

# The Many Tongues of *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka*

## Collaborations

We have begun our work together by trying to understand whose text *Mothertalk* really is.<sup>1</sup> The cover suggests that at least three people were involved in making this book; the life stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka have been written by Roy Kiyooka and edited by Daphne Marlatt. However, what seems to be a collaborative venture poses problems from the start, with the risk that “Mary” is subsumed by multiple layers of reading.<sup>2</sup> Marlatt’s introduction to *Mothertalk* outlines the complex procedures whereby Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka’s life stories travelled from Japanese conversations to English print: Mary Kiyooka told her stories, in Japanese, to Matsuki Masutani, who taped and transcribed them. He then translated these transcriptions into fairly literal English, which Roy Kiyooka re-translated in order to capture the effects in English of his mother’s Tosa dialect. Adding to his mother’s stories from his own knowledge and memories of her storytelling through his childhood, Kiyooka also rearranged the material he had received. When he died in 1994 before completing his book, his daughters asked Marlatt (a writer and one-time partner of Roy Kiyooka) to see it into print. NeWest published *Mothertalk* in 1997, rearranged by Marlatt, and now including significant additional materials. Every addition (such as the inclusion of Kiyooka’s poetry) and every change marks accretions of meaning and purpose for this text as new readers become involved. From the photographs on front and

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\* We have used some of the materials for this paper in presentations at two conferences: “Approaching the Auto/Biographical Turn” in Beijing, June 1999, and the “Roy Kiyooka Conference” at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, October 1999. We regret that publication timelines do not allow this paper to reflect discussion at the Roy Kiyooka Conference.

back covers, from introduction to appendices, this work presents an historical transformation that implicates so many readers that we, reading in our turn, need to examine the finished product as a work in progress.

As we examine the relations among these multiple layers and players and the actual process of making *Mothertalk*, our initial question about authorship and originality becomes increasingly problematic. As Marlatt herself suggests, "there is no original here," which she modifies by adding "the original is inaccessible to us" (Interview). To tease out the layers of *Mothertalk* and understand it as process, we will trace its evolution by reading the published text with and against Kiyooka's earlier manuscript versions and in the context of recent interviews with Masutani and Marlatt. As we describe the changes between different versions of *Mothertalk*, we also hope to show that the kind of complex collaboration informing the *Mothertalk* project forces us to reconsider how we approach this kind of life-writing, what analytical tools are available to us, and what we hope to achieve in our discussion of such material. As a result, we wish to raise questions, explicitly and implicitly, about authority and originality for instance, but some of the answers may lie beyond the scope of this introductory paper.

The complexity of *Mothertalk* and the many questions and comments it prompted in our initial individual readings compelled us to work on this text together. We had collaborated before and had therefore already established the trust and responsibility necessary for such a task. (It is difficult to forget that "collaboration" in wartime contexts describes treachery. This negative meaning highlights the importance of trust, whether maintained or broken, in any kind of collaboration.) With this text in particular, we have benefited from discussion because we have been able to draw on earlier work that each of us had done in related areas. What we could develop together promised to be much wider-reaching than anything we could have achieved separately. We have also experimented with the collaborative writing process itself by talking and writing together in front of the computer as well as rewriting each other's contributions. In the process of these challenges, exchanges, and negotiations, we have blurred our own boundaries as individual speakers and have now produced a shared paper that we both read as "ours."

While on the one hand it seems entirely appropriate that an academic study of a collaborative project should itself be collaborative, we recognize on the other the simplicity of our task in comparison with the *Mothertalk* project. Mary spent several hours in conversation with Masutani. Once her

stories were transcribed onto paper and translated in English, she herself had no further control over them. Kiyooka may well have spoken with his mother about his own work on these stories, but she was in no position to confirm his choices. Similarly, when Marlatt entered the process, Kiyooka himself was no longer alive. Her discussions with Masutani and with members of the Kiyooka family did not enable her to receive confirmation from Kiyooka himself or, of course, from Mary. By contrast, our collaborative enterprise has involved continuous interaction between us, an extended exercise in repeated and reciprocal suggestion, adjustment, and confirmation.

We ourselves come to Mary Kiyooka's life stories as outsiders, but undoubtedly read them for their resonance with our own experiences. As women of two generations, and as immigrants from England and Germany respectively, we respond to Mary Kiyooka's experience of immigration from Japan to Canada. We respond to Kiyooka's involvement with his mother's text, recognizing its power to explain his identity as both Canadian and Japanese. We respond to the challenges of translation and the grounding of Kiyooka's sensibilities in two languages (Miki, "Roy Kiyooka" 59). We respond to Marlatt's editorial involvement derived from her sense of responsibility to Mary and Roy Kiyooka and part of her longstanding commitment to oral and community histories. We also read *Mothertalk* in light of very significant help from those whose readings have preceded our own. The generosity we have received at every stage of this work has been quite inspiring. Masutani explains everyone's willingness to help in terms of Roy Kiyooka's own kindness that friends and family would wish to perpetuate. Marlatt put us in touch with Fumiko Kiyooka, who simply handed over the manuscripts for *Mothertalk* in an amazing act of trust. Kiyo Kiyooka has given us permission to publish from these manuscripts. Masutani gave an extended interview at his home on Denman Island, 11 June 1999, and Marlatt gave an extended interview at her home in Victoria, 8 July 1999. Both the manuscripts and these interviews implicate us as readers, drawing us into the ongoing interpretive process and the earlier community of collaborators; they are crucial to the discussion that follows.

*Mothertalk* is collaborative life-writing that defies familiar definitions of collaboration. Marlatt herself describes only her interaction with Kiyooka's drafts as collaborative, a collaboration in her own mind, explaining that "it was also partly a way of having an extended visit with him after he died because his voice was so present" (Interview). Although critics have discussed

forms of collaboration, both as acknowledged by double signatures or hidden behind a single name, we are not aware of any critical readings of collaborative life stories that are as self-consciously complex as *Mothertalk*.<sup>3</sup> When Samantha Hodder, for example, describes *Mothertalk* as a “dual autobiography” (13), she accounts for only two of the participants (Mary and Roy Kiyooka) in this much more complex collaborative endeavour. Recent work on collaborative life stories that were first narrated orally and then presented in writing has identified important questions about authority and mediation in the collaborative enterprise (see in particular Cruikshank, Davies, Humez, and Kaplan), although here too the focus has usually been on two participants.

