

# Writing the Pacific War in the Twenty-First Century

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and Kerri Sakamoto

## The Unwritten War

The Pacific War began in 1931, with Japan's invasion of Manchuria, and ended in August of 1945, when Japan surrendered to the American-led Allies just days after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is less familiar to most Canadians than the European theatre of World War II because far fewer Canadian troops fought in the Pacific; indeed, after the battle for Hong Kong in December of 1941, contacts were limited to those between prisoners of war and their captors.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Pacific battlefields were scattered across a vast and unfamiliar expanse of land and sea. The few contemporary Canadian novels that described it were shaped by their authors' cruel experience of incarceration in Japanese POW camps.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of this relative silence and distance, the recent publication of three Canadian novels about the Pacific War—Dennis Bock's *The Ash Garden* (2001), Rui Umezawa's *The Truth about Death and Dying* (2002), and Kerri Sakamoto's *One Hundred Million Hearts* (2003)—is striking. While the Pacific War has not been entirely neglected—not only ex-POWs but also Japanese Canadian writers have dealt with it—never has it been treated on this scale, or with so much attention to the Japanese side. This approach raises certain questions: how, for example, do these Canadian authors bridge the geographic, temporal, and cultural gulf that divides them from their subject matter? Are they able to craft Japanese characters who are not stereotypes? Finally, why should Canadian novelists suddenly be displaying an interest in the Pacific War nearly sixty years after the conflict ended?

Before addressing these questions, I want to explain my own background, for it has shaped my approach to the novels under discussion. I am a specialist in twentieth-century Japanese literature; I have lived a quarter of my life in Japan since my first stint there in 1968. Recently, my research has touched on the resurgence of war literature in Japan, especially the case of Haruki Murakami, Japan's most popular writer both at home and abroad, who, like me, was born several years after the Pacific War ended. One question that naturally comes to mind, therefore, is whether there might be some connection between the Japanese and the Canadian situations. Another experience I have drawn from is a research project initiated in 1988 by the late Kinya (Ken) Tsuruta of the University of British Columbia, which brought together Japanese, Canadian, and American scholars to examine the ways Japanese and non-Japanese (French, British, Chinese, etc.) have portrayed each other.<sup>3</sup> Our collective research demonstrated how rare it was to find a "foreign" character *not* based on racial and cultural stereotypes.<sup>4</sup> The tidal pull of Western Orientalism and Japanese Occidentalism seemed almost inescapable.

### ***The Ash Garden: "Facing" the Pacific War***

Dennis Bock's *The Ash Garden* (2001) tries to swim against this tide. It examines the bombing of Hiroshima and its aftermath from the perspectives of three people: Anton Böll, a German scientist and one of the fathers of the Bomb; his wife Sophie, an Austrian whom Böll met in a Quebec refugee camp during the war; and Emiko, a victim of the Bomb who moved permanently to the United States in the 1950s when she and two dozen other teenage "maidens" were brought from Japan for plastic surgery, preceded by an appearance on a popular TV show.<sup>5</sup>

*The Ash Garden* is an intricate novel, albeit occasionally marred, as Richard Lourie has noted, by the very neatness of its allegorical structure.<sup>6</sup> Yet Böll and Sophie, far from being limited by their highly symbolic roles as A-Bomb scientist and Holocaust survivor respectively, come across as believable people whose marriage has been drained of joy by their contact with the Bomb. They are, one might say, its invisible victims. Emiko, by contrast, is the most visible victim one could imagine, an Elephant-Man-like figure until her lengthy round of surgeries is completed, and afterwards, an inexpressive mask. On the one hand, this history of disfigurement establishes her as the antithesis of the stereotypical Japanese woman, the beautiful geisha with the mysterious smile. But has Bock merely exchanged one

surface for another, an allegorical foil for a stereotypic cipher? Does Emiko, in short, have a face—an identity—of her own, which can help us to understand the Pacific War in human terms?

Identity, of course, is inscribed within a cultural context. Yet Japanese culture is hardly Bock's strong suit, as we can tell from the very first line, in which Emiko describes Hiroshima as "*the grassy floodplain that had been my people's home and misery for centuries*" (3; italics in original). "Misery"? For anyone familiar with the Japanese love of native place, this word does not ring true. Nor is it conceivable that Emiko's grandfather would lean down to kiss her and her brother goodbye when he leaves the hospital ward where they are being treated.<sup>7</sup> In short, from the outset it is apparent that, when it comes to Japanese culture, Bock is in over his head. To make up for this deficiency, Bock adopts a three-pronged narrative strategy: he places almost complete emphasis on Emiko's surface, i.e., her damaged face; he establishes her initially as a small child; and, finally, he has her tell her own story, in contrast to the third-person narration used for Böll and Sophie.

