

“Our Next Neighbour Across the Way”: Japan and Canadian Writers

For most readers, Japan as a Canadian literary topic begins with *Obasan*. Joy Kogawa's 1981 novel is not about Japan, but its success made Japanese culture respectable in the Canadian mainstream. Before its publication, Japan was inseparable from the memory of the fall of Hong Kong, a struggle in which two Canadian battalions had suffered terrible losses (Roy 66-68).¹ But the Japanese in *Obasan* were victims, not brutal soldiers, and for non-Japanese Canadian readers, Kogawa's book humanized the Japanese. It was probably the first novel they had encountered in which people of Japanese origin were central characters, and in which the world was presented through a framework of Japanese cultural values. By the early 1980s, other forces (national and international) were at work rehabilitating the image of Japan, but one cannot overestimate the part *Obasan* played in this process in Canada.²

Because of its success, *Obasan* may seem a lonely monument, but in fact, Canadian literary images of Japan have a long history. In this article, I examine selected works from the past century and a half. Not all belong to the genre of travel writing. Like many books about distant places, they fall “between the disciplinary cracks” (Kröller 5). One is a castaway's tale, another a polemic in the guise of a memoir; several works from the 1980s and 1990s are novels or short story collections. As I hope to demonstrate, these generic shifts are not incidental; rather, they reflect alterations in the sources and examples Canadian writers have drawn on.

The Deliberate Castaway: Ranald MacDonald's Japan Adventure

In June of 1848, Ranald MacDonald, the first Canadian and the first teacher of English in Japan, arrived on the northern tip of Hokkaido.³ He had joined the crew of an American whaler with the intention of being set adrift off the Japan coast. His “plan was to present [himself] as a castaway” (131); his “principal motive” was “the mere gratification of a love of adventure—the world within a mysterious veil which then hung, as it still hangs over Japan, unaccountably attracted my roving mind” (68). He chose Japan as his destination because “on the Pacific Coast . . . Japan was our next neighbour across the way—only the placid sea, the Pacific, between us” (120).

MacDonald's plan worked. He was found by Ainu villagers and taken to the authorities. After being handed from official to official, he ultimately was taken to Nagasaki where, towards the end of his ten-month stay, he was living “in clover” (248) with books, four meals a day, servants, regular meat, bread and butter, and even occasional coffee and English papers (courtesy of the Dutch Factor of Nagasaki) (242-43). MacDonald was useful to the Japanese: he taught English to fourteen pupils, three of whom ended up interpreting in the negotiations with Commodore Perry.

In a sense, MacDonald's “Japan: Story of Adventure” is a castaway's tale, with obvious echoes of *Robinson Crusoe*. When MacDonald first makes landfall in Japan, he spends two days on an uninhabited island, living “a Robinson Crusoe life” (154). But whereas Crusoe has no real contact with exotic people (save faithful Friday), the drama of MacDonald's story lies in his account of the Japanese he meets. They are not fearsome cannibals but men and women he respects for “their really generous treatment” (260) and “congenial sympathy” (261); he praises them as “the cleverest people I know of: I say ‘cleverest’ not in the sense of deceit, but in its highest and purest meaning” (244).

Because “the original version of MacDonald's memoir has not survived” (335), it is difficult to determine how much of the “Story of Adventure” is MacDonald's own, and how much was added by his friend and co-writer Malcolm McLeod, a lawyer and pamphleteer from Quebec.⁴ McLeod was an energetic propagandizer for the CPR, and he may have viewed MacDonald's story, with its emphasis on the intelligence and shrewd self-interest of the Japanese, as supporting the notion of a cross-country railway to connect with the Pacific trade. MacDonald's own interest in Japan was related to his “Indian birth,” which, he claimed, made him decide to go to Japan “from which he was convinced that the North American Indians originally came—

“The land of his ancestors,” he termed it” (39). MacDonald’s account of Japan, therefore, nicely establishes the two main lineages of Canadian writing about Japan—the traveller’s account of Japan as a strange and distant land, and the special kind of travelogue in which the descendant of immigrants “journeys back to [his] country of origin” (Kröller 5). Among subsequent Canadians writing about Japan, only Peter Oliva (whose 1999 novel *The City of Yes* I discuss later in this article) has recognized MacDonald’s account as a significant antecedent.

“This quaint Japan”: Sara Jeannette Duncan in Tokyo

With the end of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868, Japan was no longer a country that Canadians could enter only as castaways (and Japanese leave only under threat of execution). The first Canadian missionaries went to Japan in 1873 (Powles 146) and the first Japanese immigrant arrived in Canada in 1877 (Woodsworth 48; Roy 3).⁵ Moreover, trade and tourism were actively cultivated. On the first run of the CPR, one car was named the Yokohama. William Van Horne (“an ardent collector of Japanese porcelain” [Woodsworth 18 n.25]) and his CPR colleagues knew that their railway would tie together not only the disparate parts of a nation, but also Europe and Asia, the West and East. The journey by steamer from Vancouver to Yokohama was a week shorter than the San Francisco-Yokohama voyage (Duncan 56).