Most of the collaboration in *Mothertalk* is best described as successive or serial as each listener becomes the speaker of another story shaped by yet another listener.<sup>4</sup> Each version thus always belongs to at least two people whose sameness and difference inform their struggle for control over the story.<sup>5</sup> Working beyond mere acknowledgement of multiple voices, we want to examine their relationships in detail, recognizing that collaboration may range from dialogic relations between separate but mutually engaged subjects to a blending of voices which renders them indistinguishable from one another. Although the experience of immediate reciprocity that Marlatt has described in other collaborative projects may be less important in *Mothertalk*'s serial creation,<sup>6</sup> slippage remains a crucial concept to account for what happens in the in-between spaces between collaborators' “distinctive ways of moving in and through language” (*Readings* 116). The term serial collaboration can thus be helpful in setting this kind of collaborative writing apart from the more common dual collaboration; it not only emphasizes the crucial relations among multiple speakers, listeners, and contexts, but it also foregrounds the succession of multiple versions, their mediated quality, and the processual nature of the life stories collected in *Mothertalk*.

### **The Genesis of *Mothertalk***

*Mothertalk* originated as Roy Kiyooka's project to record his mother's stories. He had listened to them from boyhood, but felt his own Japanese was too limited for the purpose of recording or translating them for posterity. In his third-person narration of “Pacific Windows,” Kiyooka describes how he and his mother began their particular collaboration on *Mothertalk*:

They spent long summer evenings together remembering distant ‘names’ and

'faces' and they recounted all the kindred and alien time-warps. Each summer she cited the names of those she knew who had recently passed away, and in her obits she would cite how each of them had passed their presciences onto those who were alive and kicking. . . . she invariably talked about all the family ties they had on both sides of the pacific, and though she never mentioned it, they both knew she was the last link to the sad and glad tidings of the floating world. (*Pacific Windows* 298)<sup>7</sup>

Marlatt's memories of Mary's visits to Vancouver support Kiyooka's lyrical evocation of reminiscences with his mother. Describing Kiyooka and his mother as sharing "a very strong sense of humour and a kind of astonishment at life" (Interview), Marlatt describes Mary as

a great storyteller. She told stories all the time. She loved telling stories about other people too. Whenever she came to visit, she would go down to Tonari Gumi, which is the senior centre, and often find people that she had met through her travels so many years earlier across Canada, and they would trade life stories. And she would come home very excited and pour all this out to Roy, and they would sit and marvel at it and so on. (Interview)

This jubilant intimacy of storytelling began in Kiyooka's childhood and provided him with his earliest comprehension and use of oral Japanese. In "Gotenyama," Kiyooka writes of

this roundabout  
saunter  
thru Gotenyama backstreets  
re sound-  
ing inside the shell  
of a child's  
syntax  
  
(an 'echo'  
of a distant echo...  
  
my mother  
taught me on the sunday morning  
back porch  
of a long ago East Calgary  
circa 1930s  
  
these  
thrasht blossoms clinging to my sleeve  
  
this mid-morning  
reprieve

(*Pacific Windows* 227)<sup>8</sup>

Japanese was an oral language for Kiyooka. In his address, "We Asian North Americanos: An unhistorical 'take' on growing up yellow in a white world," which appears as an appendix for *Mothertalk*, he writes: "Everytime I look at my face in a mirror I think of how it keeps on changing its features in English tho English is not my mother tongue" (181). Marlatt remembers Kiyooka working informally at his Japanese which, she says, improved with his visits to Japan later in his life (Interview). Masutani, who says that Kiyooka enjoyed conversing in Japanese and managed very well despite his limited vocabulary, remembers just one instance in which he knew of Kiyooka working on written Japanese:

In 1985 Roy wrote a poem in Japanese. He wrote it phonetically (in Roma-ji) since he couldn't write Japanese. I first corrected his roma-ji, then rewrote it in Japanese. This poem is reprinted on page 262 of "Pacific Window". This was the only time that I ever helped him with written Japanese. ("Re: *Mothertalk*")

For the larger project of retrieving his mother's stories and translating them from oral Japanese to an English appropriate both to her voice and to a wide audience, Kiyooka looked for help with Japanese translation and turned to Masutani.

Kiyooka asked Masutani to interview Mary in Japanese and to record and translate her storytelling. Despite Kiyooka's personal interest in the project, Masutani describes his own mandate as quite independent. Kiyooka was sometimes present during the conversations but did not become involved and never stayed for long. Kiyooka had expressed interest in recording his mother's stories of Meiji Japan, but did not provide specific questions, leaving the possibilities of these encounters quite open. We were glad to establish these details because they clarify for us the extent to which Masutani could pursue his own interests in these conversations and they also establish the early stages of what we have come to describe as serial collaboration.

Masutani and Mary had not known each other before the interviews but were introduced by Kiyooka with the express purpose that Mary should tell her stories in Japanese. Masutani describes Mary as an eager and voluble storyteller, requiring no prompting. Masutani says that he and Kiyooka-san spoke in different dialects, her Tosa-ben being distinct and also old-fashioned. Her Japanese dated back to the turn of the century and had not undergone any of the shifts of time or the elimination of differences that television had introduced. Their language together was casual and conversational, but he recognized her as a highly educated woman. She had spo-

ken to Maya Koizumi, who had interviewed her some ten years earlier, and Masutani commented on Mary's comfort in speaking to a woman; she had been prepared, for instance, to speak on that occasion about wearing underwear for the first time in her life when she came to Canada. With Masutani, so much younger than she and a man, Mary developed a different kind of bond. Masutani suggests that he unconsciously positioned himself as a grandson might, listening to a grandmother with great respect.

Clearly, she enjoyed talking about Japan in Japanese with a sympathetic listener who could understand what she was talking about. In the original translation, Mary claims Masutani's particular understanding in frequent parenthetical asides: "It's only Japanese," she says at one point in her story of her father's role as second, required to behead young samurai who were committing seppuku or traditional suicide: "Japanese only understand this. My children laugh at this, but you understand, don't you. You come from Japan, you have heard these things from your parents" (MM's Transcript 2).<sup>9</sup> These asides indicate her regret that her children do not speak better Japanese and that the two children she left behind in Japan, and from whom she was separated for many years, have no wish to keep records from that past. While these asides are crucial in affirming the relationship between Mary and Masutani, they create problems when other listeners come to Mary's stories from a different cultural background and miss the specific context on which much of her storytelling relies.<sup>10</sup> The culture-specific nature of these oral exchanges seems to invite Kiyooka's intervention. Had Masutani's responsibility been simply to transcribe oral history in Japanese across generations, the resulting work would clearly exclude us as readers. It would also play a more limited role in Canadian culture. Our work on the genesis of *Mothertalk* suggests that the value of this book for all Canadian readers has been significantly increased by the interventions that followed.

