perhaps more accurately understood as a reflection of the limitations imposed on him by a discriminatory society.

References to a long-standing tradition of anti-Japanese sentiment in Canada can also be found in Muriel Kitagawa's writing. In a letter to her brother written shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Kitagawa notes that "we are . . . used to wars and alarums, and we have been tempered for the anti-feelings these long years" (70); elsewhere, she dubs Japanese Canadians "a long suffering people" (180). The recurring emphasis on the prolonged nature of Japanese Canadians' experience with "anti-feelings" suggests the presence of discrimination at work dating back through "these long years." What is also instructive, however, is the verb that Kitagawa selects to describe the community's preparation for further ill treatment. To "temper" something is to "bring [it] to a proper hardness or consistency";[2] thus the image that Kitagawa evokes with this word choice is one of resilience, carefully learned and sustained over the course of time. Inasmuch as this passage evokes years of discrimination and suffering, so too does Kitagawa's framing of the Japanese Canadian history suggest the possibility that the individual or community who is racialized may develop forms of resistance to processes of containment and

discrimination. As Butler notes, "if there is agency, it is to be found . . . in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands" (Butler, *Bodies* 12). To the extent that Kitagawa fills the space created by the interpellation of "Japanese Canadian" with the presence of an individual who resists her subjectification as an oppressed, maligned "other," she may be said, in part, to refute the discrimination directed against her.

In *Mothertalk*, Mary Kiyooka also alludes to the years of prejudice that she has experienced. In discussing how the redress movement was taken up differently by Japanese Canadians depending on where they lived during the war years, Kiyooka notes that "those of us who lived all over the prairies in small communities couldn't put a face to the hatred we felt but we knew its ugliness by heart" (139). To know something "by heart" is to know it well, often through teachings that are reinforced over the course of time. While Kiyooka, like Kitagawa and Miyazaki, focuses her discussion of the discrimination experienced by Japanese Canadians around the internment, all three texts, upon a close reading, illustrate as well the years of discrimination and underlying process of racialization that set the stage for the racist acts of World War II.

Processional Power: The Trajectory of a Racializing Discourse

To understand how racialization works at a more subconscious, and therefore insidious, level than the overt act of racism, it is important to underscore the fact that this concept

signifies an ongoing process that takes place over an expanse of time. Through repetitious acts of iteration that name bodies as, for example, Asian or white, racialization effects and maintains the idea of race as a constitutive category of representation. Racialization meets with a great deal of success because, as a process, it can reconfigure the ways in which individuals are interpellated in accordance with the specific demands of various times and places.[3] As a reworking of the early-1900s notion of Japanese as "the Yellow Peril" (an negative label based, in part, on Japan's growing success as an Imperial power, as well as the nation's empire-building initiatives),[4] the appellation "JAPS" was used during World War II to conflate Canadian citizens with the enemy overseas, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the internment to the general public. While both ways of framing Japanese Canadians posit this community as simply "other," the shift in what the label represents illustrates the way meaning ascribed through racialization can shift over time. Theorizing race as the result of a process of racialization helps to destabilize the fixity inherent in this ideological descriptor and provides a means of exploring how racialized constructions are managed over the course of time. By recognizing that racial difference is manufactured through a constant process of framing and reframing, racialization's efficacy across temporal and spatial boundaries may be better understood.

Life writing texts such as the ones by Kitagawa, Oiwa and Kiyooka help to illustrate how, at the time of the internment, Japanese Canadians were already the subjects of a substantial amount of discrimination that began when the first Japanese settler arrived on Canada's west coast in 1877.[5] What is intriguing to note, though, is that evidence of racialization as an ongoing process is often missed in textual readings that privilege the

internment as the quintessential, episodic act of racism against Japanese Canadians. Reading life writing texts with the intent of uncovering more details about processes as well as historic events can lead to a greater understanding of how individuals come to be identified within society.

