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Joy Kogawa's Triad of Invasion: *Obasan* (1981), *Itsuka* (1992), and *The Rain Ascends* (1995)

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The history of Japanese Canadians has been one of invasion. In 1942, sanctioned by the War Measures Act, the federal government in Ottawa and the provincial government of British Columbia ordered the evacuation of the entire community from the West Coast of Canada on groundless charges of complicity in the event of invasion by Japanese military forces (Adachi 220-222). This action against the Japanese Canadian community was an ironic reversal of the enemy invasion the two levels of government purported to guard against. Instead, the lives of 22 000 Issei, Nissei and Sansei, all Canadian-born or naturalized citizens[1], suffered the injustice of invasion by their own governments. Kogawa's three novels narrativize the political and psychological dimensions of this invasion, calling into question an image of Canada as a non-abusive, non-racist pluralist immigrant society, and raising issues of English Canada's long-standing deference to its legacy of British imperialist culture.

With the publication of *Obasan* in 1981, Kogawa became active in the National Association of Japanese Canadians movement for redress of the wrongs suffered during World War II at the hands of racist politicians. Her 1984 essay "The Enemy Within" raises the Japanese Canadian experience to "universal" significance by aligning it with the European Holocaust:

> The story of the Japanese in Canada tells us something about universal corruption, universal greed, universal ignorance, blindness and fear....by becoming part of the silent and oppressive majority, we show that yesterday's victims often become today's victimizers.
>
> In Canada, the decision to send us to concentration camps was not a military but a political one. The decision to confiscate our property, to disenfranchise us, to deny us the freedom to work or to travel within this country, the decision to implement the dispersal policy, were all made by our elected politicians, who were supposedly voicing the will of those they served. Racism in Canada was therefore as official as ever it was in a racist regime in the world. (qtd in Fairbanks 77)

Kogawa's statement here asserts a political vision significant for challenges to cultural values that have supported the institution of official multiculturalism in Canada[2].

This paper considers *Obasan*[3] as the first in what may be read as a triad of novels that — despite their differing focusses on the issues of dispersal, redress, and sexual abuse — all put into narrative the effects of what Kogawa terms "universal corruption, universal greed, universal ignorance, blindness and fear." By their acts of narrative, which all speak against the systemic abuse of power by institutions in Canadian society, all three novels demonstrate that by not speaking out, we become "part of the silent and oppressive majority, [and] we show that yesterday's victims often become today's victimizers." Kogawa's trilogy creates a discursive space where silent ones speak, and thus makes accessible for victims and victimizers alike in Canadian society a mutual narrative process of "healing...reconciliation...forgiveness" (qtd in Fairbanks 89).

The relation of victim and victimizer belongs to a typology of binary oppositional thought tracing back through the Western philosophical tradition's division of experience into oppositional categories

of positive and negative terms. Simply put, the positive term stands for the standard; the negative term serves as the absence of the standard. In the binary opposition subject/object, for example, "subject" is the positive term by which "object" is defined in negative relation. In other words, by its powerful position as positive, the subject "knows" the object, which is "known," that is, defined by this knowledge. Further stark examples are good/evil, white/black, master/slave, male/female, colonizer/colonized. Kogawa's choice of the binary victimizer/victim positions the Japanese Canadian community in a binary oppositional structure in negative relation to the dominant order of Anglo Canadian society. However, the process of healing, reconciliation and forgiveness also informs Kogawa's triad, which thus narrativizes her call for the "mutuality" (qtd in Fairbanks 89) of victim/victimizer that post-colonial discourse emphasizes in the dismantling of old imperial/colonial constructs[4].

Fundamental to imperial authority are "knowledge and power" those "formidable" tools of "economic and political control" (Ashcroft 1). These tools are means by which the colonized are "increasingly persuaded to know themselves" (Ashcroft 1) so that, as the negative term, the colonized are silenced about themselves. In the colonized position, the structures of culture and language, including self-knowledge, are those of the imperial power. Moreover, as theories of post-colonialism and deconstruction respectively assert and demonstrate, binary oppositions are not stable categories. In addition, the terms are implicated, that is, they depend on one another for their positions in the structure. With the dismantling of European imperial authority in the twentieth century has come the post-colonial assertion of creative self-expression:

> imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter-

> colonial resistance which drew upon the many different...local and hybrid presences of self-determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge. (Ashcroft 1)

Concomitant to the imposition of authority is, paradoxically, both appropriation of it and resistance to it[5]. This paradox applies not only to cultures of post-colonial countries such as those of Africa and the Caribbean, for example, where the imperial authority invaded and then withdrew, but also to cultures where the imperial authority invaded and, although it subsequently withdrew politically, stayed to a large degree in the cultural values of settlement societies descended from the imperial centre — Australia, New Zealand and Canada, for example. Literatures of these "Second World" invader-settler societies demonstrate particularly the paradox of appropriation and resistance[6]. In the Anglo literatures of Canada, for example, incongruities of imperial outlook and colonial experience may be traced from Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) to Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It In the Bush* (1852), and through to Robertson Davies' *Deptford* trilogy published in the 1960s and 70s.