Masutani's role in this project was crucial at the time in providing Kiyooka with an extended text. As Mary's first audience and interpreter in this cumulative project, Masutani provided the first stages of mediation—from oral Japanese to written English. However, the fact that his name does not appear on the cover or title page of the completed book may indicate just how remote his foundational work came to seem after years of work by Kiyooka and then by Marlatt on the written text. It was nonetheless so foundational that Marlatt, as final mediator for this project, returned to Masutani's text when Kiyooka's final version seemed to her muddled and

confusing; while no version can be read as original or authoritative, Masutani's transliteration remains foundational for the English-speaking reader. Close attention to Masutani's text also helps to explain how these stories retain their oral quality through multiple successive interventions. Strangely, given the liberties Kiyooka took with Masutani's text, sometimes for very clear reasons, as we can show, and sometimes to satisfy his own sense of how his mother would sound in English, he seems never to have forgotten his mother's speaking presence or the context of the original exchange.

Masutani's task was to provide a literal transcript from conversation in Japanese and then to translate the Japanese tapes fairly literally into English text. Because Masutani's own English is strongly inflected by Japanese, the effect of the earliest translation is indeed that of reading a Japanese speaker with what Kiyooka has called his mother's "broken-english" (*Pacific Windows* 298). For example, Masutani renders Mary's meeting in Japan with an old school friend who had emigrated to the States:

Oh Boy Boy, I was shocked to death. He was full of white hairs and bald. We were so happy, though, to meet childhood friend. I was with him for four years in Jinjou [elementary] school days, fighting with him every days. I was a tomboy, and strong, so I was afraid of boys, and fighting with them all the time. I've often beaten up boys to tears. Yea I was a real tomboy when I was small.

So, we hold each others and cried, then took pictures of us.  
(Mrs. Kiyooka No. 2., 16)<sup>11</sup>

(Kiyooka's pencil makes the obvious correction that Mary "wasn't" afraid of boys. Masutani's slip in this instance may be a simple omission or may indicate transition from Japanese to English or from oral to written language.) Masutani retains not only repetitions of narrative as Mary returned to certain topics repeatedly but also the repetitions or rephrasing that suggest the musing nature of oral narrative dependent on a listener for confirmation. "Remember!" she says at one point (#2, 2), or "You know him, don't you?" (#2, 3) or, about Mariko, the daughter she left in Japan: "'I parted with her when she was two. You see her, she'll come soon. She is now about sixty" (#2, 17).

Masutani was unhappy with his own earliest understanding that he was to produce a book from these meetings; he did not feel his English was adequate. Once he had persuaded Kiyooka that further "translation" would be necessary, he began to annotate his own transcriptions for Kiyooka's use. For example, as a parenthetical note in the story of meeting an old school friend, Masutani inserts "about to cry." She talks of her brother at one point



as the rotten son of “such a nice father,” and Masutani adds “(tapping the table by the finger)” to include her emphasis. Or she talks about her nephews’ weddings in Japan and “(her tone of voice is suddenly like a that of haikara lady [“high-collar” or very elegant]).” Or again, describing just how mistaken her father was to think that life would be better for her in Canada than in Japan, “(she raised her voice suddenly,)” in order to say “on the contrary, I had a terrible time, I went through hell!” (MM’s Transcript 3). Telling of her father’s expectation that she would return to Japan, “(Her voice starts to shake with tears)” (Mrs. Kiyooka No. 2. 24). In two copies of the same story, one heavily edited by Kiyooka and the other annotated in pencil by Marlatt, Masutani’s text is interrupted by the parenthetical note: “(Telephone call from her daughter Mariko).” The oral quality of the text is enhanced by the reader’s understanding of immediate context, gesture, mood, and expression provided in parentheses and by inclusion of literal renditions of laughter, for example, as “ha ha ha ha ha.” Marlatt has described Mary Kiyooka as earthy and ribald (even in her “broken-english”), thoroughly engaged, for example, by the harsh stories she had to tell of picture brides, illicit love, violence, and prostitution. Masutani’s annotation of the emotional qualities of Mary’s oral delivery and of her laughter conveys one sense of her presence that has been “refined” out of the printed text.

We note these changes that affected both language and storytelling with ambivalence: on the one hand, Mary’s first narratives, mediated only by translation, do not assume a wider public than her immediate speaking situation; on the other, Kiyooka’s interventions necessarily determine and control the nature of that wider public that the book has reached. Kiyooka edited Masutani’s text to provide formal English diction and syntax equivalent to the nature of his mother’s Japanese. For example, the meeting with a former school friend is changed with bold pencilled lines straight through words to be omitted, and with rephrasing provided in large pencilled capitals:

Boy, I was shocked. He was whitehaired and bald. We were so happy to meet each other again. I was with him for four years in Jinjou school days, fighting with him every day. I was a tomboy and strong, I wasn’t afraid of boys. I’ve often beaten them up. Yea I was a real tomboy when I was small.  
So we held each other and cried, he had pictures taken of us.<sup>12</sup>

Part of Kiyooka’s work on syntax, diction, and idiom included tidying and focussing Mary’s “text” for more public delivery than her intimate conversations with Masutani had invited. So “my Mom” becomes “MOTHER,”

“my Dad” becomes “HER HUSBAND.” The clause, “she wait on his drinking,” is repaired not only for idiom but also for the precision required for a wider, English public, so it becomes “she SERVED HIS SAKE” (TALES OF Mrs. KIYOOKA 7, 2). In one heavily edited passage, we find every element of both Masutani and Kiyooka’s interventions. In the original:

my old man came here at 18, he was 28 in this picture and I was 20. (looking at the picture nostalgically) Poor fellow he was! But that’s life isn’t it. You guy are lucky, but don’t make mistake with woman A HA HA HA” (Mrs Kiyooka No. 2., 11).

Kiyooka’s heavy pencil transforms the passage:

My HUSBAND came here IN 1905. HE WAS JUST 18. He was 28 in this picture and I was 20. My old man was different. He wasn’t too much of a talker. . . .

Mediating between his mother’s intimate narration and its public reception, Kiyooka’s editorial work anticipates the needs of readers who are unfamiliar with Japanese culture and therefore resituates Mary’s extraordinary stories beyond their family context into a broader Canadian history. The “Parsha Hotel,” for example, becomes the “PALLISER Hotel” (Mrs. KIYOOKA [Pearl-Harbor] 11), and Mary’s memory of her age at the birth of each child (or Masutani’s hearing) is also corrected: “I had the last kid when I was 33. He [her husband] was 38 or 39, I think” becomes “I had the last kid when I was 43. He was 48 or 49, I think” (11).