Occupied by Terms: Complicity and Racialization

A crucial aspect of racialization is the fact that the individual or institution who stands to gain from this process (through achieving, for instance, control over certain power relations within society), as well as the individual who is racialized, employ the same discursive constructs to describe difference. In this way, race itself is maintained as a constitutive category of identity and its valence as a legitimate way of understanding social relations goes unquestioned. This mutual understanding of the terms used to describe difference is what Butler is alluding to when she notes (in the epigraph to this chapter) how the parameters delineating the semantic scope of race may be shaped not only towards racist ends, but also "in the service of the contestation of racism." In order to participate in a discourse that privileges the materiality of the body and its racialized inscriptions, we must use similar constructs ourselves or risk perpetual silence.

In one sense, the universal employment of racial categories of identification is decidedly problematic for the fundamental reason that the very (personal) terms used to oppress are re-enacted time and again. In other words, "one does not stand at an instrumental distance from the terms by which one experiences violation"; on the contrary,

one is "occupied by such terms and yet occupying them oneself" (Butler, *Gender* 383). This assertion is borne out by a reading of Japanese Canadian life writing texts that finds individuals employing the very terms and concepts that are used to effect their racialization. As Kitagawa surmises in the epigraph to this chapter, the harsh treatment that Japanese Canadians received over other (German and Italian) enemy aliens, was experienced "because we look different." This statement thus attributes the discrimination endured by members of the Japanese Canadian community to a matter of race. More importantly, however, it illustrates how Kitagawa recognizes her community as "other," in short, as the ones who "look different." By definition, the notion of difference implies a standard from which variance is possible; Kitagawa's observation therefore acknowledges the existence of such a normative precept. By positing Japanese Canadians as the ones who are "different" on the basis of the way they look, Kitagawa participates in a racialized classification of her community. In this manner, she demonstrates both the trajectory of racialization within her own understanding of Canadian society and her complicity with racializing interpellations.

In *Stone Voices*, Koichiro Miyazaki also provides an example of how racialized inscriptions may be adopted by the individual who is the focus of these appellations. In describing the events that unfolded immediately after the first internees were rounded up, Miyazaki pays particular attention to what happened when he and his colleagues were integrated into the group of prisoners already assembled at the detention centre:

> The physical examinations began. We were stripped naked. Men with rough and

> yellowish skin entered the brightly lit room and made an even uglier mass. In a way it was like a warehouse of cheap mannequins. Just as dolls are sold one by one, naked men lined up and disappeared one by one into the next room. (40)

The movement in this passage is one of increasing objectification: incarcerated men are first declothed and exposed; then dehumanized, through a comparison of their naked bodies to "a warehouse of cheap mannequins"; and finally commodified as abject objects, "sold" off "one by one." This depiction illustrates the ways in which Miyazaki has understood and reflected back in his writing the attitude of a discriminatory government and ignorant public that imaged Japanese Canadians as less than human--"like moles . . . [burrowing] in after dark" (Kitagawa 92). In addition, Miyazaki brings to light evidence of his complicity with the process of racialization as he characterizes individuals of Japanese ancestry by their "rough and yellowish skin" and classifies a large group of naked Japanese men together as an "even uglier mass." Such descriptions suggest that the author has internalized dominant ways of perceiving the materiality of the Japanese body both in a racialized sense ("yellowish") and, perhaps more instructively, in an inferior way ("ugly") as well. The fact that this passage was written by a *ganbari-ya* (die-hard) Japanese national who remained staunchly loyal to his native country throughout World War II, and who loved and admired all things Japanese, speaks to the pervasiveness of the racialization process in engendering complicity among even the most defiant of individuals.

While textual evidence of the racialization process at work is instructive because it illustrates the dense, intertwined roots of identity construction founded on race, the effects

of such a phenomenon must not be seen as absolute. On the contrary, racialization and its effects can be challenged, as is made apparent through the subversive gestures in Japanese Canadian life writing texts.