When the Second-World writer lays no claim to antecedents of the dominant Anglo culture, as in Kogawa's case, the paradox of appropriation and resistance is more problematic. Central to the narratives of Kogawa's three novels is the opposition of silence and speaking out, a binary relation that positions the narrators as the negative term. To remain silent is to remain the "known" object of a "knowing" and "speaking" subject with whom resides official knowledge and power. To speak out, on the other hand, is to both resist and appropriate the discursive practices of the dominant orders of culture and language. Kogawa's novels begin to address the "silent and oppressive majority"

by an "examination of our own internal enemies — our own Canadian system's own greed, our own personal greed, our own prejudice, and the ways in which we perpetuate the systems of thought through which we do violence to people" (qtd in Fairbanks 77). In effect, the three novels form a triad of narratives each of which represents the position of a first-person narrator speaking for herself and others who exist in negative relation to a stronger, more powerful "term" — which is in each case aligned with the powerful white Anglo Canadian social and political establishment.

Links between the narratives of these three novels begin with voices of Kogawa's previously silent first-person narrators, Naomi Nakane in *Obasan* and *Itsuka* and Millicent Shelby in *The Rain Ascends*. Naomi, her Aunt Emily points out, has always been a silent one. As a child, she tells Naomi, "You never spoke. You were so *majime*" (*Obasan* 57). But from Naomi's position

> It isn't true, of course, that I never spoke as a child. Inside the house in Vancouver there is confidence and laughter, music and meal times, games and storytelling. But outside, even in the backyard, there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown, and often dangerous world. Speech lies within me, watchful and afraid. (*Obasan* 58)

Naomi's memories of her truncated childhood in Vancouver, and a lost home filled with confidence, laughter and music, also include ones of Old Man Gower, a neighbour, and his sexual abuse of her from the age of four. Naomi has covered her memory of this invasion by the same psychological mechanism that has suppressed her ability to speak out against the government's invasion of the lives of her family and the Japanese Canadian community. Silence preserves the safety of the private and inner; speaking out exposes the inner realm to the world

outside — the realm of the dominant order signified by Old Man Gower, in this case, white, male and adult. This position of difference between inside and outside, between private and public, between silence and speaking out describes the stance of Naomi between these discourses.

Like other "Second World" post-colonial Canadian novels such as those by Timothy Findley, Margaret Atwood, Micheal Ondaatje and Daphne Marlatt, *Obasan* may be read as metafiction[7], inviting the reader "to consider it as simultaneously a literary, historical and theoretical work" (Jones 215). *Obasan* exposes the "fiction" of the official version of the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community by focussing on the history of Naomi Nakane and members of her family — particularly the paternal issei Obasan who raised her and her maternal nissei Aunt Emily, her mother's younger sister.

The "voices" of these two aunts in Naomi's narrative represent stances towards what happened to the Japanese-Canadian community on the West Coast of Canada in 1942. Obasan's voice is rarely heard; the "language of her grief," Naomi comments, "is silence" (Obasan 14). Aunt Emily, in contrast, is the strident documentor of actions taken against Japanese Canadians during and after the war. The texts of *Obasan* and the two novels that follow respond to Aunt Emily's exhortation to remember:

> "You have to remember," Aunt Emily said. "You are your history. If you cut any of it off you're an amputee. Don't deny the past. Remember everything. If you're bitter, be bitter. Cry it out! Scream! Denial is gangrene." (*Obasan* 50)

The framework of Kogawa's text represents this opposition of speaking/not speaking. The voice of the "other" is heard in the prologue — the private voice without speech:

> There is a silence that cannot speak.
>
> There is a silence that will not speak.
>
> Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task. The word is stone. (*Obasan* prologue)

In contrast, the epilogue reiterates Naomi's achievement of breaking the silence. It is a reprint of the *Memorandum* sent by the Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and the Senate of Canada, April 1946 . It begins:

> It is urgently submitted that the Orders-In- Council [for the deportation of Canadians of Japanese racial origin] are wrong and indefensible and constitute a grave threat to the rights and liberties of Canadian citizens, and that Parliament as guardian of these rights and the representative of the people, should assert its powers and require the Governor-in- Council to withdraw the Orders for the following reasons. (*Obasan* 248)

The list of ten reasons includes the following:

> 7. The Orders constitute a threat to the security of every minority in Canada.
>
> .....
>
> 10. The Orders are directly in contradiction of the language and spirit of the United Nations Charter, subscribed to by Canada as well as the other nations of the world and are an adoption of the methods of Naziism. (*Obasan* 248-250)[8]

Between the binary of lyric prose and historical document framing the narrative, Naomi negotiates a position of difference where the agency of appropriation and resistance comes into play. Naomi's narrative constructs a discursive space in which the silenced "voice" now speaks as agent of the mutuality of victimizer/ victim. *Obasan* is thus emblematic in Canadian post-colonial discourse: through the

agency of its seeming reluctance to speak out, it both appropriates and resists the events of 1942, making mutual the psychological and political trauma for Naomi Nakane, the Japanese Canadian community, and Canadian society.