These formal distancing elements are worth noting in the work of a man who published very personal correspondence in *Transcanada Letters* with all the idiosyncracies of his own style of address. With his own narrative, Kiyooka creates the illusion of unmediated reality, the personal mail that suggests to an outsider intimate connections to be puzzled over, communities of family and fellow artists both revealed and obscured by cryptic and therefore often incomprehensible pieces of information, trivia lacking explanation. In his mother’s story, on the other hand, Kiyooka seems to have wanted somehow to capture her patterns of speech and thought while at the same time translating the most personal of her exchanges into a fully transmissible public voice. He attends to precision and creates authority for Mary by formalizing her public persona, ensuring that the English reader receives her nostalgia and her measured wisdom but not her raucous energy or intense and immediate emotions. Where *Transcanada Letters* plays explicitly with persona and with the opacity of transmission, Kiyooka intervenes in *Mothertalk* to create the illusion of simple clarity. Mary’s narrative voice is a

project of Kiyooka's artistry under which she is in fact obscured, but the slippages are only apparent if we examine all the available versions of this text.

Finally, Kiyooka worked to transform his mother's oral Tosa-ben into an English that sounded to his ears equivalent to or resonating with his own understanding of his mother's speech. However, he mutes Mary's very practical approach to events. For example, talking to Masutani about the impoverishment of the samurai class during the Meiji Reformation, Mary says: "some became absolutely destitute. They needed money, so lots of them put their swords in the pawn-shop, just to survive" (Mrs. KIYOOKA No. 3, 3). Kiyooka's final version provides elegant rhythms and translates concepts of absolute destitution and survival into the relative abstractions of "income" and suitability: "the samurai found themselves without a master and hence without an income. They'd all been trained to live by their swords and now their swords were only fit for the pawnshop" (*Mothertalk* 19). Similarly, where Masutani's text has Mary taking pride in the story of her father having to chop off nine heads, *Mothertalk* presents her narration as more restrained and genteel: "I won't go into all the gory details but as each rebel prostrated himself and committed seppuku, Father had to behead him" (162).<sup>13</sup>

However, in tandem with this restraint, Kiyooka's text also introduces lyrical sentences that have no equivalent in the original translations but nonetheless do capture Mary's yearning for the Japan of her childhood. For example, when her father was drunk, "the old songs sang through him" (*Mothertalk* 41), or "When I pass away there won't be a soul left to tell how the heart-of-Tosa sang in our home behind an English facade" (172). Repeated use of "O" as a lyrical apostrophe in *Mothertalk* also originates with Kiyooka. Marlatt says "That's Roy, that's very Roy. He uses that a lot in his poetry" (Interview). When we asked Marlatt about these lyrical passages, she described the work as "almost symphonic in its different tones" but agreed that "the lyrical impulse is there very strongly often in the descriptions. And the descriptions are Roy's. [Mary] was not a describer. She would indicate. She would give an indication, but it would be quite concise, and he liked to elaborate and in the elaboration to try to recreate the feel of that experience, in that place, at that time" (Interview). In no small part, then, Kiyooka's mediation seems to expand on his childhood sense of Mary's nostalgia conveyed in the Tosa dialect that was his "mother tongue."

Clearly, Kiyooka also heard his "mother tongue" inflecting his own English. Miki quotes from the Kiyooka papers: "i do believe that my kind of

inglish bears the syntactical traces of my parent's kochi-ben: everytime i've gone back there and walked the streets of that lovely city on the pacific, i hear the cadences of my own native speech: both nihongo and inglish subtly transmuted into an undialectical syntax" (Afterword 320, fn. 21). Kiyooka's pencil, then, altering text in bold capital letters and scoring through Masutani's printout, translates and selects but also adds his own voice to his mother's. His "reading" of his mother's stories is distinct from Masutani's in particular because of their effect on his own life. Marlatt's pencil, too, in light cursive in the margins, highlights topics but does not affect the text in terms of manuscript markings.

### **Japanese Components of *Mothertalk***

During the taped interviews, Mary wanted in particular to talk about her father, whom she admired, and who was a significant figure in the Meiji period of Japanese history (1868-1912). Masutani's understanding is that Kiyooka, too, was particularly interested in recording Mary's memories of her father and of her life in Japan. Not only does Mary repeatedly describe Kiyooka as her father's true heir, a true samurai, filled with the bushido spirit that values honour above life,<sup>14</sup> but her stories also carry, from the earliest transcripts, the urgent refrain of her desire to erect a stone to honour her father's memory. She sends money for the stone. She corresponds with her father's former students. She visits Japan in her old age to urge the project forward.<sup>15</sup> Mary also wanted to talk about Tosa, which is now known as Kochi City, remembering the haunts of her childhood with more passion than any other places in her life. The finished text retains this element of the earliest transcripts in that it carries this refrain too, her love for Tosa and her wish to return. She talks of childhood memories. She regrets being unable to return to Japan. For all the nearly 80 years she has lived in Canada, she demonstrates neither comfort here nor any sense of a second home. Times have been cruelly hard. Customs here are different. Old ways are not respected. ("These days people are losing the sense of Giri & Ninjou [honor and compassion]") (Mrs. KIYOOKA No. 3, 4). The only comfort that occurs to her is that wartime in Japan must have been much harder than in Canada. "I've spent most of my life here," Mary says in the published text, "but Tosa's my real home" (*Mothertalk* 29).

Mary and her father, Masaji Oe, had been devoted to each other, he raising her like a son to participate in martial arts and to live according to the

samurai code of honour. Her stories include her early experiences of training with the young boys. "I still remember mid-winter training," Mary says at one point (*Mother talk* 21). In the transcription, she says "I didn't do that myself but I watch them doing that. Tosas' youth were tough. This is my memory, a fact. Nobody know this except me. Even my children wouldn't understand this" (Mrs. Kiyooka No. 2., 6). Masaji Oe's choice of Shigekiyo Kiyooka as a husband for her was based on his understanding that this young man was also a warrior and could assume the responsibilities of a son, continuing to teach the art of Iai. Masaji Oe died later in the year of Roy's birth, leaving Mary with the lasting regret that she could not keep her promise to him and return to Japan. But stories of his distinction and renown and of her own closeness to him were an early part of Kiyooka's personal inheritance.