Occupying Terms: Questioning the Racialization Process

The problems inherent in the ways in which racialized terms circulate may be undeniable, but it seems prudent to consider as well more empowering possibilities with respect to our occupation of categories of identity and representation. This may be done, in part, by maintaining the use of concepts, such as race, but developing ways of understanding how these notions are constructed discursively, and what their specific historicity in any given moment might entail. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty notes, "the challenge of race resides in a fundamental reconceptualization of our categories of analysis so that differences can be historically specified and understood as part of larger political processes and systems" (146). In other words, we do not necessarily have to abandon established categories of identification, such as race, altogether; rather, we must be vigilant about how such forms of affiliation come to be manufactured and, moreover, how they are employed by "larger political processes and systems." In the spirit of such an endeavour, a reading of life writing texts that takes into account the specificity of racial constructions will prove helpful.

In addition to providing examples of how racialization can shape individuals over the course of time, life writing authors also destabilize this process by calling into question

the irrefutability of identity formation based on race alone. In such a fashion, these individuals "work the mobilizing power of injury, of an interpellation [they] never chose" (Butler, *Gender* 383) to expose the insufficiencies of racialized identity constructions. At times, this interrogation is done with a measure of humour, as racialized individuals point out how ineffective systems of classification can be. As Kitagawa observes, "the Chinese are forced to wear huge buttons and plates and even placards to tell the hakujin the difference between one yellow peril and another. Or else they would get beaten up. It's really ridiculous" (91). This statement is intriguing because it weaves together three different registries of racialized experiences: that of Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and "hakujin." Although Kitagawa is here participating in her own depiction as a type of "yellow peril," she does so sarcastically, and with an irreverence that illuminates how "ridiculous" the construction is in the first place. Kitagawa's mention of the experiences of individuals of Chinese ancestry alludes to a different instance of the racialization process at work, one in which Chinese Canadians had to constantly define themselves negatively--as non-Japanese--in order to avoid harassment during World War II. The use of the term "hakujin", meaning "Caucasian" or, literally, "white men"[6] is further evidence of the process of racialization, where individuals--this time, Caucasians--are categorized on the basis of racializing interpellations. Furthermore, by pointing out that the hakujin need signs to let them know who their supposed enemy is,[7] Kitagawa exposes the lack of effort on the part of members of mainstream society to understand the cultural specificity of various groups of individuals.

Mothertalk similarly thematizes a resistance to the reductive nature of racializing interpellations. In a discussion of the inadequacy of the term "Japanese Canadian," Mary Kiyooka challenges the government's assumption of homogeneity within her community, noting that:

> [T]here was just a scattering of us across the prairies in the early years. In most prairie towns we were barely a community. When Papa and I took leave of Victoria in the early twenties we were never again a part of the larger JC community. That's how it was for us Issei who lived on the prairies. Then after Pearl Harbour the numbers of JCs increased till those of us who had lived in one small town or another since the twenties found ourselves at odds with all those who came from BC with loyalties intact. It's funny how the local politicians lumped us all together in the name of an ersatz community we never felt wholly a part of. (144-5)

By exposing the regional differences masked by the overarching term "Japanese Canadian," Kiyooka shows how categories of representation may operate inaccurately to name a diverse group of people. In refusing to consider herself or her family as wholly connected to the "ersatz community" created by the government's labeling, Kiyooka subverts the authority of a bureaucracy attempting to position the category of Japanese Canadian strictly along racialized lines of association. Kiyooka's emphasis on both generational and regional disparities within the JC community flatly rejects the notion that

commonality must be somehow implicit in a group of people strictly because of racial similarities.

While the process of racialization thus depends, to a certain extent, on racialized individuals accepting the terms of their own interpellation, the ways in which such categories of identification are presented within life writing texts help to expose their inherently constructed nature. By glimpsing such a process at work, the seemingly fixed nature of racial categories comes to be understood as the product of different racializing moments, temporally and spatially situated in the process of identity formation.