In 1888, Sara Jeannette Duncan took the CPR across Canada to Vancouver, where she embarked on a steamship and travelled to Japan on the first leg of a round-the-world journey. According to Thomas Tausky, her account of this trip, *A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves* (1890), “probably sold better than anything else Sara Jeannette Duncan wrote” (*Novelist* 54), and the chapters on Japan are “by far [its] strongest part” (57).

In a recent essay, Denise Heaps describes *A Social Departure* as a travel satire, and points out the ways in which it resembles such works as Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad* (1869). Heaps argues that, like Twain, Duncan uses the conventions of sentimental and scientific travel writing to comic effect, deflating sublime moments with bathetic comedy, and mocking the data collection of serious-minded travellers. According to Heaps, Duncan’s purpose is “to present an ambivalent combination of feminist grit and unthreatening, fumbling femininity that would appeal to mainstream female readers” (89). But *A Social Departure* is more precisely parody, not satire (Heaps uses both terms), inasmuch as it delivers the familiar satisfac-

shops” (137). SJD and Orthodocia’s passion for shopping transcends the usual appetite for pretty trinkets: “to shop in Japan is to perform an elaborate function which operates directly on the soul . . . you never fully know the joy of buying until you buy in Japan [where] [l]ife condenses itself into one long desire, keener and more intense than any want you have ever had before—the desire of paying and possessing” (139).⁷ For Duncan, Oriental objects represented an aesthetic ideal, a mark of individuality and advanced taste. An instructive comparison can be made between SJD and Elfrida Bell, the doomed artist of Duncan’s 1895 novel, *A Daughter of Today*. Elfrida compensates for her lack of talent by writing about painters and painting, and decorating her London flat with Oriental bric-à-brac, including a Japanese screen and a bronze Buddha (58-59). SJD’s shopping expeditions serve the same purpose as Elfrida’s manner of living: they provide second-hand aesthetic fulfillment and declare the refinement of her taste.

Basil Hall Chamberlain, the most important interpreter of Japan in the early twentieth century, thought well of Duncan’s book: “the liveliest [travel book] is Miss Duncan’s *Social Departure* . . . [T]he sense of humour which never deserts her prevents her enthusiasm from degenerating into mawkishness” (70; qtd. in Tausky, *Sara Jeannette Duncan and Her Works* n. 84). That Chamberlain would single out *A Social Departure* is high praise, for, as he notes, there is “literally no end to the making of” travel books about Japan (70). *A Social Departure* has many of the vices of other Japan books of the period: for example, Duncan attaches “little” to nearly every mention of a Japanese person and cannot resist any opportunity to make fun of Japanese speaking English or wearing articles of Western clothing.⁸ However, Duncan’s frank admission of superficiality, her knowing parody of conventional travel accounts, and her impressionist experiments go some distance to redeeming *A Social Departure* and setting Duncan apart from contemporary commentators on Japan.

From Fairyland to Enemy Nation

The late 1920s and early 1930s were a brief period of what one might call normal relations: Japan had ceased to be a fairyland but was not yet the enemy. A bilingual book published in 1927, *Hatsutabi no nihon/First Tour to Japan*, reflects the calm tenor of Canada-Japan relations. Consisting primarily of brief accounts by young Nisei from British Columbia of their trip to Japan, *Hatsutabi no nihon* belongs to that category of travel account in which the traveller returns to an ancestral homeland. Perhaps because the authors are quite young (most are teenagers), there is very little philoso-

phizing about identity. They report dutifully on their expeditions to Nikko, Nara, and Hakone. Admiral Kuroi guides them in a tour of Tokyo, both of its splendid sights and of its poor neighbourhoods (Ariga 2). Their greatest enthusiasm seems to be for Osaka—"the Manchester of the Orient" (4, 6, 11, 12)—where their guides show them modern factories, with equipment more advanced than that in Europe or America. One young visitor observes, "When you travel through the city of Osaka you wouldn't think you were in Orient" (14). The young Japanese Canadians are impressed by the order and productivity of the society they see; several remark how Tokyo and Yokohama have been speedily rebuilt in the four years since the great Kanto earthquake. But these Nisei do not take any personal pride in the success of the Japanese. Despite their admiration for the Japanese, they identify with Canada, as the closing words of one account suggest: "With deepest regards and respect for Japan I boarded by ship again once more on my return journey to the land of my birth, Canada" (24).

The lack of idealization or of demonization (these young travellers are not all perturbed at being introduced to famous military men like Admiral Togo) is probably a consequence of their relative youth and inexperience. But it also reflects, I think, the optimism or even complacency of the time. It seemed that Japan would smoothly progress to its rightful place among the "advanced" nations of the world. Unfortunately, the determination of the Japanese army to control continental Asia interrupted this process.