While the narrator has kept silent about the permanent exile she has lived in since the break-up and removal of her family from the West Coast in 1942 to the Slocan Valley in the British Columbia interior, her Aunt Emily, twenty years older is determined to bring the facts of the dispersal to the attention of the Canadian public. Emily's goal is nothing less than redress of the social injustice and economic wrong done to Japanese Canadians during and after World War Two.

The strident Aunt Emily has kept a record comprising her journal, and a scrapbook of clippings documenting the events beginning in 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbour. Emily delivers these documents to Naomi immediately after the death of her Ojisan,whom she calls Uncle, and who, along with Obasan, raised her from the time of their exile, first in the British Columbia interior and then in rural Southern Alberta. Now, after his death in 1972, Naomi reads these documents during the three days while Obasan prepares for his funeral. Her narrative incorporates this miscellany of texts, which includes Aunt Emily's account events surrounding the dispersal of 1942 recorded in newspaper clippings and government evacuation orders. Naomi's narrative is thus fragmented, non-linear and subjective, unlike the linear, cause and effect chain of events comprising official views of what happened. The disordering of the chronological sequence of official history's selection of facts and events calls into question the processes that silenced the Japanese Canadian dispersal in Canadian public consciousness, and, by extension, the narrative processes that produce any story from the discourses of surrounding events.

Furthermore, Kogawa's narrative calls into the uses of genre as one of these narrative processes; her text resists definition as belonging to one literary kind or another. By putting into interplay the differing literary kinds of lyricism and realism in her poetic prose style, and including the literary modes such as letters, diary entries, and government documents, Naomi's narrative thereby calls attention to the impossibility of defining events from the site of a particular genre, style or viewpoint. Similarly, the legitimacy of official history is called into question not only by Naomi's disordering of events in terms of chronological sequence but also by her narrative's legitimization of both inner and outer experience, that is, of psychological trauma as well as political injustice.

The text of *Obasan*, as Manina Jones observes, "enacts a kind of paradox" (228). That is, it is a narrative that both loses and finds the object it sets out to recover and has desired since Naomi's childhood, but has been denied by Obasan's compassionate silence, "kodomo no tame" (Obasan 233):

> "Please tell me about Mother, I would say as a child to Obasan. I was consumed by the question. Devoured alive. But Obasan gave me no answers...." Everything is forgetfulness," she says. (*Obasan* 26).

The pre-oedipal mother, the endlessly sought, but irrecoverable, lost object is a familiar enough psychoanalytic theme. However, in Naomi's narrative, the disappearance of her mother from her personal history also parallels the suppression of the Japanese Canadian dispersal in the official Canadian conscience. The revelation of "why" her mother did not return is what Naomi works towards in her remembering and working through[9] of personal and historical memory.

On the third day after Uncle's death Naomi learns about what happened to her mother. The small gathering in Obasan's house after

the death of Uncle includes Nakayama-sensei, the Christian minister who has known the family since the dispersal. He reads two letters finally brought forth by Obasan which tell Naomi why her mother and grandmother, in Japan during a family visit in December 1941, never returned to Canada. They were caught in the bombing of Nagasaki; her mother was horribly and permanently disfigured.

Her grandmother Kato had written from Japan in the aftermath of this Holocaust:

> For a long time...Mother wore bandages on her face. When they were removed, Mother felt her face with her fingers, then asked for a cloth mask. Thereafter she would not take off her mask from morning to night. (*Obasan* 239)

The masking of Mother's face parallels the shroud of Obasan's silence surrounding Naomi since childhood. The disappearance of her mother and the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community from the West Coast take on the status of a double trauma in Naomi's narrative, now implicating irrevocably the private and public, the psychological and the historical responses to what Kogawa calls the "universal" significance of the Japanese Canadian experience. In effect, the words of Grandmother Kato's letter break Naomi's silence surrounding the loss of her mother. In the reading of these words, Naomi recognizes that silence perpetuates both the negation from history of those who remain voiceless, and, as in her case, the inability to heal psychologically:

> Gentle Mother, we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction.....I am thinking that for a child there is no presence without flesh. But perhaps it is because I am no longer a child I can know your presence though you are not here. The letters tonight are skeletons. Bones only. But the earth still stirs with dormant blooms. Love flows through the roots of the trees by our graves. (*Obasan* 243)