Emiko's face is a metaphor for many things. It is a technical "triumph": science replaces what science (in the form of the Bomb) has taken away. Like postwar Japan, it is rebuilt from the ashes with American help, outwardly normal-looking but lacking a full and natural range of expression. Emiko's face is also Hiroshima, the face of victimhood. On the surface, Hiroshima today looks like any other Japanese metropolis, but its inhabitants still bear the scars of August 6, 1945, both within their own country (where "marriage detectives" still check to ensure that a prospective son- or daughter-in-law has no A-bomb survivors [*hibakusha*] in the immediate family) and to a lesser degree in the rest of the world.<sup>8</sup> Bock presents Emiko as having overcome the terrible suffering of her youth. Compared to Böll and Sophie, she is at home in her adopted land and less tormented by the past; she even speaks better English than they do. But it is not clear if she has ever ventured outside the mask of her reconstructed face to touch anyone or to be touched. Böll and Sophie at least have each other, but Emiko seems to have no intimate relationships. Even the documentary films she makes, insofar as Bock describes them, seem less evocative than the sculpted gardens created by Sophie. Emiko records the world like a detached eye, as if in revenge for the way that it has recorded her and her disfigurement.

Bock tries to fill out Emiko's character by establishing her as a small child in the opening sections of *The Ash Garden*. In the italicized prologue that begins the novel, we see her at six years of age innocently playing beside a

river with her younger brother. They see a passing plane drop something “like a bloated body with dark skin.” Then, a few seconds later, her brother turns away from the apparition:

*The glint of a smooth stone had stolen away [my brother's] attention. It glistened at his knees in the brilliant morning sun, and suddenly it began to glow and the stone rose up from its mud pocket, which in an instant turned hard-baked and grey, and then I could not breathe and my mouth became a desert and the air jumped alive with objects that never had flown before. (6)*

We are thus introduced to Emiko moments before her life—and the world at large—is transformed by the Bomb.<sup>9</sup> In the scenes that follow, we see her fighting for survival in the hospital ward and mourning the death of her brother, whose hospital bed was beside hers. Bock hardly needs to delineate Emiko's character at this juncture. It is enough for us to feel her suffering as a child of the Nuclear Age. This section is weakest when Bock tries to ascribe specifically “Japanese” attitudes—about respecting the Emperor, sacrificing for the nation, and, more generally, facing life with what might be termed a Buddhist sense of resignation—to what is, after all, a six-year-old child. Emiko's character seems more credible the less information we are given.

This minimalist portrayal would be less convincing were it written in the third person, a mode which requires, if not omniscience, at least a sure grasp of context. In the first person, however, the limitations of Bock's characterization are not so obvious. Emiko tells us only what she chooses to reveal. If, compared to the other two main protagonists, she seems to have little inner life, we can ascribe that to her reticence or to the imprint of traumatic events a half-century old. As for her memories of those long-ago events, we can assume that, as a child, she did not register them in the self-conscious or analytical way an adult might. In short, Emiko's incompleteness—her derailed, two-dimensional personality—can be understood as a natural consequence of the defining event of her life. In *The Ash Garden*, the contours of Emiko's identity, like the features of her face and of Hiroshima itself, have been erased, then re-inscribed by the overwhelming force of the Bomb.

### ***The Truth about Death and Dying: Our Town at War***

The Pacific War may have been distant to most Canadians, but for those of Japanese ancestry, it had immediate and far-reaching consequences. Even those whose parents immigrated to Canada after the war, and who were thus spared the trauma of internment, had their own hard memories to deal with, for the war years and their aftermath caused unimaginable suffering

in Japan.<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that the war plays an especially significant role in Japanese Canadian literature. Yet references to the Pacific War in Japanese Canadian literature tend to be fairly brief, despite their often crucial role. Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981) does not deal directly with the Pacific War until its climactic scene when Naomi and her brother are read a letter from their grandmother, graphically describing their mother's sad fate after the A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki (258-63). The letter causes her "children" (although both are adults by this time) sorrow and grief, but it also frees them from the silence that has ruled their lives. This association of the war with "the hidden truth" also characterizes Hiromi Goto's *A Chorus of Mushrooms*, where the brief but powerful sections dealing with the grandmother's past—her childhood in colonial Manchuria, her family's escape from the continent, the final conflagration that awaited them in Japan—allow the narrator (and the reader) to begin to understand the grandmother's eccentric behaviour. Even in works like Terry Watada's *Daruma Days*, where the war in the Pacific is virtually ignored, we can feel it lurking in the background, all the more disquieting for being invisible.<sup>11</sup>