Two accounts, one describing the 1930s, and the other the 1930s and 1940s, suggest the complexity of Canadian feeling about Japan during these critical years. In *Hammer the Golden Day* (1981), Hugh Keenleyside recalls with evident pleasure his days as a diplomat in Japan. In 1929, when Canada established independent diplomatic relations with Japan, Keenleyside was sent out to Tokyo to open the legation. His first view of Japan is a nice exemplar of the "arrival scene" convention of travel writing:

Impatient for my first glimpse of the land that I later learned to love, I had climbed onto the topmost deck just as the golden-red ball of the rising sun was breaking over the horizon far behind us. The morning mists still veiled in light broken formations [in] the water just ahead. At a distance on either side the massive rocks of broken cliffs and rugged shorelines were topped by the green and dark copper-brown of Japanese pines. Walking to the high prow of the ship, I watched as the sun's increasing power dissolved the mists. Suddenly, and almost directly ahead, an immaculate silver-white cone rose above the land as we approached. (265)

This utterly conventional view of Japan, with the cliffs, the pines, and Fuji,

could come straight out of a woodblock print. But it could also be read allegorically as foreshadowing of the “increasing power” of the “rising sun” of Japan.

Lyrical description (even with political undertones) is infrequent in Keenleyside’s memoir. His main rhetorical strategy is to demolish myths. The idea, for example, that Japan is a sensualist’s paradise is disposed of by his description of an evening with geisha (part of an excursion organized by the Japanese Foreign Office specifically for the diplomat). Keenleyside describes the geisha as “very graceful, beautifully dressed, bright, animated, but doll-like, almost inhuman. They did not impress me as being *women*.” (293; italics in original). In the economic sphere, Keenleyside is impatient with what was even then an old saw: the Japanese are imitators, not inventors. To counter it, he offers examples of innovations in Japanese manufacturing (305-6). In the chapter “Canadians in Japan,” Keenleyside focuses primarily on three remarkable women—Annie Allen, Caroline Macdonald, and Alice St. John—who were pioneers in education and social welfare in Japan.⁹ Here he takes the opportunity to demolish yet another myth: “the superior spirituality of the oriental peoples” (319). Keenleyside asserts that “appalling as has been the persistent guilt of Western civilization in its unnecessary mistreatment of its own and other peoples, the record of the Orient has been even worse” (317). Despite his posture as a demythologizer, Keenleyside does not engage in Japan-bashing.

In contrast, Phyllis Argall’s *Prisoner in Japan* (1945) is undiluted vitriol, almost impossible to consume yet instructive for its revelation of a wartime mentality. It is presented as an autobiography, but is plainly an anti-Japanese polemic in which every detail about Argall’s life serves her propagandistic purpose.¹⁰ In 1912, when she was three, Argall received “a tea set, of fine, hand-painted porcelain [that] had travelled all the way from Japan” (10). She “carefully and methodically smash[ed] it, piece by piece.” Soon after she received a Japanese doll named Hana-chan. Despite its “gay silk kimono and shining black hair,” she did not like the doll and remembers muttering, “Hate this old Hana-chan” (10). The doll was taken away. Looking back in the 1940s on these incidents from her childhood, Argall considers them harbingers: “It may be that the smashed tea set and the despised doll indicated an innate tendency to obstruct and where, possible, destroy what the Japanese had produced, and to dislike the people” (8-9).

Argall was raised in Japan: she lived there from 1916 until the late 1920s, when she returned to Canada to study at the University of Toronto. After

graduation, she became principal of a mission school in Formosa, then a Japanese colony. When Argall refused to conform to regulations requiring students to venerate the emperor, she was forced to leave her job. Returning to Japan in 1935, she became a journalist. She worked as a reporter and editor for *Japan News-Week*; her articles also appeared in Canada in the *Star Weekly*. Her knowledge of Japan is by no means superficial, but everything she observes is interpreted to “reveal” some innate perfidy in the Japanese. Even the behaviour of a neighbourhood dog, “a wretched, pint-sized mongrel,” is invoked as an object lesson in the nature of the Japanese:

He would lie low until we had gone by, and then, the moment we were past, would bound out, yapping and snarling and snapping. . . .

“That,” said my mother one day, “is typical of the Jap. He’ll never face you, but always bites from behind.” (18)

Moreover, the qualities that charmed previous travellers to Japan are interpreted by Argall in a new and ominous light:

Since the days of Pierre Loti and Lafcadio Hearn, the Japanese most often written about, and most avidly read of, has been either a vague ideal full of Oriental art and mysticism, or a grotesque imp full of Oriental artfulness and quaintness. Whichever view we got of him, he has always been the little yellow brother, treading not very cleverly, albeit yearningly, in the footsteps of his big white exemplar. We have enthusiastically taken his rich brocades and gaudy colour prints, not realizing that he has, quite as enthusiastically, been taking our scrap and manufacturing materials. (8)

To Argall, the Japanese are irremediably Other, and nothing about their difference is attractive; they are simply an alien force that must be repulsed.