Moreover, Naomi's revelation via Aunt Emily's package of documents of what happened to her mother parallels the reader's revelation of what happened to the Japanese Canadian community, and the implication of its association with the Holocausts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki[10]. In seeking to answer Naomi's question of deep and persistent psychological abandonment and loss — "Why did my mother not return?" — the novel ties the psychoanalytic situation of its speaking subject, Naomi Nakane, to the globally historical and political relevance of the discourses surrounding the Japanese Canadian dispersal. Her narrative's fragmented, disordered, multigeneric process of remembering moves towards mutual recuperation of both the individual and Canadian society in the redress that is subject of *Itsuka*, the second novel in Kogawa's triad of invasion.

The epilogue of *Obasan* points towards Kogawa's second novel of invasion and resistance, *Itsuka*[11], which also is Naomi's personal narrative in the context of social and political events significant for both the Japanese Canadian community and Canadian society. While the subject of *Obasan* is the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community, the sequel, *Itsuka,* is about events and individuals involved in the movement for redress of the wrongs suffered by the community resulting from the actions of the Canadian government[12]. Like *Obasan*, *Itsuka* gives parallel significance to psychological and historical events by implicating personal and political levels of Naomi's narrative.

Redress by the Canadian government underlined by the 1988 Multiculturalism Act not only "restored honour" to the Japanese Canadian community but also marked "one of the most significant civil rights victories in the history of the country" (Omatsu 9). In *Itsuka*, Naomi's narratives achieves a double redress — that of the invasion of

the Japanese community by the Canadian government, and that of the invasion of her mind and body in a childhood event that has numbed her capacity for social communication and sexual intimacy.

The novel's time-frame begins in 1983, and retraces Naomi's move, with the encouragement of Aunt Emily, from her reclusive life in Granton, Alberta to Toronto, Ontario, relating at the same time her hesitant involvement there with the Japanese Canadian community and commitment to the National Association of Japanese Canadians' lobby of the Canadian government for redress. Apropos to the multicultural focus of the magazine, *Bridge*, for which she writes and Naomi works Emily says:

> "Japanese Canadians are east-west bridges. We span the gap. It's our fate and our calling — to be hyphens — to be diplomats....[*Bridge* is] "the multicultural voice from St. John's College....taking you from one side to otherness." (*Itsuka* 78)

Through Emily's voice, Naomi's narrative reiterates the significance of speaking out to challenge the structures that perpetuate ethnocentricism and racial injustice. A year later in the chronology of the narrative, Naomi attends an "ethnocultural breakfast" hosted by the Federal Minister of Multiculturalism in downtown Toronto, where she hears non-white members of the audience speaking out so that their voices will be heard in the debate surrounding growing dissatisfaction with government policy. One woman at the microphone asserts:

> "Everyone of us lives and breathes in structures of racism from the moment we're born. We're caged in standards controlled by people of privilege — standards of truth and goodness, standards of excellence, standards of beauty which are standards of privilege through and through, and those are the bars that deny our specific realities and lock us out of even your most anti-racist institutions." (*Itsuka* 189-190)

Clearly, Kogawa's novel implicates official Canadian multicultural

policy with issues surrounding the Japanese Canadian redress movement. The narrative sets the official views and policies of the government in opposition to the objects of these discourses. Another voice speaks out at this breakfast meeting:

> We know that a homogenized mindset is ecologically unsound. But by [contrasting it with] real plurality. And I'm not talking about ethnic folk dancing. I'm talking about access to power. I'm talking about distinctness and mutuality, collaborative politics at every level. Not tolerance of difference, but celebration...." (*Itsuka* 191)

Kogawa's novel of redress creates a narrative where the post-colonial paradox of appropriation and resistance comes into play. In effect, the voice at the microphone appropriates the official discourse of the meeting in order to resist it. The call for "real" plurality and celebration of the differences between the members of Canadian society poses the same challenge to the authoritative "standard" of Anglo Canadian authority as does the Japanese Canadian redress movement.

Itsuka, like *Obasan*, ends with an official statement. This epilogue reprints the Canadian government's 1988 *Acknowledgment* of the injustice and wrongdoing of its invasion of the Japanese Canadian community in 1942. Moreover, the statement explicitly includes the significance of redress for all Canadians[13]. The final paragraphs of the *Acknowledgment* read:

> The acknowledgment of these injustices serves notice to all Canadians that the excesses of the past are condemned and that the principles of justice and equality in Canada are reaffirmed.
>
> Therefore, the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, does hereby:
>
> 1) acknowledge that the treatment of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II was unjust and violated principles of human rights as they are understood today;
>
> 2) pledge to ensure to the full extent that its powers allow, that

such events will not happen again; and

3) recognize, with great respect, the fortitude and determination of Japanese Canadians who, despite great stress and hardship, retain their commitment and loyalty to Canada and contribute so richly to the development of the Canadian nation. (*Itsuka* epilogue)

One of Aunt Emily's *Bridge* editorials compares the silence of Japanese Canadians "who went into hiding" after the dispersal to the reticence of rape victims (Itsuka 174). This explicit comparison of victims of political and physical invasion puts into the circulation of this narrative the issue of sexual abuse that Naomi has shrouded in silence since childhood.