Rui Umezawa's *The Truth about Death and Dying* and Kerri Sakamoto's *One Hundred Million Hearts* drag the Pacific War out into the light. Umezawa, like Goto, was born in Japan but came to North America as a small child; his father, like the father in *The Truth about Death and Dying*, taught physics at a university in Wisconsin before moving to Alberta. Kerri Sakamoto is a third-generation descendant of the first wave of Japanese immigrants, the Issei, who arrived in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (She is thus a Sansei, in contrast to Kogawa who is Nisei or second-generation. Umezawa, in this parlance, is considered a "new" Nisei: i.e., a child of postwar immigrants.) These positions inform their treatment of the war and of life in Japan.

If, in *The Ash Garden*, the Pacific War is an epic drama, dominated by the vast scale of the Bomb and the moral dilemmas it unleashed, Umezawa's *The Truth* presents the conflict in its most concrete and local form, as a force which perverts and then crushes life in a small Japanese town. Umezawa uses his familiarity with Japanese society to bring this community to life with great skill: its residents are as quirky—and as interconnected—as we might find in a similar settlement anywhere. The father of Shoji, the teenaged hero of the wartime section of the novel, for example, is a man of strong opinions who does not know when to keep his mouth shut, and who likes to parade around in the nude. He has been exiled to this out-of-the-

way spot for having pointed out the incompetence of a senior physician; now, with the war in full swing, he rails against the propaganda people are being fed, and the waste of young men being sent to die in distant battles. Opposed to him is Tamura, the leader of the local *kempeitai*, the dreaded military police. Unlike the other villagers, Tamura is presented not as a distinct individual but as a living symbol of the demonic wartime system:

Who was this man? What gave him pleasure? What dreams did he dream? What was his favorite food? . . . Tamura was the personification of all the evils of the Pacific War—of Japanese imperialism, of fascism, of prejudice, of stupidity. His was the face that was ubiquitous during the war but to which no one would stake claim afterwards. He appeared out of nowhere and would disappear into thin air. (268-69)

Might Umezawa be suggesting that responsibility for the war can be laid at the feet of a few war criminals like Tamura who wreaked havoc on an innocent population and then vanished “into thin air”? Hardly. The ostensibly good young men of the village were also capable of evil. Umezawa makes this point by developing a figure in the Milwaukee/Toronto portion of the novel who is a survivor of a Japanese POW camp. This character is one of the least effective in *The Truth*, yet he fulfills a necessary function, for he provides the means through which Japanese war atrocities—the wanton gang rapes and murders, the casual brutalities of the POW camps, and so forth—can be incorporated. He provides an external viewpoint that shifts the action from Japan, where people suffered terribly, to abroad, where the Japanese were the victimizers.<sup>12</sup>

Balancing these two perspectives—the two sides of wartime Japan, as it were—is one of the challenges of contemporary writing on the Pacific War, whether in Japan or Canada. Umezawa’s strategy is to ridicule both the men who planned the war and the masses who meekly accepted it:

Someone in Japan once said making war with the most powerful nation in the world was a good idea, and everyone else pretended this made perfect sense. Someone else said Japan should scare the Americans by flying its own planes into their battleships, and everyone agreed again. If things went wrong, people cut their stomachs open. All these exquisitely demented ideas were forever unquestioned. (198)

Umezawa shows how this wartime dementia affected ordinary citizens. The villagers happily see off their newly enlisted sons as if they were “sending the local softball team off to a regional tournament,” (12) while schoolyard bullies dreamily contemplate the day when they will be “blown into tiny

pieces in a glorious fireball" (13). As Shoji muses after his father's death, "It wasn't the war. It was insanity. Insanity had started the war and kept it going. And insanity had killed [my father], in more ways than one" (64). Indeed, it is the father's own act of "madness"—he calls the Emperor an "inbred fool" and a "bastard"—that leads to his violent end. In his final moments, he reflects, "Was madness saying just what was needed, or was it refraining from saying anything at all?" (270). In the face of mass insanity, the only sane response, it seems, is to keep one's mouth shut.