One story in particular belongs in Japanese history books but demonstrates in our present context the slippages that occur when the narrative passes from oral exchange to transcription, translation, and then through the multiple revisions that Kiyooka undertook.<sup>16</sup> We have already referred to the restraint and refinement that have been introduced into Mary's story of ten young samurai having to commit seppuku. Lord Yamanouchi ordered the young samurai, Masaji Oe, to be second to ten men, all well known to him, who were to commit seppuku by disembowelling themselves. His task was to behead them in order to abbreviate their suffering. Masutani's transcript reads as follows, prior to Kiyooka's editing and without any typographical corrections:

The Tosa opposition group was arrested and brought to Senshu Koobe, and ordered SEPPUKU. My dad was summoned by Mr. Yamanouchi to assist the Seppuku. They won't die by just cutting their abdomen, so they need assistance to die. My dad had to cut their heads, after calling them in their names. He did up to nine people. Then Whitemen stopped it, being terribly shocked. Apparently whitemen were there. They came to Japan by boat. Probably Tosa opposition group did something rude to these foreigners, so they were ordered to Seppuku in from of them to apologize thier deed. That's why it was performed in Senshu, Koobe. You see, Koobe and Nagasaki were only ports to the foreigners in olden days.

One person survived. I saw him when I was little, he was still around. He was called uncle DOI. My dad helped him, mr. Doi was ordered to commit seppuku but whitemen said "It's enough. No more." So he was only one came back to Tosa from the ordeal. He live long up till Meiji. He was still alive when I was little. He was running the inn. Do you know why I remember this so clearly? My dad told me about this many many times. It won't disappear from my mind. Tosa is different, very rough indeed. (Mrs KIYOOKA No. 3, 8-9)

The emotional import of the experience and of the old woman's memory of listening, repeatedly, to her father's telling of the experience are conveyed by that repetition, by her comment that this memory is indelible, and by her comparative stance, surely acquired later in life, that Tosa was both "different" and "very rough indeed." However, the experience is also contextualized in terms of "whitemen" having entry to some ports rather than others, likely to have been insulted, and then stopping the proceedings in shock at this unfamiliar form of violence. Given that Mary refers more than once to the lack of contact between Japan and the West, and the resistance to western influences even in Meiji Japan, this version of an old story conveys some sense of her own ambivalence. However, another, briefer version, also in Masutani's transcripts, includes the information that these young men were friends of Masaji Oe and that he was only eighteen when required to behead them. She comments: "Men of olden days were something, now men of 18 or 19 werestill [sic] kids. Men before Meiji were very matured" (KIYOOKA-SAN NO TALE 6, 12-13). Here, Mary's admiration for her father acknowledges the moral courage involved in samurai behaviour. She also describes the shocked white men merely as "people who were watching." Curiously, this unspecific and ahistorical reference, which eliminates even the fact of their being foreigners, provides the ground for Kiyooka's processes of revision.

For example, in this story of seppuku, Kiyooka struggles not just with language but also with political perspective and with publicly verifiable information in his editing. In both *Mother 2* and *Mother 3*, the death sentence follows a "revolt," though *Mother 3* indicates "a big revolt." *Mother 2* calls these young men "Loyalists," but *Mother 3* calls them "young rebels." As for the white men who were so shocked, *Mother 2* refers to the witnesses as "all the local people" and *Mother 3* calls them "all the locals." Masutani has expressed surprise at this revision, remembering vaguely from history lessons in Japan that these white people were either English or French, horrified witnesses of an execution they had requested because these young samurai were guilty of killing a westerner. Indeed, the whole situation is very strangely altered if foreigners are eliminated and local Japanese witnesses are disturbed by seppuku. In both versions, the tenth man is saved because the witnesses protest. Mary remembered being invited as a small girl many years later to rub the survivor's bald head for good luck. This memory must identify the survivor referred to in Masutani's transcript as the man who kept an inn, but Masutani's transcript makes no mention of the young girl

rubbing his bald head. We can only assume Kiyooka drew on his own memories of his mother's stories to embellish the story she had provided on tape.

In *Mothertalk*, Marlatt has placed this story of seppuku in the final chapter, called "Landscape-of-the-Heart" (162-63), a title that focusses on Mary's intense longing for Tosa and therefore on the ways in which longing colours memory. Situated here, this story belongs not with Mary's memories of childhood but with her visits to Japan as an old woman and her efforts to raise the memorial stone for her father. This story becomes part of the monument, a tribute to his character rather than evidence of a clash between two cultures. Given Mary's preoccupations as they are evident from the earliest transcripts, Marlatt's decision seems entirely appropriate, but we note the shifts in detail, tone, and purpose as examples of slippage from one reader to the next, and as vivid evidence that the final version necessarily obscures its own origins. This final version elaborates not on "the local people [who] were so horrified by the blood-letting" but on the relations between the young men committing seppuku and their executioner:

He told me the story many times and I listened to it like a boy does. "It was such a pity! Even I felt sorry. They were my friends. They were bidding farewell to each other and saying, Now it's my turn, Good-bye! Good-bye! and then each one would politely ask me to cut off his head. And I had to do it." (*Mothertalk* 163)

Mary comments: "It took tremendous courage. An ordinary person wouldn't have been able to do this" (163). All the ingredients remain from separate incidents in the earliest transcripts: the girl who was like a son to her father, the father's own (repeated) storytelling, the "calling them in their names," the rigour of the samurai code of honour, and the exceptional character of Masaji Oe. However, the effect of this passage has been refashioned over many readings, polished like a stone to eliminate information not essential to Mary's filial piety.<sup>17</sup> Our own sense of Mary's voice, both as it first addresses us from Masutani's translations and as it is affected by Kiyooka's interventions, suggests that she would have been happy with this emphasis on filial piety, that we can read this polishing almost as a search for the very heart of her narrative.

### **Canadian Components of *Mothertalk***

Given that *Mothertalk* itself is an act of filial piety on Kiyooka's part, we note as ironic the further shift from Japanese stories to the Canadian stories that form so large a part of the book. Kiyooka had wanted his mother's memories

of Japan.<sup>18</sup> Marlatt's extended negotiations for publication with Alfred Knopf gave her to understand that they, too, were interested in the Japanese elements of the stories, that they wanted more about Japan, which Marlatt, of course, was unable to produce (Interview). Not only that. Marlatt also shared Masutani's interest in the Canadian stories but for a different reason from his. She felt very strongly that Mary's stories were important for Canadian history. This Canadian component of *Mothertalk* deserves fuller attention than we can give it here, though we cannot downplay the significance of Marlatt's intervention in this matter. Ultimately, her choices have determined that Mary's life stories find their place in the English reader's understanding of the Japanese Canadian experience.