In *Obasan*, dream motifs of "British martinets" and torturing soldiers accompany Naomi's adult memories of Old Man Gower, a white neighbour of her family's house in Vancouver:

The dream had a new and terrible ending....The first shots were aimed at the toes of the women, the second at their feet. A few inches from the body, the first woman's right foot lay like a solid wooden boot neatly severed above the ankles. It was too late. The soldiers could not be won. Dread and a deathly loathing cut through the women.

Does Old Man Gower still walk through the hedges between our houses in Vancouver...? (*Obasan* 61-62)

Gower literally carries Naomi through a "break in the shrubs where [their] two yards meet. "I am four years old," Naomi remembers, "His hands are large and demanding....as he puts his mouth on my face" (*Itsuka* 62-63). The loss of her ability to communicate that is Naomi's persistent symptom begins at this time. "If I speak," she remembers, like one of her dolls, "I will split open and spill out" (Itsuka 63). Furthermore, Naomi relates, "It is around this time that mother disappears" (*Itsuka* 66).

The narrative's sequence of dream motifs of bodily invasion,

Naomi's memories of her seduction by Old Man Gower, and reference to her mother's disappearance locate these events in a psychological constellation of victimhood and loss. In the context of this narrative, Gower's personal invasion of Naomi's body, and her confessed "secret" complicity with it[14], represents the invasion of the Japanese-Canadian community by the authority of the dominant English Canadian society. It is this invasion (and complicity of silence) which Naomi counters and comes to resist in *Itsuka*, resistance which, on the political level, takes the form of the movement for redress. On the psychological level, Naomi's intimate involvement with the Metis Anglican priest Cedric provides emotional redress of the traumatic effects of her abuse by Gower and the loss of her mother. As Lynn Magnussen observes:

> The Gower episode is carefully placed in the narrative sequence of events, immediately before the account of the physical separation of the mother and child when the mother's ship leaves the Vancouver bound for Japan. Hence when we go back to the apparently definitive point of loss in the novel — the mother's leave-taking — it turns out not to be the point of loss. The point of loss appears instead to be the problematic episode of the child's seduction by Gower. (64-65)

Significantly, not until middle age and her relationship with the gentle and compassionate Cedric, is Naomi Nakane able to overcome the trauma of her early childhood abuse by Old Man Gower and its exacerbation by the disappearance of her mother[15]. In *Itsuka* Naomi's psychic redress of her invasion by the white neighbour aligns with the political redress of the invasion of the Japanese Canadian community by the authority of the Government. Coinciding with both invasions is the loss of her mother, to which her relationship with Cedric gives redress:

> He is soothing as friendship. He cradles me as a mother holds her child, with care and confidence. He is gentle as the smallest waves

from the sea where the rainbow is moored and he does not, he does not invade....

"What is home for you, Cedric?"

"This. This is home enough. That you trust me. That we so much trust each other."

And with fingertip and tongue and tangled hair, through the falling air, through starlight, into stone, into stone become flesh, into the ancient myths of birth and rebirth and the joyful rhythms of earth, we are journeying home. (*Itsuka* 252)

The dragon of Gower is again met and battled against in the third novel in Kogawa's triad, *The Rain Ascends*, which like the previous two novels addresses both psychological and political effects of invasion. The discursive ground of the third novel continues the rhetorical process of remembering, repeating and working through of the past in a text which also achieves a movement from silence to speaking out. The narrator in this novel is of English Canadian ancestry. Her clergyman father is head of a model family according to the values of fundamentalist Christian culture. In *The Rain Ascends*, Millicent Shelby's narrative breaks the silence about childhood sexual abuse of children in Canadian institutions such as the family and the church.