Although Argall’s perspective is extreme, there is no doubt that the well-documented brutality of the Japanese military dispelled the romance of Japan for many years to come.¹¹ In addition, the conditions of post-war Japan were no incentive to travel. E.H. Norman reported in 1946 that “living conditions for Canadians in Japan are far from easy or pleasant” (qtd. in Roy 213).¹² It is not surprising, therefore, that for more than a decade after the war, little was published in Canada about Japan. In 1962, *Maclean’s* broke the silence with Frank Moritsugu’s “A Japanese Canadian Goes ‘Home’” introduced by the following headline:

This is what a Canadian reporter who speaks fluent Japanese saw and heard when he took his first look at the jazz-age country the New Japanese are grafting onto an ancient civilization. Probably no Western writer has brought back as clear a picture of the modern Japanese . . .

This introduction elides the memory of the war: the new Japan is being built not on the ruins of the cities the Allies firebombed but on its “ancient civilization.” The people building this “jazz-age country” are not the survivors of the war and their children but the “New Japanese.”

The title of the article may assert that Japan is “home” for Moritsugu, but he soon contradicts that view:

Unlike the children of other immigrants, many Japanese-Canadians don't hear the clarion call of the Old Country. The constant fight against the “Once a Jap, always a Jap” epithet, hurled against us by West Coast witch hunters in the 1930s and 1940s, led many of us to underline the “Canadian” and obliterate the “Japanese” in “Japanese-Canadian” until some years after the war with Japan ended. (28)

Moritsugu's episodic article is held together by his persistent search for the “real Japan.” He likes Tokyo, even though he knows one is not supposed to: “The Ginza—the area most foreigners see first—contradicts the romantic and exotic mental images of Japan that we westerners carry. But if not ‘real Japan,’ what then is Tokyo?” (32) When he gets to Kyoto, Moritsugu is relieved to discover that “here is where the picturesque postcard images of traditional Japan come to life” (34). But he notices the “ugly buildings” in the business district. He is sent to stay at a traditional inn, equipped with chairs, TV, and an air conditioner. A tour through other cities—Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima—reveals that “the westernization so apparent in Tokyo and downtown Kyoto” is everywhere: “it still takes a lot of looking to find traces of old Japan” (36).

His “last hope” lies in Yonago, the city where his parents were born (36). His relatives live in an old Japanese-style house, but “even here, [he] slowly begin[s] to see the inroads of westernization”: chairs, western clothes, an electric washing machine, a television (*Wagon Train* is the favourite show of one elderly aunt) (40). Throughout his travels, Moritsugu notes many incongruities of this kind: Elvis Presley's “Blue Hawaii” blaring on the Ginza, then a “rockabilly song” in Japanese “punctuated with ‘Yah, Yah’'s and ‘hey, hey’'s” (29); a TV antenna poking out of a thatched roof; a giant English-language billboard beside a Buddhist statue. A young Japanese man explains these contradictions not as “westernization” but as “modernization”: “it only seems western or American because we are following the lead of the United States who dominate world culture right now” (40). Moritsugu comes to a similar conclusion: “. . . this dizzily changing westernized façade of Japan is the real Japan” (42). But in the next and final paragraph, he suggests something quite different: “The only unshakable

conviction I reached was that it is unwise to measure the Japanese by our standards just because their façade seems so much like ours" (42). Now, he seems to assert that the "façade" is only superficial and that it disguises an underlying reality. This confusion about surface and essence arises inevitably in the quest for the "real Japan." The governing assumption of this quest is that beneath the layers of modernity and sham tradition awaits a "real Japan." Moritsugu, perhaps because of his own experience as a Japanese Canadian, does not want the task of saying what it means to be "Japanese" or what the "real Japan" is (though clearly this is what *Maclean's* wanted his article to do).

Since Moritsugu's article, other Japanese Canadians have written about the journey "home" to Japan, with similar uncertainty about what it means to be "Japanese." In *The Japan We Never Knew*, David Suzuki and his co-author, anthropologist Keibo Oiwa, present portraits of a range of dissenters, individualists, and radicals in Japanese society. Their purpose is to dismantle the myth of Japan as "monolithic, homogeneous, and conformist" (3) and to find people who "negate the Japanese stereotype" (3), a task for which Suzuki and Oiwa are well-suited. Suzuki, who grew up "with a Japanese name and an Asian face in a racist society" (306), is Japanese ethnically, but not culturally. Oiwa, who did not learn until he was an adult that his father was Korean (307), is Japanese culturally, but not ethnically. Thus, their histories challenge any easy definition of "Japanese" as either a racial or a cultural designation. Their book's focus on the diversity of Japan seems a natural outgrowth of their own mixed identities, but Suzuki finds further justification in biological terms: "One of the most startling lessons of twentieth-century biology has been the discovery that *diversity*—genetic, species, and cultural—is a critical part of long-term resilience and survival" (6; italics in original). The value of cultivating diversity is a political message, not only for the Japanese, but presumably for Canadians as well. Like many recent books, *The Japan We Never Knew* uses Japan as a source of object lessons; here, the lesson is not a positive one about productivity or industrial management but a negative one about the dangers of political and ethnic intolerance.