Racism and Containment: Racializing the Internment

As I have attempted to show earlier, the World War II Japanese Canadian internment has, over time, achieved preeminent status within the national imaginary. Once a silenced history, the narrative of the uprooting and displacement is now found in curricular offerings across the country and is recognized as part of the nation's history. For many individuals, the event is understood as an untoward act of discrimination that was provoked, in large part, by the wartime animosity between Canada and Japan. As an act that had everything to do with the skin colour of the individuals affected, the internment is commonly recognized as one of Canada's most reprehensible acts of unmitigated racism.

While I agree with the general consensus that the act of internment was racially motivated, I think that to remember it only as a racist *event* misses the mark. Positing the Japanese Canadian internment as an act of racism only is, in fact, reductive, for it belies

the years of racialization leading up to this event. Conceived as an *episodic* act of racism, the notion of the internment is disturbingly finite, with a clear beginning (Pearl Harbour) and a definable end (the close of World War II) which elides the fact that the energy that produced the event is pervasive. Remembering the internment as a racist act only, as opposed to the result of both racism *and* racialization, serves, in fact, to "intern" the notion of the uprooting itself within the timespan of World War II, managing it as a regrettable incident that happened as the result of wartime hysteria. As an increasing number of people have come to realize, however, "the uprooting of Japanese Canadians in 1942 was not an isolated act of racism, but the culmination of discriminatory attitudes directed towards them from the early days of settlement" (Miki & Kobayashi, 17). This assertion is borne out by analyses of the internment that take into accounts events both preceding and following the wartime years. As Ken Adachi observes:

> There is something about the wartime evacuation and detention of nearly 21,000 people . . . that had always disturbed me. It is something more complicated than a reaction to the suspect morality of the acts of a nation supposedly fighting to uphold democratic ideals but rounding up children, middle-aged men and women from their homes on the west coast of Canada [and] incarcerating them in detention and labour campus . . . Those acts were rationalized on the need to maintain Canada's 'national security' following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour. But that excuse became rather threadbare when restrictive measures were

> maintained for almost four years after the end of World War II, denying the right of Japanese Canadians to live and work where they chose. (Preface, xii)

As this passage points out, the marginalization of Japanese Canadians extended well beyond the end of the war; in fact, it was not until 1949 that Japanese Canadians finally received the right to vote in federal elections. From evidence of processes of racialization and discrimination at work in the pre- and post-internment treatment of Japanese Canadians, a picture of the uprooting emerges that spills out in excess of its temporal borders and works against the episodic notion of racism.

Recontextualizing the internment in a longitudinal trajectory that takes into account the process of racialization is important not only for reasons of historical accuracy. By destabilizing the monologic status afforded the internment in its framing as an episodic act of racism, the success of this notion as the quintessential story of the Japanese Canadian community is, in part, thwarted. The importance of resisting tropes that come to act as definitive descriptors for entire cultural groups is an important concern for racialized communities generally. As Lisa Lowe notes in a discussion of the construction of Chinese American identity in popular culture:

> Interpreting Asian American culture exclusively in terms of the master narratives of generational conflict and filial relation essentializes Asian American culture, obscuring the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities among Asians. (63)

In a similar manner, I would argue that reading the history of the Japanese Canadian community strictly in terms of the master narrative of the internment is an essentialist approach that does not take into account the "particularities and incommensurabilities" of other forms of affiliation within this cultural group. The overwhelming significance attributed to this narrative within the Canadian ethos is evident in observations, such as the one made by Keibo Oiwa in the introduction to *Stone Voices*, that "the entire Nikkei history in Canada continues to revolve around the wartime experience of uprooting, incarceration and dispersal" (18). While such a statement might certainly be true for some members of the Japanese Canadian community in Canada, it seems dangerous to assume that it has relevance for all Japanese Canadian people everywhere. This concern is thematized in Kerri Sakamoto's 1998 novel, *The Electrical Field*. While this work certainly deals with the legacy of the internment, the main character, Asako Saito, steadfastly resists dwelling on the past--not in a way that suggests denial, but in a way that emphasizes a desire to move on in life and out of the shadows of the internment. Regarding the uprooting, Saito notes, "Really, it mattered little now . . . I had no interest in that kind of discussion, of things I'd long ago left behind and made my peace with" (5, 71). The act of moving on and refusing to give the internment preeminence suggests one way in which the event is resisted as a master narrative within the community as a whole.