Nevertheless Shoji's father's final act of opposition is heroic. After the war, Japanese intellectuals were criticized because they had not spoken out. Why did so many "convert" (*tenkō*) from socialism to patriotic nationalism under pressure from the authorities?<sup>13</sup> Some critics saw the answer in the incomplete adjustment of the "Japanese psyche" to modernity. Japanese are too dependent on their social circle, went the conventional argument, too conformist.<sup>14</sup> They need to develop stronger egos and become more "individualistic" like Americans. Umezawa shows some sympathy for this point of view: at one point, for example, he muses that postwar Japanese workers who lay down their lives for their jobs are like samurai in service to a feudal lord, or, possibly, soldiers in the old Imperial Army. Yet his portrait of the village, with its non-conformists, its renegades and wastrels, its light-fingered maids and ribald old ladies, militates against such an essentialist construction of "the Japanese."

### ***One Hundred Million Hearts: The War and the Nation***

In the opening lines of Kerri Sakamoto's *One Hundred Million Hearts*, Miyo, a Canadian Sansei, says: "During the war my father learned to shoot a rifle, lunge with his bayonet and march the perimeter of Okayama Second Middle School, knees high and arms swinging. He had been born in Vancouver but sent to Japan for schooling, then to a farther away place he called Manchukuo" (1). This opening immediately establishes *Hearts* as a novel which dares to examine "problem cases" omitted in previous Japanese Canadian narratives, in particular the Nisei who found themselves in Japan when hostilities began.<sup>15</sup> Most were very young and had been sent there, like Miyo's father, for schooling: since racial prejudice severely restricted opportunities in mainstream Canada, Japanese language skills were essential to get ahead in the one place where decent work could be found—Japantown. Yet the reception these Nisei students got in Japan—a country most had never seen—could be as cold as what they had experienced in Canada. Caught

between two nations, with a war looming on the horizon, some of these stranded young people threw their support behind the Japanese war effort.

To focus on this group during the time of the Redress Movement (successfully concluded in 1988), when Japanese Canadians and their supporters were struggling to obtain official apology and compensation, would have been regarded as counterproductive. Not a single act of sabotage or treason had been committed in Canada by a Japanese Canadian; the expropriation of property and the dispersal of the community to internment camps had been both unjust and strategically unnecessary.<sup>16</sup> But at the time of the Redress Movement, maintaining this position (reflected in the title of Ken Adachi's history of the Japanese Canadians, *The Enemy That Never Was* [1976]), required that experiences and individuals who might compromise the "official narrative" had to be excluded. Sakamoto's first novel, *The Electrical Field* (1998), bent that narrative by creating characters so damaged by the internment camp experience that it was almost impossible to sympathize with them. With *Hearts*, however, she breaks it wide open. For Nisei like Miyo's father and the others around him did not just subsist in Japan after the war broke out; they fought for the Imperial cause, in a few rare cases even committing war crimes themselves.<sup>17</sup>

While over half of the action in *The Ash Garden* and *The Truth About Death and Dying* takes place in the West, *One Hundred Million Hearts* is set almost entirely in Japan. When Miyo's father passes away, she learns that after her mother's death he had a second family that he kept a secret from her, and that she has a younger half-sister, Hana, in Japan. As a result, Miyo, who is in her thirties, travels there for the first time to meet Hana and learn more about her father's concealed past. Hana is convinced that their father was a "bad man," but her mother Setsuko (a Canadian Nisei who "returned" to Japan at war's end) sees him as a tragic figure whose noble desire to die for the Emperor as a kamikaze pilot was thwarted by the end of the war. Indeed, his dying words to Miyo, "Endure the unendurable," are those used by Emperor Hirohito in his radio address to the Japanese people announcing the surrender.<sup>18</sup>

*Hearts* is filled with the symbols of Japan's wartime ideology: cherry blossoms, thousand-stitch amulets, martial songs, the kamikaze themselves. The most important symbol, however, is Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, where the spirits of the nation's fallen soldiers are enshrined as gods (*kami*).<sup>19</sup> Setsuko hopes that the shrine will relax its rules to permit her late husband (Miyo and Hana's father) to be enshrined there. Hana, on the other hand, despises the ideology that sacrificed so many young men and bitterly resents her



father for having deserted her. Nevertheless, she has befriended the clutch of old women who dance for their fallen lovers beneath the cherry blossoms at Yasukuni each spring, possibly because their suffering mirrors her own. Caught between the contesting positions of her stepmother and half-sister, Miyo must struggle to make some sense out of her father's secret past.