If Suzuki interprets Japanese culture in terms of his own disciplinary and political concerns, another Japanese Canadian, the poet and artist Roy Kiyooka, has done much the same in recording his journeys to his parents' birthplace. In works such as "Kyoto Airs," *StoneDGloves*, and *Wheels: A Trip thru Honshu's Backcountry*, he writes about Japan through a Japan-influ-

enced Anglo-American poetics.¹³ Part of the force behind the post-war rehabilitation of Japan was the Beat Generation's interest in Buddhism and traditional Japanese literature. Anyone following American poetics in the 1960s and 1970s could not fail to have captured some of the *japonisme* of the period through writers such as Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Allen Ginsberg. During this period, Japanese design also became fashionable, particularly the Zen aesthetic of rustic refinement. For example, in 1976, an exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery entitled "Tsutsumu: The Art of the Japanese Package" drew enthusiastic crowds (see Oka).

Canadian passion for things Japanese has grown steadily since the 1970s. This revival of interest in Japanese culture is evident in two novels published in 1985 with nearly identical plots.¹⁴ In Ann Ireland's *A Certain Mr Takahashi*, two sisters in Toronto fall in love with the man next door, a concert pianist from Japan. Their infatuation with Mr Takahashi induces virulent adolescent Japanophilia: they study the language, discard all their bedroom furniture, wear yukata instead of nightgowns, write notes to each other in short crypto-haiku lines, and ponder intensely Okakura Tenshin's *The Book of Tea*.

In Sarah Sheard's *Almost Japanese*, a young Toronto girl named Emma idealizes the Japanese musician next door because he represents the delicious opposite of her own dreary life: his kimono versus her school uniform, his spartanly elegant living space versus her family's cluttered home. He becomes her obsession, and as a result, "everything Japanese became magic" (32). She goes one step further than the Potter sisters of Ireland's novel: after graduating from high school, Emma works in a Japanese grocery store until she has enough money to go to Japan in pursuit of him. Once in Japan, Emma finds her romantic obsessions fading (at least temporarily) as Japan itself becomes the focus of attention.

Whereas Ireland's *A Certain Mr Takahashi* is a conventional narrative, *Almost Japanese* is a mixture of fragments. It begins with an inventory of body parts, each part (feet, nose, hips, and so on) illustrated with an enigmatic anecdote. There is a diary of the musician's comings and goings, as witnessed by Emma from her bedroom window. The final third of the novel is Emma's travel diary of Japan. Much of this narrative unconventionality could be described as Japanese-influenced. There is, for example, the list headed "Tools of enlightenment," which consists of sentences like "A tile shatters against a tree" and "A handful of hair floats to the floor" (57). There

are gnomic quotations from Japanese authors. Two major sections have titles containing Japanese words: Emma's account of the musician's stay in Toronto is entitled "The approach (*kyohan*) to a bridge" (21) while her diary of Japan begins with "The Bridge (*o-hashhi*) of Dreams" (87). Since one of the diary entries records a visit to Uji, famed in Japan for its associations with the *Tale of Genji*, the final chapter of which is "The Floating Bridge of Dreams," this section title seems intended as an allusion to hopeless love, Japan-style. Sheard, however, is not at all precious about the *japonisme* of her narrator. While Emma is deeply affected by the tea ceremony she participates in, and by her experience meditating in a Zen temple, she does not lose her wry appreciation of ironic contrast:

I stood on a bridge and all down the canal, as far as I could see, branches sagging with blossoms trolled in the current. A raft of petals, caught under the bridge, quaked below me. As night fell, the geisha began emerging, making their way to the nightclubs, their *geta* clip-clopping across the cobblestone bridges. Another living woodcut. I walked back to the main street where I passed two well-dressed young men lying face down in vomit. (100)

Sheard employs here the stylistic convention of the static tableau that both Duncan and Keenleyside employ (or "living woodcut," to use Sheard's own phrase), but the note of bathos struck by the two drunks redeems it from sentimental archaism.