The life writing texts by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa provide further evidence of the complexity inherent within the Japanese Canadian community. While concerned generally with the notion of the internment, the ways in which these texts introduce other

elements of individual and community identity work against the imperative to define Japanese Canadians on the grounds of subjugation alone. The unique ability of life writing to allow for the articulation of diverse forms of association and experience is, I would argue, ideally suited to the production of Japanese Canadian internment narratives. By providing space for articulations of the internment that detail the long-standing process of racialization that led to such an event, life writing texts contribute not only to the field of literature, but to the archives of history as well.

Notes

[1] Adachi devotes one chapter to a discussion of the turbulent events of 1907, and gives a detailed account of the Vancouver riot.

[2] "temper,"; *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 8 ed., 1990.

[3] Although I speak of racialization as a process that meets with a great deal of "success" this should not be taken by the reader as an indication that I necessarily support or endorse such an accomplishment. Indeed, the degree to which the process of racialization is effective is a concern that I attempt to address in this chapter.

[4] In his study of the history of Japanese in Canada, *The Enemy That Never Was*, Ken Adachi chronicles the reception of Japanese immigrants from the late 1800s on.

[5] See Miki & Kobayashi's *Justice In Our Time* for a brief synopsis of Japanese Canadian history, and Ken Adachi's study for a more in-depth look at the experiences of Canada's first Japanese settlers.

[6] I take my definition here from Roy Miki's editorial notes in Kitagawa's *This Is My Own*.

[7] In his novel, *The Jade Peony*, Wayson Choy thematizes the subversive use of these regulatory buttons by Japanese Canadians. In the act of borrowing such items from Chinese Canadian friends or colleagues, Japanese Canadians in Choy's book rely on the inadequacies of a racially-based system of identification to maintain their mobility during the World War II period of restrictions imposed on the community.

Conclusion

> The aim of judgment in historical or literary-critical discourse . . . is not that of determining guilt or innocence. It is to change history to memory: to make a case for what should be remembered, and how it should be remembered.
>
> Geoffrey Hartman (qtd. in Simon 127)

> [Kitagawa's writings] are dramatic, impassioned documents from the time in which the living words, the descriptions and statements, were set down--sometimes frantically--in the heat of the turmoil. The driving force of Muriel's thinking as a Japanese Canadian writer was her desire to keep the record straight.
>
> Roy Miki, *This Is My Own* (33)

In my thesis, I have attempted to illustrate various ways in which life writing texts provide a rich terrain for examining the notion of "what should be remembered and how it should be remembered" within Canada's national imaginary. Following Hayden White's assertion that "there is no such thing as a specifically historical approach to the study of history" (302), I have attempted to read the literary works by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa as an alter-native form of historical discourse that offers insight into the events and processes surrounding the World War II internment of Japanese Canadians. My interest in employing autobiographical-type literature as a means of revisiting this event is borne out of a desire to challenge traditional historical accounts of the internment that have privileged empirical reports over personal narratives.

As a project that attempts to expand our understanding of what constitutes historical--and other--forms of knowledge, my thesis belongs to a wider movement

questioning the authenticity of traditional approaches to understanding the past. As White notes, the premises of conventional historical inquiry are problematic because of the ways in which value and significance are constructed within the discipline itself:

> [E]very approach to the study of history presupposes some model for construing its object of study, for the simple reason that since "history" comprises everything that ever happened in "the past," it requires some *tertium comparationis* by which to distinguish between what is 'significant' and what is relatively insignificant within this 'past.' (296)

By showing how history is itself a selective narrative, White underscores the need for a critical awareness of the discipline's heretofore unchallenged "objective" status. In essence, history's claim to the past is not sacrosanct; thus, other disciplines, such as literary studies, have an important role to play in contextualizing events that are outside of our temporal range of understanding.