Masutani, too, a young immigrant to Canada, arriving in the 1970s was particularly interested in Mary's stories of Canada. He recognized that Kiyooka would not have needed stories of their early life in Canada; he had been part of that himself. Laughing, Masutani acknowledged that his role as interviewer just might have skewed Mary's emphasis and led her to talk about the early years of her married life, the hardship and poverty, their work in hotels and laundries, a whaling station, a vegetable market in Calgary, and so on. Certainly, the Depression years, the hungry men hiding on trains, and the food line-ups blend with her sense of "O Canada." These Depression years of Kiyooka's early childhood formed his own most personal memories. Where Japan and the samurai grandfather provided stories from his mother's past, enriching Kiyooka's sense of his Japanese heritage, the Depression in Calgary formed him as a Canadian.

Masutani's curiosity as an immigrant gave rise to stories that belonged in Kiyooka's own foundational memories. Furthermore, just as Kiyooka's poetry can be inserted so readily into *Mothertalk* because Kiyooka shared so many preoccupations with his mother, so his memories of Calgary provide a distinct perspective on hers. Kiyooka's own musings on that Canadian history appear on frayed and yellow legal pages loosely stuffed into a thin black binder that is labelled "AUTOBIOGRAPH - "(what follows could be a Y but looks like a number 9, a number 7, or the letter M). Repeatedly, he refers to the "house" that he carries within him. He looks out through the windows of that house:

thru all the rooms  
i have lived in in all over canada



thru all the rooms  
all over the country

even today, standing with my coat on  
at the entrance to a room  
somewhere in the world i am the boy who stood  
watching the trains leave from  
the cpr yards to distant cities.

Repeatedly, in these drafts, Kiyooka calls to his children from his own childhood. He remembers playmates by nickname, the schoolyard, the ball diamond, his slow and painful recovery from serious burns:

It was  
his mother come home  
from work  
who could take his pain  
into her arms  
& there it would lie  
as if it were hers . . .

Some of these drafts are heavily marked with red ink. Many are repetitions with small variations. None seems complete. These pages, however, provide the child's slant on the history that Kiyooka and his mother shared in Canada, the story he did not need to hear because he himself could tell it. Information that Masutani pursued in his interviews with Mary, repeated in preoccupations evident in Kiyooka's notebooks, illuminates the role Mary's life stories must have played in Kiyooka's own sense of identity. One feature, then, of this serial collaboration is an important overlap between the concerns of these two collaborators, Mary and Kiyooka, and the sense in which these stories are reflexively auto/biographical.

### **Marlatt's Intervention**

In her introduction to *Mothertalk*, Marlatt describes the project of writing down his mother's life stories as "Roy's great gift to his mother and his family" (8). Similarly, she speaks of her own personal reasons for taking on this editing project as her "last gift to Roy" (Interview). However, she found her task was much more than copy-editing of Kiyooka's final manuscript, which did not seem to her publishable as it stood. Neither she nor Masutani could make sense of what Roy had done, and both felt quite strongly that Mary's own sense of historical detail and development had been important to her and quite precise. For these reasons, Marlatt's commitment to the project

turned, in the last analysis, on the importance of Mary's stories, Mary's place in the Issei community, and the Issei community's role in Canadian history.<sup>19</sup>

In the end, Marlatt assumed a much more active role as editor than she had expected, taking on significant responsibility and authority in the decision-making process. Although Marlatt's voice does not participate in the storytelling as Kiyooka's does, and she does not insert her own autobiographical overlap into the text, her editorial interventions in the book are clear. Marlatt leads readers into *Mothertalk* by way of an introduction in which she first asserts the personal and historical significance of Mary's stories and then goes on to outline the complex stages of putting this book together, foregrounding and explaining her editorial role and her own investment in the project. While her personal accountability is an important element in setting up Mary Kiyooka's life stories, it seems equally important to us that Marlatt uses the introduction to foreground the much more general realization that life stories are always already mediated. And she is one of the central mediators of *Mothertalk*.

Marlatt's editorial changes are varied. Maybe the most significant difference between Kiyooka's final version and the book edited by Marlatt is their principle of organization. Kiyooka's "free-floating succession of stories" seems driven by a desire to capture the obsessions of his mother's life and a fascination with the process of telling stories (*Mothertalk* 5). Marlatt suggests that readers who lack Kiyooka's familiarity with the stories he had heard so many times would be unable to evaluate the significance of the individual stories to Mary's life. While they might be intrigued by Kiyooka's interest in "troubling the notions of transparent transmission" (Interview), they might fail to appreciate what Marlatt describes as the "emotional weight" and the "emotional shape" of the narrative (*Mothertalk* 5 and 7). Since Marlatt saw the value of Mary's stories preeminently in their content, she felt that publishing Kiyooka's version would ultimately be a disservice to Mary's life stories. Marlatt's decision to choose "a more conservative approach" (6) to organizing the book reinforces the notion that the readers of *Mothertalk*, or at least the readers expected by Marlatt, have indeed shaped its form in its making.<sup>20</sup>

Marlatt's assumptions about readers' responses seem driven by her own work on aural history projects, which have taught her the importance of the chronological shape of a story. In both *Opening Doors* and *Steveston Recollected*, Marlatt found such chronology to be crucial for appreciation of

immigrant histories: "To understand the depth of an immigrant experience, you have to know what the immigrant has come from" (Interview).<sup>21</sup> We cannot forget that Marlatt herself is an immigrant to Canada. She has pointed out that Mary's experiences of immigration resonate with her and her family's own immigration from Malaysia to Canada (Interview).<sup>22</sup> Her insistence on chronology to appreciate "the skeletal arc" of Mary's stories may thus also reflect her reliance on historical progression to explain her own sense of displacement and nostalgia, not to mention the historical irony that Japanese Canadians were victims of World War II in Canada while Marlatt's family were victims of the Japanese invasion of Malaysia (Interview). Each participant in this collaboration has recognized and valued something different in Mary's storytelling. Each has worked in turn, on conflicting principles, to provide a reading that makes "sense" of an immigrant experience.