While poets such as Kiyooka and Joy Kogawa were experimenting with Japanese poetic forms as early as the 1970s, Sheard's experiments represent something new in Canadian prose about Japan. In *Almost Japanese*, Sheard uses models from Japanese literature, assuming that her readers know enough to appreciate parody when they encounter it. She does something similar in her 1995 piece, "Tokyo Pillow Book," an episodic travel diary that pays homage to the classical Japanese genre of the pillow book.¹⁵

By the 1980s, most Canadians did know something about Japan: sushi, sake, kimono, tatami, and kabuki did not need italics or definitions.¹⁶ As a consequence, in order to produce the exotic effect, writers have had to provide more *recherché* touches of authentic Japan—as, for example, Sheard does with her generic borrowings. Moreover, conventional travel accounts have virtually disappeared, and in their place have appeared fictionalized versions of life in Japan, in which the "real Japan" is figured not as a pre-modern dream of geisha, haiku and *ukiyo-e*, but as the shabby world of commuters, office buildings, love hotels, and bars—what Tzvetan Todorov (referring to Japan and Hong Kong) calls "the exoticism of skyscrapers and electronics" (266).¹⁷

Gabrielle Bauer's *Tokyo My Everest* (1995) straddles genres: classified on the copyright page as "Japan: Description and Travel," it reads like a novel, not a travel book. In fact, it neatly fits the pattern of the Oriental quest novel in which a "restless Western dreamer takes temporary refuge in the East, hoping to find either physical stimulation or spiritual enrichment or, preferably, both; instead, said dreamer finds only the limitations of his/her own culture, a culture to which s/he nonetheless returns, suitably 'enlightened' by the experience" (Huggan 182). When Bauer flees from her "half-life" back in Canada (15) with a one-way ticket to Tokyo, she is convinced "that only a Japanese man would give me the key to Japan and uncover my reason for being there" (29). If finding an apartment, getting a decent job (i.e., not teaching English in a crummy private school), and making friends constitute the arduous approach to base camp, then finally getting her Japanese boyfriend is the summit of Bauer's Japan experience:

"I love you," he says simply, looking me straight in the eye. If Tokyo is indeed my Everest, then this has got to be its pointy peak. Wrapped in fog, hearing the magic words from Tetsu. (206)

Inevitably, like a shipboard romance, the affair ends, and Bauer is devastated: "Coming to Japan had been an attempt to . . . try on a completely different self. My sense of failure was deep and wide" (215). The romance was not merely with a man, or even with Japan, but with "a completely different self" (215). Bauer is a sexual tourist and all tourists, as Graham Huggan has asserted, "are self-involved even as they seek out the cultural other" (208).

If Bauer's memoir is an old-fashioned Oriental quest novel, other recent Canadian novels about Japan try to escape this mode. Will Aitken's *Realia* employs bizarre plot twists (involving designer drugs and inventive sex) for his tale of how a Canadian girl (possibly a man in drag) ends up having an affair with a Japanese pop star. A parody of the Orpheus myth, *Realia* also imitates the fantasy mode of the contemporary Japanese writer Haruki Murakami (in his acknowledgements, Aitken lists Murakami along with Kenzaburo Oe and Yasunari Kawabata as influences). Turning to models derived from Japanese literature not only signals a writer's special knowledge and therefore his or her authority; it is also a way to represent the irreducible strangeness of Japan, for still, even in its thoroughly modern (or postmodern) phase, Japan is strange to someone reared in Vancouver or Toronto or St. John's.

Peter Oliva's 1999 novel *The City of Yes* is narrated by a young Canadian teaching English in Japan. His experiences are woven into a fictionalized

biography of Ranald MacDonald. These two Canadians are linked through a third character named Endo, a Japanese teacher and lexicographer who is researching MacDonald's life. Endo's name alludes to Endo Shusaku (1923-1996), the Catholic writer whose novel *Silence* (*Chinmoku*; tr. 1969) describes the spiritual journey of a Portuguese priest in seventeenth-century Japan. Oliva's narrator recognizes that "all travellers re-invent the places they visit" (161); in this case, Oliva re-invents Japan through the history of Japan's contact with foreigners during its centuries of isolation. The story of Ranald MacDonald not only adds adventure to *The City of Yes* (the fictional potential of teaching or studying in Japan has been fairly well exhausted by picaresque books like Matthew Kneale's *Whore Banquets* and John David Morley's *Pictures from the Water Trade*); it also makes the point that interpreting Japan for the foreign reader has a history, one which Oliva cannot escape. The complexity of this novel, which shifts from MacDonald's story to the narrator's to Endo's, reflects Oliva's struggle to free himself from simple-minded exoticism. The results are sometimes strained, especially when, as in the opening sequence, he attempts what the book jacket calls "the delicacy of a brushstroke artist." Haiku-like phrases that are used as chapter headings—"wild geese/Balloons from Japan/Fade to black" (5)—and the sumptuous cover reproduction of a Hiroshige print suggest that the romance of old Japan is not dead yet.