Ironically, the only place Miyo's father did fit in was Manchuria (Manchukuo), a Japanese colony from 1932 to 1945. An old friend of his reflects on what *akogare no Manshū* or "yearned-for Manchuria" meant to Nikkei (i.e., persons of Japanese origin living abroad):

It was paradise. Where else would you see a white man carrying a yellow skibby's bags, or the skibby telling him what floor he wanted in a hotel elevator? And they were all nikkei—no matter where you came from, where you were born, you were just as good as Japanese from Japan. World-class citizens with streetcars to ride, roomy, reserved for Japanese only. You were a man one time in your life. Back home, *yellow skibby* someone once called him on the street. It was forever one ugly name or another, even in the neighbourhood around Powell Street. Yellow skibby stuck, no escaping it. (139)

Miyo cannot imagine this level of racial hatred, nor does she know much about the "neighbourhood around Powell Street"—i.e., Vancouver's Japanese community—which was decimated in 1942 when its inhabitants were shipped off to the camps.<sup>20</sup> He had told her almost nothing about his life—he had never even spoken Japanese in front of her—in order to protect her from what he had undergone. To discover who he really was, she must learn more about the world he inhabited. She must, in short, develop a historical consciousness.

At one level, Miyo's search for the past represents the emancipatory struggles of a number of forcibly "infantilized" entities—women, the physically challenged, Japanese Canadians, and, most strikingly, the Japanese nation itself. Much as the prewar Japanese were taught to rely on their Emperor, Miyo, as the only child of a single parent, learned to depend exclusively on her father. He in turn responded by encouraging her to lean on him, thereby locking the two of them in a stultifying mutual dependency. Finally, when her father faltered, she established a relationship with a white man and shifted her dependency to him (much as Japan turned to depend on America after the war), at which point she became able to regard her father as a normal human being rather than an all-providing deity. By using Hirohito's most famous words—"endure the unendurable"—in his final admonition to her, Miyo's father overtly identifies himself with the fallen "god" in whose name he had once fought, while at the same time

pushing his daughter to stand on her own two feet. In this manner, Sakamoto places Miyo's personal struggle for emotional and physical independence squarely alongside the struggle of the Japanese people to overcome paternalistic authority and achieve political maturity in the modern era.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike most Japanese evocations of the Pacific War—not to mention *The Truth about Death and Dying* and *The Ash Garden*—*Hearts* contains no scenes of carnage, no exploding bombs or maimed bodies.<sup>22</sup> Until the final sections of the novel, the war's brutality is conveyed indirectly, through art and snatches of memory. Hana obsessively superimposes small photos of kamikaze pilots and tiny bundles of yarn over a wall-sized picture of her father's face and then over a picture of the emperor. Wartime atrocities emerge from the mist, are briefly confessed, then disappear again. Old women dance beneath the cherry blossoms for lovers now too young to be their children. Like Hana's art, *Hearts* presents the Pacific War in montage form as a succession of shifting images set against an ideologically charged historical backdrop.

### **Writing the Pacific War in Contemporary Canada and Japan**

How has Sakamoto, a Sansei who has spent relatively little time in Japan, managed to write so convincingly about the country and its wartime legacy? The answer, I think, is twofold. First, like Bock, she approaches the problem of characterization strategically, focusing on characters with whom she feels the most affinity: in her case, "marginal" individuals who stand, sometimes uncomfortably, between Canada and Japan. In fact, the only culturally unambiguous characters in *Hearts* are Miyo's and Hana's boyfriends, both of whom are easily forgettable. The rest of the cast is more mixed and far more interesting: Nisei with close ties to Japan like the girls' father, his wife Setsuko, and his "buddy" from his Manchuria days; International (i.e., English-language) school products like Hana and her circle, whose education and background set them apart from Japanese society;<sup>23</sup> and, finally, Miyo herself, a faltering, self-conscious loner in Canada who discovers her true strength in Japan. The second reason why Sakamoto is able to evoke Japan so well is that she has worked long and hard to familiarize herself with Japanese culture, seeking out the research materials and expert sources she needed to fill in whatever she lacked in direct experience.