At a loss for a principle of continuity in Kiyooka's version, Marlatt made the difficult—and contentious—decision to unweave the stories Kiyooka had woven together and to reorganize them. Not only did she consult Masutani, family members, and friends before making this decision, but the actual task of reestablishing dates and content connections was possible only with the help of Masutani's earlier transcripts and other middle-stage manuscript pages. Marlatt therefore reintroduced earlier stages of the collaborative project in the ongoing negotiations of textual meaning and translation. As a result, she has, for instance, inserted square brackets in the text to provide specific dates.<sup>23</sup> To avoid the repetitions characteristic of Kiyooka's version, Marlatt chose to have Mary refer to previously described events or people without repeating sections of the text. She struggled to decide whether stories were about the same or different people, sometimes arriving at decisions that seemed to her, even after consultation with the family, quite arbitrary (Interview). Moreover, she divided Mary's life stories into six chapters, each headed by a quotation from that section (with the exception of Chapter II, where the heading was grammatically adjusted to stand on its own). Marlatt's chapter divisions support her chronological arrangement in that they suggest phases in the overall development of Mary's life, which seem to counterbalance the stories' "incessant moving back and forth between Canada and Japan" (*Mother talk* 7).

However, one section breaks away from Marlatt's chapter chronology. "Pictures from the Old Family Album" constitutes a separate section pre-

ceded by a Kiyooka poem; this section has its own page number in the table of contents but is not counted as a new chapter. Kiyooka planned to include photographs in his project because they had been crucial in eliciting many of Mary's stories. As readers, we receive visual images of Masaji Oe, of Mariko and George as children in Japan strongly contrasted with the other children wearing their Maple Leaf sweaters in Canada, and of family groups in various combinations—for example, George newly arrived in Canada and now wearing a jacket and a large tweed cap. In keeping with Mary's involvement with other Japanese immigrants to Canada, one picture of a multi-family gathering includes several generations of the Iwamas, on whose movements Mary comments. As hard copy, these photographs also facilitate transitions between speaker and listener, writer and reader. In several cases, distinctive features of the photograph retained on the printed page provide an intimate sense of the original—the torn corner or the photographer's name. Recognizing the centrality of these prime documents, Marlatt has placed the photographs in the middle of *Motherstalk*, inviting readers to see them in relation to each other and to Mary's commentary on them.<sup>24</sup> Marlatt added two photographs of Mary's mother and of her only brother and his son, which she considered important for Mary's stories (Interview). To distinguish these photographs from the family album over which Mary muses in the text, Marlatt has provided them with captions at the end of the section. This varied interface between text and image once again complicates any effort to read the information in *Motherstalk* as transparent despite devices that appear to be unmediated.

In spite of the chronology of Marlatt's edited version and her desire to capture what she considered the overall shape, the arc, of Mary's life, Marlatt does not suggest seamlessness or transparency in the finished product. On the contrary, she highlights the strategic quality of this decision in her choice of the book's subtitle: "Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka." The term "life stories" hints at the tension between the historical information contained in Mary's life and the intervention of the historian or editor in selecting and presenting it. Moreover, the plural also acknowledges the collaborative nature of the book, the many speakers and listeners who have shaped Mary's stories. And finally, the plural picks up on the multiple tellings of these stories that Kiyooka's own title, *Motherstalk*, suggests.<sup>25</sup> Marlatt's editorial intervention therefore may simplify reception of these stories but by no means simplifies our understanding of their process. We

recognize the difficulty Marlatt faced in making changes to Kiyooka's version while she was still grieving his death. Quite apart from our own sense of indebtedness to Marlatt, our reading of this work suggests she showed Kiyooka the greatest respect by "tussling," as she puts it, with him and his manuscripts in her editorial work (Interview).

Let us pause here for a moment on possible responses to Marlatt's intervention, her reconstruction of chronology in Mary's life stories. If we argue that Kiyooka's sense of organization in the manuscripts reflects most accurately his own agenda in the telling of his mother's stories, Marlatt's changes seem at least problematic, maybe even disrespectful. The gaining of chronological order then has been achieved at the expense of Kiyooka's exploration of his own self, his "cultural recovery" in Saul's words (17), which finds expression in circularity and repetition in his manuscripts. Given the extent to which these stories were his, we must read Marlatt's interference as seriously problematic. If we argue, on the other hand, that the focus of this text is the documentary or biographical drive to tell Mary's life stories, then Marlatt has helped readers to enter the text by relying on chronological and spatial markers as well as cause-and-effect relationships. As readers and critics, we find ourselves in a dilemma. Are we reading *Mothertalk* to learn more about Mary Kiyooka, Matsuki Masutani, Roy Kiyooka, or Daphne Marlatt? And is it our task to pass judgement on each collaborator's contributions and decisions, to determine what is a loss or a gain? Rejecting such absolute decisions and evaluations, we have chosen to demonstrate the changes between different versions and examine their implications, highlighting the impact of serial collaboration. While we ourselves admire the final product as a deeply moving story, and particularly appreciate the delicacy of its nuances because we have followed each part of the book from its beginnings, we suggest that assessment of this work is finally a subjective matter. Withholding actual judgement on the value of each intervention, we have seen our task as one of understanding the complex relations within this serial collaboration. We have chosen, insofar as we can, to approach our task from all of the perspectives our archival work has provided.

Given the necessarily serial nature of this project, Marlatt could not seek final approval or authorization, often a crucial step in collaborative projects (Humez 36), from either Kiyooka or Mary. She therefore sought feedback from all of Kiyooka's daughters and siblings, sending them each a copy of the final manuscript, thus returning the trust that they had placed in her.

While nobody asked her to rewrite sections, responses confirmed that the first mediation of our life stories happens when we try to remember them, for some family members challenged the way Mary had depicted specific events. To acknowledge the constructed nature of everyone's memory and the disagreements about Mary's versions, Marlatt includes several footnotes in the text. Most striking may be Frank's insistence, in Chapter V, that he has no recollection of a conversation in which his father warned him against marrying a Catholic woman (*Mothertalk* 155, fn. 2). Two of his other interventions in that chapter also correct stories dealing with his wife Ann (155, fns. 1 and 3). Moreover, Mariko clarifies where her mother and sister Irene stayed when they arrived in Yokohama (130). The most extensive perspective provided by another family member constitutes Appendix 1, entitled "Papa's version." Marlatt's introductory note explains that the text is a transcript of an interview with Kiyooka's father, Harry Shigekiyo Kiyooka, which was found among Kiyooka's papers (175). In this brief introduction and in the note at the end, Marlatt acknowledges Masutani's help in identifying the text and clearing up the confusion about its content, for Kiyooka's father makes a number of points about George that actually apply to Roy. As a result, therefore, of Marlatt's intervention, this rendering of Mary's stories too is contested in the printed text, which now foregrounds these inescapable issues of plural perspectives, partial truths, and the creative role of each reader.