The victimizer in *The Rain Ascends* is Dr. Charles Barnabas Shelby, the charismatic clergyman father of the novel's first-person narrator, a white, Christian woman who, like Naomi Nakane, is in a position of conflict between silence and speaking out. Her narrative reveals the sexual abuse of young boys perpetuated for years by her well-known father, who has been respected nationally for his accomplishments as Christian fundamentalist minister. In the prologue, Millicent begins:

The town of Juniper, in the foothills of Alberta, celebrated the opening of the Juniper Centre of Music by declaring it C.B. Shelby Day after the

> founder of the Centre, my father, the Reverend Dr. Charles Barnabas Shelby....Within five years, through our father's efforts, three new centres of music and healing were opened — one in Ontario, one in northern B.C. and a smaller one father north. (*Rain Ascends* 1)

Millicent, like Naomi, begins her narrative in the present, and then gradually reveals past events that have led to her conflict between silence and speaking out. Here too, is a female character who is a strident foil to the narrator's reticence and who insists that the truth be spoken. Eleanor is the wife of Millicent's brother; the couple have raised Jeffery, the child that Millicent gave birth to as an unmarried teenager. He is now a young adult. Eleanor urges Millicent to "[c]onsider the victims for God's sake" (*Rain Ascends* 13). Like Emily, Eleanor is unrelenting in her campaign for speaking out. Disclosure of Shelby's prolonged invasion of the bodies of boys to whom he has had access in his travels for the church, includes, as she will reveal to Millicent later in the narrative, his grandson, the child Jeffery.

At first, however, Millicent resists confronting her father with his crime:

> A friend, they say, is someone who helps you hide the body. But Eleanor, my brother's strong-minded wife, was telling me to exhume the skeleton garbed in the robes of a priest — a skeleton busily hiding other small skeletons between the walls. (*Rain Ascends* 13)

Her father, Charles Shelby, "garbed in the robes of a priest," is a pedophile who has sexually abused "three hundred, perhaps" boys during the course of his ministry (*Rain Ascends* 205). His deviance is first discovered when Millicent, now in her forties, was fifteen, and reported by two priests at the then new Juniper Centre of spiritual healing.

Her father's "Fall" was considered by the bishop of the church, who decided that he was to go on "a retreat for a month in the mountains,"

after which he was "permitted to remain at Juniper" with the proviso that when he travelled he was under orders to travel with Millicent's mother. But, Millicent tells us, "bishop's orders or no bishop's orders, Father intended to travel alone" (*Rain Ascends* 86). Decades later, Millicent will confront him to learn that he continued his invasion of the bodies and "souls" of the "unsuspecting young":

> In the secret of his day and nights, he stole the souls of the unsuspecting young and devoured them. Then boldly, in the clear light of the new day, with his white cleric's collar under his black priest's shirt, with his sign of holiness visible for all to see, he got in his car, on the train, on the plane and travelled to other Juniper Centres, to small churches hidden in the hinterlands, to countries far away, preaching the Word of God, blowing his trumpet, a trusted servant, as priest, as visionary, as glutton, whose God was his belly. (*Rain Ascends* 69)

Millicent's narrative also makes problematic traditional codes of obedience to institutional authority. Not only is Shelby an irresistable leader to his followers, but also to his daughter, in whom conventional allegiances to traditional hierarchical structures of family and society have been deeply encoded:

> "We go to extreme lengths — we devoted daughters, we women, we children, we slaves of the men we love — we go to extreme lengths in our efforts to justify our unacceptable loyalties. We expend our day and nights thinking of ways to protect and redeem them." (*Rain Ascends* 14)

However, with the knowledge that her father's victims include her son Jeffery (*The Rain Ascends* 155-156), Millicent tells the new bishop of the church about her aging father's continued sexual abuse under the institutional aegis of the Juniper Centre. Twenty years after the first discovery of his pederasty, the church now has a "zero tolerance" policy. The new bishop will proceed with legal action against Shelby.

However, Millicent is now caught between the guilty knowledge of herself as her "father's betrayer" and bringing an end to her father's victimization of others. The bishop tells Millicent, "The silence all these years, Millicent, that silent collusion was a far, far greater betrayal" (*Rain Ascends* 211).

Kogawa's text evokes the disclosure of similar sexual abuse systemic in Canadian Christian religious institutions. In the early 1990s, former inmates of the Christian Brothers residential school for boys in St. John's, Newfoundland came forward to reveal decades of prolonged sexual abuse by the clerical authorities of the school. And the subsequent trial of the authorities involved and demolition of the school prompted other victims elsewhere in Canada to come forward to speak out against what they had suffered while students at Anglican and Catholic residential mission schools in the North. Implicit in the parallels of these disclosures to the concerns of Kogawa's text is its deeply critical challenge to existing institutional structures of Canadian society that perpetuate the exploitive binaries of race, gender, class and age, and with them the founding imperial/colonial paradigm of victimizer/victim. That Shelby spreads, along with his mission, his victimizing pederasty into the margins of not only Canadian society but also other countries speaks for this text's condemnation of the imperial/colonial binary structure.