Sakamoto mentions some of her most important sources in the acknowledgements at the end of *Hearts*, a gesture one can also find in contemporary Japanese novels about the Pacific War. Haruki Murakami, for example, includes a short list of works consulted at the end of his best-selling *The*

*Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Both reading lists represent the best of North American and Japanese scholarship: Alvin Coox's massive study of the battle of Nomonhan, for example, was a crucial source for Haruki's research, while Sakamoto has drawn substantially from recent historical works in English (especially John Dower's *Embracing Defeat*) that incorporate the work of Japanese scholars. (Bock is indebted to Dower's book as well.) This convergence of scholarly research makes a wealth of new information available to novelists—from Canada, Japan, or elsewhere—who seek to describe, not just battles and atrocities, but the tenor of life in Japan and its colonies before, during, and immediately after the Pacific War.

The mere availability of historical research, however, cannot fully explain why Canadian and Japanese novelists born after the end of the Pacific War are now taking it up in their work. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to talk with Haruki Murakami shortly before he completed *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. We found ourselves talking about our fathers and the war. His had fought in China, mine in Europe. Neither, we felt, had been particularly forthcoming about what they had experienced, or about how it had changed them. Soon they would be taking their stories to the grave. Had they told those stories to us, might we have looked at our fathers differently? In Japan's case especially, what have been the broader social and psychological costs of the secrecy surrounding the war? Later, I reflected that I had been too harsh on my father. Was it not up to the child, after all, to fill in imaginatively what the parent could not express—to develop, as it were, his or her own powers of what has been termed “postmemory”? Perhaps many works of literature could be subtitled “Stories my parent(s) never told me.”

Still, of the three Canadian writers discussed here only Umezawa, who began writing what turned into *The Truth* immediately after the death of his own father, may be seen to have conjured up an actual parent's “untold stories” as a starting point for fiction.<sup>24</sup> Bock and Sakamoto, by contrast, deal with the image of the father (or, in Bock's case, perhaps the grandfather) as a more overtly symbolic figure. Yet they too are involved in a process of retrieval, imaginatively bringing to life the experiences of those who lived through the war and now are passing from the scene. There may be some who feel that, in contrast to the European theatre of war, the war in the Pacific is less relevant to Canadians because fewer fought and died there. In fact, however, several million Asian Canadians—not to mention many others with personal ties to that part of the globe—carry the legacy of the Pacific War in some form or other. Moreover, all of us are in a deep sense children of the A-Bomb, and thus linked to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Whatever our origins may be, therefore, we benefit from the opportunity these three novels provide to envision more clearly what the Pacific War meant in human terms, and how it shaped the world we confront today.

#### NOTES

- 1 For a description of these contacts, see Roy, *Mutual Hostages*.
- 2 Dagmar Novak's study of Canadian war novels discusses only two works about the Pacific War: William Allister's *A Handful of Rice* (1961), and James Jackson's *To the Edge of Morning* (1964).
- 3 Selected proceedings of the initial conference were published in English as *The Walls Within: Images of Westerners in Japan and Images of the Japanese Abroad*. The project also led to two books in Japanese: *Uchinaru kabe* (The Walls Within, TBS Britannica, 1990), which added many new articles to the original proceedings, and *Nihon bungaku ni okeru "tasha"* (*The "Other" in Japanese Literature*, Shinyosha, 1994).
- 4 This has changed recently as more and more young Canadians have written about their experiences travelling and/or teaching English in Japan in fictional form. See, for example, Sarah Sheard's *Almost Japanese*, Steven Heighton's *Flight Paths of the Emperor*, and Peter Oliva's *The City of Yes* for efforts to represent Japan in non-Orientalist terms. Other examples can be found in *Descant* 89/26.2 which includes a selection of Canadian writing on Japan.
- 5 See Barker.
- 6 Lourie notes that Sophie's name seems to cite the horrors of the death camps (cf. *Sophie's Choice*). Böll's name may be an ironic reference to the post-war German writer Heinrich Böll, regarded by many as the moral conscience of his age, who railed against the folly of the war and the crimes committed in its name.
- 7 It may seem essentialist to declare what is and is not normative in Japanese culture. But the deep attachment and love for "native place" (which, for example, underpins probably the greatest "Hiroshima novel" ever written, Masuji Ibuse's *Black Rain* [1968]) is so basic that its rejection by a Japanese character must be supported by other (personal or historical) factors to be plausible. Similarly, the custom of public, non-sexual kissing, rare even today, would be alien to a Japanese person born, as Emiko's father was, in the nineteenth century.
- 8 The purpose here, of course, is to protect future generations from genetic damage. Other things these detectives search for include insanity, inherited disease or disability, and ancestors who are non-Japanese or *burakumin* (literally "people of the hamlets," former outcasts once known by the discriminatory term *eta*).
- 9 This narrative strategy mirrors that used by John Hersey in his classic *Hiroshima*, published a year after the bombing, which profiles six survivors of the Hiroshima blast.
- 10 The extent of the suffering before and after the surrender is well captured in chapter three of Dower's *War Without Mercy*, "*Kyodatsu*: Exhaustion and Despair." The most moving fictional treatment is Akiyuki Nosaka's short story, "A Grave of Fireflies," based on the author's experience of watching his sister starve to death.
- 11 Ironically, the one exception occurs in the next-to-last story, "The Moment of Truth," in which the white policeman "Fitz" thinks back to his war years in the South Pacific. Otherwise, the war is reconstituted, as it were, in the brutality of the work camps under the dictatorial control of Etsuji Morii, who comes across as a homeland version of a Japanese fascist thug.