"Knowledge," as Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out, "is incompatible with exoticism, but lack of knowledge is in turn irreconcilable with praise of others; yet praise without knowledge is precisely what exoticism aspires to be. This is its constitutive paradox" (265). Steven Heighon's short stories in *Flight Paths of the Emperor* unfold within this paradox. They are exoticist inasmuch as they savour the strangeness of Japan—its language, its traditions, its placenames, its food, and its peculiar brand of English. But there is knowledge here as well. There are sometimes more allusions and narrative complexity than the stories can bear (a point noted by Geraldine Sherman when she reviewed them in 1993), but their density is also their strength. "A Man Away From Home Has No Neighbours" is made up of seven separate sections, joined only by the various ways in which they demonstrate the truth of the title (a Japanese proverb). The situations range from the Rape of Nanking to the internment of the Japanese Americans, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, and the suicide of one of its heroes, General Nogi. The great Japanese modernist, Natsume Soseki, made General Nogi's suicide after the death of the Meiji emperor in 1912 the central symbolic event

of his novel *Kokoro* (1914; trans. 1957). By including Nogi in his own story, Heighton borrows resonances from Japanese fiction. *Flight Paths of the Emperor* teems with such resonances, and they are central to his depiction of the mutual entanglement of Japan and its foreign Others.

In *Floating Shore*, Japanese Canadian writer Sally Ito presents two distinct groups of stories about Japan. The first group deals with Japanese people, ranging from a failed Christian evangelist in a remote village to middle-aged newlyweds honeymooning in the Canadian Rockies. The stories in the second section are told by a first-person narrator, a Japanese Canadian studying in Japan. Even when these stories describe Buddhist temples and Japanese gardens, they do not have the suspect glitter of exoticism. “Mishima,” a story partly set at the famous temple Kinkakuji, involves a Chinese student hot on the trail of his own “theory” about Mishima’s suicide, an ambitious Japanese poetess (she collects books inscribed to her by Octavio Paz and Margaret Atwood), and a broken-down American translator (modelled on Howard Hibbett). Ito convincingly evokes a range of milieux, both in the expatriate community and “inside” Japanese society; her treatment of the Japanese literary world, where translators and globe-trotting littérateurs mingle, seems particularly well done. The short story form here fulfills certain confessional, self-discovery purposes that we associate with the travel memoir, but it also frees Ito to adopt multiple perspectives and thereby explore various zones along the Canada-Japan border. The narrator of “Furyo,” who wants to be a writer, muses about form: “What if there was a story that was just a series of unconnected moments—moments that left only a vague impression, fleeting and light, of a person or a place?” (196). Japanese fiction is often described as having just this kind of impressionistic plotlessness. Perhaps the narrator’s question indicates Ito’s wish to present her encounter with Japan in an appropriately Japanese manner, as “a series of unconnected moments.” Fortunately, Ito also provides more substantial narrative satisfactions. *Floating Shore* is a remarkably nuanced account of a Japanese Canadian (and Canadian student of Japanese literature) encountering her ancestral homeland.

Conclusion

When Hugh Keenleyside opened the legation in 1929, about a hundred and thirty people registered themselves as Canadian residents of Japan (278); most were missionaries. In 1980, there were 1,698 Canadians registered as foreign residents in Japan; by 1985, this number had doubled. Despite the

problems in the Japanese economy in the 1990s, the numbers of Canadians attracted to Japan kept growing, from 8023 in 1996 to 9185 in 1999 (*Japan Statistical Yearbook*). Gabrielle Bauer's memoir gives an accurate picture of how most of these people live: they watch American television, socialize with other English-speaking expatriates, and save money to pay off debts back home. Nonetheless, among their ranks have also been writers like Ito and Bauer, who speak Japanese, and Oliva, Sheard, and Heighton, who have some knowledge (beyond what the *Lonely Planet* guide can provide) of its history and culture. The result of their encounter with Japan is writing that goes beyond travelogue and even attempts to infuse into Canadian fiction elements of Japanese literary traditions.

NOTES

My thanks to the reviewers of this article for their helpful comments.