Millicent's narrative condemns the constructions of victimization perpetuated in Canadian institutions such as those of the Christian Church. But Kogawa's text is also deeply spiritual, calling on the Goddess of Mercy, the "Great Mother, who birthed us all" (*Rain Ascends* 216) to supplant the invasive and masculinist ramifications of the victimizer/victim structures still endemic in society. What Kogawa's third novel in this triad may seem to lack in the political vision,

poetic style and psychological insight that are so compelling in *Obasan* and *Itsuka* may be compensated for by her attempt here to extend the issue of invasion and its complicity with the binary victimizer/victim to its perpetuation by other Canadian institutions in the sanctioned "colonization" of the bodies, minds, and according to Millicent Shelby, "souls" of individuals who have been betrayed by the authority of institutions that have been invested with their trust. Kogawa's own religiosity, represented in her evocation of a female Goddess of Mercy (which also evokes the Buddhist goddess Kannon), may be read as a move towards deconstruction of the destructive hierarchical binary structures of race, gender, class and age still systemic in Canadian society.

By way of an epilogue, *The Rain Ascends* closes with, not an official acknowledgment of wrongdoing, but a plea for what Kogawa herself perhaps would term a kind of spiritual "universal" redress:

> the seeds of mercy are planted in the human condition, within each of us, between and among and towards us all, men, women, children, majorities, minorities, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Arabs — all people who know betrayal and enmity. We are to water with our tears the hidden seeds lying dormant in the spirals of our hearts till they grow and flower and spread truth and healing over us. Thus shall we inherit the earth. (*Rain Ascends* 216-217)

Perhaps problematic in this closure of Kogawa's text may be the assumption that the institutionalized structures which have perpetuated Shelby as victimizer may be overcome by an apocalyptic and abstract reversal of the balance by which power is entrenched. In this vision, which appears to rest on the very discourses the text purports to challenge, as the "rain ascends" so shall "the meek inherit the earth." In such reversal, the binary structure remains intact; victim and victimizer exchange positions. However, that Kogawa, in *The Rain*

Ascends, shifts her theme of invasion from specific representation by the Japanese Canadian context is a sign of an intention to extrapolate on the significance for all Canadians the government's "condemnation" of the "excesses of the past" in its official redress of "discriminatory attitudes" influencing the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community.

The Rain Ascends focusses the issues of invasion and betrayal on facets of Canadian society which perpetuate attitudes inherited from imperial/colonial institutions of Canadian culture and language. Furthermore, Kogawa's narrative voice, through the self-recovery achieved in the process of remembering and working through in *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, continues to speak out in *The Rain Ascends* against the fundamental betrayal of trust by the authority of dominant institutions. First encountered in *Obasan*, and primary subject of the third novel, sexual abuse as betrayal of trust, as invasion political, physical and psychological, is symbolic in Kogawa's triad of narratives, each of which by appropriation and resistance redresses the legacy of power established by the white male militarist militaristic inheritance of English Canadian imperialism.

The texts of *Obasan*, *Itsuka* and *The Rain Ascends*, in their alignments with the paradox of appropriation and resistance, are a substantial contribution to post-colonialism's moves to deconstruct binary opposition systems of thought and their reiteration in social and political institutions. Kogawa's first-person narrators emphasize their positions of difference in relation to the dominant order of social and political institutions and cultural values of Canadian society. In its narrative achievement of psychological and historical redress, Kogawa's triad of invasion speaks to the continuing post-colonial challenge to

official Canadian multiculturalism.

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1 A summary of the dispersal is contained in *Itsuka* as part of the fictional newsletter *Bridge*:

In 1942, 22,000 Japanese Canadians, mot Canadian born or naturalized citizens, were branded enemies of Canada.

This is what happened under the War Measures Act:

— We were rounded up and forcibly uprooted from our homes

— We were fingerprinted and made to carry ID cards

— Families were broken up

— We were imprisoned without trial

— in animal stalls at Hastings Park in Vancouver

— in hastily built internment camps

— in prisoner-of-war camps

— We were forced to labour on road gangs

— All that belonged to us was seized and sold and the money was taken to pay for our imprisonment

— After the Second World War, 4,000 of us were exiled and deported

— The rest of us were dispersed across Canada, east of the Rockies

These war crimes and acts of racism by the Canadian government — actions opposed by senior officials within both the Department of National Defense and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — have never been officially acknowledged, nor have the victims been compensated. (*Itsuka* 143-144)

2 See "Multiculturalism," *Canadian Encyclopedia*.

Multiculturalism, or cultural pluralism, is a term describing the coexistance of many cultures in a locality, with any one culture dominating the region. By making the broadest range of human differences

acceptable to the largest number of people, multiculturalism seeks to overcome racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

In 1988 the Canadian government passed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which set forth the government's multiculturalism policy: "to recognize all Canadians as full and equal participants in Canadian society."

Government policy of multiculturalism has been viewed with hostility and suspician by many. French Canadians and others have regarded official multiculturalism as injurious to the French Canadian position as one of the 2 official linguistic communities of which Canada is composed; some have criticized them as a means of supporting Anglo-Canadian dominance over the many ethnic groups of which Canadian society is composed.