- 12 Umezawa thus avoids the Japanese tendency to shift all responsibility for the war, and the manner in which it was carried out, to the power elite. As Lisa Yoneyama, citing Yamaguchi Yasushi, writes: “Marxists and other progressive critics relegated the responsibility of the ordinary people to the ruling elites and thus spared the former from a full investigation into their participation in national projects. The post-war Enlightenment paradigm has to a large extent endorsed blaming the activities of wartime leaders and their supporters alone for prewar and wartime disasters” (*Hiroshima Traces* 10–11). Such a construction has encouraged many Japanese to see themselves purely in the role of victim.
- 13 See Arima’s *The Failure of Freedom* and Keene’s *Dawn to the West*, especially chapters 22 and 23.
- 14 See Yoneyama (10).
- 15 For a brief account of this group (the *kika* Nisei) and the difficulties they experienced in Japan, see Adachi (174–78). According to the 1944 Department of Labour Report cited by Adachi, 1,500 Canadian-born Nisei were residing in Japan in 1941, the majority of whom were young children.
- 16 See Kogawa (273) and, for the American case, *Farewell to Manzanar* (xiii).
- 17 See, for example, the case of the Kamloops Kid, one Kanao Inouye, a BC-born man charged with twenty-seven counts of overt cruelty at a war crimes tribunal in Hong Kong, and finally executed there in 1947 for treason (Roy et al. 73).
- 18 The classical diction of the Japanese phrase that Sakamoto quotes in the text (185)—*tae-gataki o tae, shinobigataki o shinobi*—would not have been easily understood by Miyo. It is not clear if it is her father or Setsuko who translates it into English for her.
- 19 For a concise description of Yasukuni, see Buruma (219–25). Another excellent source is “An Ordinary Woman,” the second chapter of Norma Field’s *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*. In this chapter, Field recounts the story of a widow determined not to have her husband enshrined at Yasukuni; her stand caused an uproar in Japan. Even today, visits of national leaders to Yasukuni, which were resumed in the late 1980s by the then Prime Minister Nakasone, are front-page news.
- 20 Although remnants of Powell Street’s past still exist, the community that once flourished there is no more. As Midge Ayukawa has written about the wartime expulsion, “The Japanese community (on the West Coast) was destroyed, and the Issei . . . who had controlled the former communities were too old to start again and had lost their power bases” (139).
- 21 This has been a central and ongoing theme in Japanese political and historical thought since the postwar years. See, for example, Maruyama; Koschmann.
- 22 Japanese war literature is vast and diverse, but most works include at least some scenes of devastation and slaughter. See, for example, the novels by Ibuse, Ooka, Murakami, and Okuizumi. For a discussion of Japanese A-Bomb literature and the victim/victimizer issue in post-war Japan, see Treat.
- 23 My daughters, both of whom have attended Japanese schools, confirm that these “bicultural” children often call themselves “Third Culture Kids.”
- 24 Taken from Umezawa’s welcoming speech at a book launch for his novel held at the Leo Kamen Gallery, Toronto, October 2002.

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