1. Anti-Japanese feelings in Canada (particularly BC) did not of course originate with the war, but they were reanimated by it. F. Leighton Thomas's scurrilous pamphlet, "Japan: The Octopus of the East and It's [sic] Menace to Canada" (1932), claimed that "the Japs [had] grabbed the fishing on the B.C. Coast" (5). Even a work of scholarship, *The Japanese Canadians* (1938), edited by Harold Innis, made a similar claim: "While the Chinese are confined to a few industries and seem content to remain in them, the Japanese are competing all along the line with an aggressive efficiency which confounds the Whites" (xxii). Dorothy Duncan's patriotic cross-Canada travelogue, *Here's to Canada* (1941), lists in an ominous tone the business interests of the Japanese: "In Vancouver alone, the Japanese operate more than a hundred grocery stores, a hundred and forty automobile salesrooms . . . and they own any number of lodging houses, apartment houses, restaurants, barbershops, dress making shops and fish shops Wherever they go they attempt to dominate the field . . ." (275-76). These "well-entrenched prejudices" were, as Patricia Roy notes in her study of Canada-Japan wartime relations, "stimulated by Japan's aggression, by atrocities committed on Allied troops, and by wartime propaganda" and consequently "allowed for precious few distinctions between Canadian citizens of Japanese origin and Japanese nationals" (218).
2. *Obasan's* importance is perhaps most evident in the fact that both Ed Broadbent (then MP for Oshawa and leader of the federal New Democratic Party) and Gerry Weiner (Minister of State for Multiculturalism) quoted from it on September 22, 1988, the day when the redress settlement was announced (qtd in Miki 148-50). Patricia Roy, in discussing how attitudes towards the internment and the Japanese in Canada have changed, asserts that "Joy Kogawa's powerful and popular novel *Obasan* has had great emotional impact" (xi). In the past twenty years, *Obasan* has become "a staple in many ethnic literature courses" (Lo 98) and a frequent choice for high-school reading lists.
3. The son of a Hudson's Bay company official and a native woman, MacDonald was born in the Oregon Territory, near the mouth of the Columbia River. He spent part of his childhood in Fort Langley and Kamloops; he attended a school in the Red River Settlement. Although his birthplace became part of the United States, MacDonald seems to have considered himself a Canadian: one version of his narrative was entitled

- A Canadian in Japan*, and, when his adventuring years were over, MacDonald returned to “my native land, or rather to that portion of it (British Columbia) which had been left to the Old Flag by the Oregon Treaty” (249).
4. Jean Murray Cole’s afterword to the 1990 edition examines the authorship question in some detail.
 5. Shotaro Iida, in his introduction to *The Forgotten History of the Japanese-Canadians* (volume 1), dates Nagano’s arrival to 1875 (Shibata vi).
 6. The role of *japonisme* in Impressionism is well documented (see, for example, Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, 912).
 7. Duncan’s enthusiasm for Japanese things was (and remains) a common response. The narrator of Pierre Loti’s *Madame Chrysanthème* ships home from Japan eighteen cases of “bibelots les plus précieux” (283). The Canadian writer Geraldine Sherman, in her 1999 *Japan Diaries*, reserves her most enthusiastic commentary for forays to flea markets where she buys antique kimono and other souvenirs.
 8. Thomas Tausky claims that the “more sober articles” on which *A Social Departure* was based are not so flippant, and “provide evidence that Sara saw more to Japan than quaint foreigners who couldn’t speak English properly” (58-59).
 9. Margaret Prang’s 1995 biography, *A Heart at Leisure from Itself: Caroline Macdonald of Japan*, provides an engaging look at Macdonald’s accomplishments. For fuller discussions of the remarkable activities of Canadian missionaries in Japan, see Ion and Powles.
 10. Although it is clearly propaganda, Argall’s book was published by a well-established British firm, Geoffrey Bles, which produced, among other things, popular mysteries and the works of C.S. Lewis.
 11. See Roy for a comparative discussion of the treatment of “enemy aliens” by the Japanese and by the Canadians.
 12. In “From Kure to Hiroshima,” a brief article that appeared in the *Canadian Forum* in July 1947, an American journalist, Harry Roskolenko, described Hiroshima as “a composite of desolation in which contrasts are abysmally violent, lurid, too arresting for the appreciation of the camera-eye alone. It is human grief, slant-eyed, wearing spectacles, saying ‘Very sorry’ to the man with the question.” The “whole nation,” he wrote, was “sick and awaiting hospitalization for mental, physical, and political diseases” (82). Clearly, in Roskolenko’s view, the Americans were applying the right cure.
 13. Joy Kogawa’s 1974 collection *A Choice of Dreams*, contains a number of imagist poems about Japan—another example of a Japanese-influenced poetic being “repatriated” to describe Japanese scenes and experiences. More recently, poets Sally Ito and Terry Watada have done something similar. See Fisher for a fuller discussion of Japanese influences in Canadian poetry.
 14. Perhaps the figure of the Japanese musician in Toronto is based on Seiji Ozawa, music director of the Toronto Symphony from 1965 to 1969. Both Ireland (1953-) and Sheard (1953-) grew up in Toronto.
 15. Hiromi Goto’s *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) could also be cited as an example of Canadian fiction with Japanese literary influences; I do not examine it here because it does not deal explicitly with travel to Japan.
 16. *Sushi, tofu, karaoke, kabuki, tatami, shoji, and kanji* do not appear in the 1967 *Gage Dictionary of Canadian English* or the 1970 *Winston Dictionary of Canadian English*; they are included in the 1999 *Gage Canadian Dictionary*.

17. Conventional travel writing is, of course, still being produced. Geraldine Sherman's *Japan Diaries: A Travel Memoir* (1999) and "Tokyo Story" in David Rakoff's *Fraud* (2001) are recent literary (as opposed to practical) accounts of Japan. But such works tend to deliver familiar set pieces—for example, descriptions of Japanese teens in strange clothing or of Tsukiji, Tokyo's famous fish market.

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