Official multicultural policies may not have met the needs of immigrants, especially the growing numbers belonging to "visible minorities." Nonetheless, the introduction of the term and what has been called the multicultural movement have been important in calling attention to the diversity of Canadian society and engendering political recognition of it.

3 The existing scholarship on *Obasan* is substantial. For example, Mason Harris asserts that the success of Kogawa's "documentary" novel is its "weaving of historical fact and subjective experience." While Aunt Emily provides the essential facts...Naomi records the "inner experience" of the dispersal and its effects. Harris sees Obasan as a species of immigrant narrative, a generational saga, while placing it within the formal line of the documentary tradition in Canadian literature. Other critics have attended to the issue of silence in Obasan, emphasizing absence of speech as metaphor of the voiceless, and thus powerless personal and political positions of Naomi, the

novel's first-person narrator and by extension the Japanese Canadian community. See for example, Jones and Magnussen.

4 See Ashcroft et al. "Introduction" for this definition of post-colonial theoretical discourse:

Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (2)

5 According to Julia Kristeva's psycholinguistic theory of the speaking subject, the subject is so only within the language it speaks and is constructed by. This is not to say that the language by which the subject is positioned cannot be subverted. On the contrary, language resists its authority by constantly eluding definitive meaning. See Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language.*

6 See Stephen Slemen, "Resistance Theory for the Second World" in Ashcroft et al. 104-110.

7 See Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern.* See the novels of Timothy Findley, *The Wars*; Micheal Ondaatie, *In the Skin of the Lion*; Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic.*

8 Apropos to appropriation of dominant discourse in order to resist it, this *Memorandum* is signed "James M. Findlay, Chairman, Andrew Brewin, and Hugh MacMillan." It must also be noted that the restrictions on Japanese Canadians, preventing them from returning to former homes and occupations on the West Coast of British Columbia, were held over until March 31, 1949 nearly four years after the war ended. According to Adachi, "while anti-Japanese hostility east of the Rockies generally abated after the end of the war, political and public pressure

from British Columbia remained a constant — and was the chief reason for restrictions being held over" (Adachi 336).

9 See Freud's essay on this process of "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" as part of the discourse of the psychoanalytic method. Freud's discovery of transference in the discourse of the analytic situation saw its clinical function not as one of interpretation, but as a rhetorical process of remembering, repeating and working through which would be recognized, in the analytical situation, by the analysand. In the same way, by participating in the stages of Naomi's narrative, the reader works towards recovery of the lost memory of the Japanese Canadian dispersal and thereby towards recovery from its traumatic impact on the Canadian "psyche."

10 The opening date of the narrative frame is 9 August 1972, the 27th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. This date is related to the suppression of Japanese Canadian history, because Naomi's mother, as she learns towards the end of her narrative, was a victim of Nagasaki blast. In the letters of Grandma Kato, her mother's mother, from Japan after the end of the war, Naomi learns that her mother was horribly disfigured, maimed and eventually dies as victim of the Nagasaki Holocaust (Obasan 236-240).

11 The title refers to Naomi's account in Obasan of Ojisan's response to exile from his sea life of fishing on the West Coast to the dry beet farm land of Southern Alberta: "Itsuka, mata itsuka. Someday, someday again" (Obasan 22).

12 For a thorough non-fiction account of the redress movement see Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience* (1992).

13 The redress "package" finally offered by the Government and accepted by the NAJC follows on the resolution of the parallel lobby by Japanese

Americans of their government. Naomi relates:

> The strategy team, unlike most of us, had felt something would have to happen following the American resolution....[T]he unbelievable happened. An agreement was reached. There's to be full acknowledgment of the injustices, individual compensation of $21,000 each to those affected (the Americans are to receive $20,000), a community fund and a race-relations foundation.
>
> It's a $350,000,000 package. (Itsuka 272)

14 "The secret is this:" Naomi remembers, "I go to seek Old man Gower in his hideaway. I clamber unbidden onto his lap. His hands are frightening and pleasurable. In the centre of my body is a rift.

"In my childhood dreams, the mountain yawns apart as the chasm spreads. My mother is on one side of the rift. I am on the other. We cannot reach each other. My legs are being sawn in half" (Obasan 64-65).

15 Robin Potter's psychoanalytic discussion of Obasan applies Julia Kristeva's extension of Freud's concept of "totem and tribe" regarding social structures that build power through the "suppression of the many for the supposed good of the few"(128). The self-regard of those without power is sacrificed to their abjection by the dominant view; the powerless in turn, internalize this abjection. According to Potter:

> Kristeva's blurring of the boundaries of inside-outside has an added ramification with regard to this novel, for Naomi's story is really about the internalization of an abjection for her own family and ultimately for her own self and body. Naomi is preoccupied with memories of abjection, and her spinsterhood is, in my opinion, due to a categorical rejection of herself. (128)

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