As "living words" chronicling the upheaval of an entire community, Japanese Canadian life writing texts help readers glimpse the "underside" of Canadian history,[1] destabilizing dominant narratives that seek to portray the internment as anything justifiable given, for instance, the wartime context of the upheaval. The frank statements and observations contained in the texts by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa challenge traditional misunderstandings and myths pertaining to the internment, and present instead an interpretation of events from the perspective of those who lived through the trauma of

dispersal. One of Kitagawa's essays, for instance, points out how little the internment had to do with the question of national security--a rationale that was often circulated by the government at the time of the dispersal:

> B.C. was never in real danger of either invasion or sabotage. If you would just think carefully and try to picture B.C.'s geography, you'd know why. B.C. is full of thousands of coves and bays, canyons and impassable mountains. It is also a young part of the country, hardly developed enough to be of any worth to an enemy needing roads and supplies. Otherwise, do you think that even a country as young and as unarmed as Canada would have left that coast so thinly defended? . . If B.C. had been on the first line of offence, some surprise attack would have happened long before and the Canadian Army would have retreated behind the impregnable Rockies. (230)

Kitagawa's observation is backed up by Prime Minister Mackenzie King's statement in the House of Commons on August 4, 1944 that "no person of Japanese race born in Canada has been charged with any act of sabotage or disloyalty during the years of war" (Miki & Kobayashi 46).

While I have selected to focus on the interconnected notions of national pedagogy and the construction of racialized subjects within the Canadian state, many other avenues for further exploration are suggested by Kitagawa, Kiyooka and Oiwa's works. Often, as a result of the internment, families were split up, with male members sent to road camps and

female members, children and aging or infirm family members assigned to internment camps in the BC interior. The uprooting thus became, in many ways, a gendered experience: women bore the brunt of responsibilities involved in taking care of the entire family, while men lived an often solitary experience in road camps or prisoner-of-war facilities. A study examining different gendered experiences of the internment would provide interesting insight into both state and community expectations of the roles of incarcerated men and women.

Another type of analysis could foreground the diasporic nature of the World War II Japanese Canadian experience. If the diasporic condition is characterized by "the experience of displacement, the process of acculturation or integration, the gaps between generations, the tensions between individuals and their communities" (Kamboureli, *Making* 13) then perhaps Japanese Canadians who were interned became something of a diasporic people within their own country. Such a suggestion is supported by the fact that more than one of the life writing authors in the current study frame their experiences in terms of exile--a common trope for diasporic peoples. Since the condition of exile can often be employed as a fruitful site for introspection and analysis, a study exploring the diasporic experiences of interned Japanese Canadians would also be valuable.

By using the textual terrain of life writing to explore questions of national subject formation and the process of racialization, I have attempted to offer insight into the ways in which identity is constructed, contested and mitigated. The diverse experiences of Japanese Canadians during the internment years, as chronicled in the pages of life writing

texts, provide insight into Canada's history and offer instruction for the future of the nation.

Notes

[1] I borrow this notion of the "underside" of history from Michael P. Steinberg's introductory essay in *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*. Ithaca & London: Cornell U P, 1996.

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VITA

Surname: Quirt Given Names: Maggie Christine

Place of Birth: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1997 to 1999
Trent University	1991 to 1995

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	Trent University	1995

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Dean's Scholarship	1997 to 1999
James G. Wharry Scholarship, Trent University	1994
Carolyn Sarah Thomson Scholarship, Trent University	1993

Conferences:

Atlantic Graduate Student History Conference, Dalhousie University, March 19, 1999
Pacific Rim Literary Conference, University of Alaska Anchorage, February 19, 1999
Qualicum History Conference, University of Victoria, February 6, 1999

At each conference, delivered different versions of a paper entitled *Scattered Ranges: Japanese Canadian Life Writing and the Contentious Terrain of Wartime Nationalism*

Other Writing Experience:

"Soliloquy" - short story published in *Freefall and Stories: An Anthology of Student Writing* (Trent University 1995)

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Author [redacted]

Maggie Quirt

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