These diverging anecdotes from the family's experiences question the very boundaries of Mary's own life stories.<sup>26</sup> Does her text, the text of her life, begin on page 13 and end with section VI on page 172? Marlatt's footnotes as well as her detailed introduction suggest otherwise. Mary's life was shaped by multiple contexts, her family, her community, the countries she lived in and left, and so on. Marlatt translates this recognition of interdependency, of belonging, or overlapping with other people's lives, in one word of contexts, into a range of marginalia around and within Mary's life stories. Marlatt implicitly characterizes the audience for the book as non-Japanese; most of the square brackets throughout the text provide translations of Japanese terms or expressions, which Mary uses most frequently in the first two chapters that deal primarily with Japan. Other brackets give historical information [for example, dates for the Meiji and Kaei Periods (20); background on the feudal lord Takeda Shingen (22)]; or they translate Japanese measurements (40, 41) or currency (41), and identify place names

(25, 103). The non-Japanese reader, of course, is not Issei, or Nisei, or likely even Sansei—all of whom may easily receive the pre-annotated text. Marlatt achieves the final translation of Mary's life stories into a broader Canadian history, making them accessible for readers who do not share Mary's Japanese heritage.

**The Politics of *Mothertalk***

Whereas Marlatt inserts Kiyooka's individual voice in the form of his poetry at the beginning of each chapter to demonstrate how mother and son shared common preoccupations, she inserts his individual voice in the form of two appendices to introduce Kiyooka's political agenda for this work of history. In addition to Harry Kiyooka's version in Appendix 1, we find two other appendices, Kiyooka's talk given at the Japanese Canadian/Japanese American Symposium in Seattle, May 2nd, 1981, and a letter from Kiyooka to Lucy Fumi "c/o Japanese Canadian Redress Secretariat." While Mary's life stories result in "a blend of both mother's and son's vision and voices" (*Mothertalk* 7), Marlatt here emphasizes Kiyooka's role as mediator in the project and contextualizes his own agenda in recording his mother's life stories. Both texts indicate the political significance of Kiyooka's project. The presentation made in Seattle (originally written for two of Kiyooka's friends, writer Joy Kogawa and photographer Tamio Wakayama) prefigures the *Mothertalk* project and anticipates many of the concerns that become central to Kiyooka later on, such as the role of silence and language in his relationship with his mother and father, the loss of his mother tongue, and the feeling of having "been left with a tied tongue" (181).

The letter to Lucy Fumi is addressed to the Japanese Redress Secretariat and accounts for Kiyooka's "'whereabouts' from 1946 to 1949" but also describes the effects of World War II and the Canadian anti-Japanese legislation on his family (187). Although the Kiyookas had not been forcibly removed from their houses or interned and had not suffered the confiscation of homes and property during the war, "they too were subject to the loss of rights, registration and finger-printing, and the stigmata of the term 'enemy alien'" as Miki explains (Afterword 304). Kiyooka has described these experiences as a "death" in his life in "October's Piebald Skies and Other Lacunae," a poem occasioned by the signing of the Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement on 22 September 1988 and the death of bpNichol in the same year. The Settlement acknowledged the unjust actions

of the Canadian government and provided “symbolic redress for those injustices” (Miki and Kobayashi 138). Kiyooka’s poem is bitterly critical of the Redress Settlement, indicating a serious tension between his perception of “a token, political stratagem” (*Pacific Windows* 283) and his responsibilities as a second-generation Japanese Canadian.

Retiring from the Department of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia, Kiyooka wrote a letter, dated June 12, 1991, to Tony Tamayose, Executive Director of the Japanese Canadian Redress Foundation in British Columbia,<sup>27</sup> to ask for funding for his project: “I must [do this work] for the sake of one Japanese Canadian family and their aged mother who will be ninety-five this year. Mary Kiyo Kiyooka belongs to the first generation of Asians who came to Canada at the beginning of the now dwindling 20th century. What befell her in the new World and how she coped with penury and a large family while keeping in touch with her Meiji childhood is the substance of a summer’s worth of cassette-tape conversations with Matsuki Masutani.”<sup>28</sup> Kiyooka’s letter of application explains that his family did not need to seek redress against the Canadian government in the same way that coastal Japanese Canadians did. In contrast, they had spent their entire lives on the prairies and “thus,” as he puts it, they “have their Histories inscribed there.” Their history as Japanese Canadians is therefore distinct and under-represented. They were, nonetheless, disenfranchised by their experiences of WWII, becoming, half a century later, “willy-nilly . . . [their] own kind of Anglo-Canadians” even while sharing their mother’s “Shikoku vision” of Japanese homelands.

Both appendices recontextualize the *Mothertalk* project in inter-cultural politics and invite readers to approach the book with these contexts in mind. In a much earlier interview with Miki in 1978, Kiyooka had eloquently explained that he understood himself as part of a larger community: “I long ago recognized that I was given a job to do and that job had to do with being, for my own immediate family in the first instance, a kind of voice, and a cultural voice in a collective sense” (Miki, “Roy Kiyooka” 61). Marlatt’s inclusion, then, of materials that so distinctly politicize Mary’s stories provides a sense of the familial and social contexts that impelled so much of Kiyooka’s creativity and his interest in this project.

These cultural contexts do not come as a surprise at the end of the book. The dedication has prepared us early on: “To the Issei women of Mary Kiyooka’s generation.” Marlatt chose this dedication in consultation with



Miki, who himself had been active in the Redress Movement and was then working on his Afterword for *Pacific Windows* (Interview). The dedication places Mary firmly in the context of other women of her (Issei) generation and reinforces Marlatt's notion that Mary's stories are important as part of the Japanese Canadian community and Canadian history in general. By narrating her stories, Mary enters that history as a subject and claims a space for her lived experiences as a Japanese Canadian woman in a public discourse that had not previously included her. It seems to us, however, that Mary does not associate herself very strongly with the first generation of Japanese immigrants in her stories, which focus so extensively on second- and third-generation Japanese Canadians. Moreover, in her interviews with Masutani, Mary included a number of stories about her grandchildren which Marlatt decided to cut from the book. We can only speculate that Kiyooka may have cut the same material because we see very little pencilling on these sections in the manuscript (Mrs. KIYOOKA (Her Family) No. 5). We do not think that Marlatt's emphasis on Mary's historical context lessens Mary's control over the meaning of her life story, but we are aware that the dedication asks readers to respond to the text with a larger historical context in mind.

Such shifts in focus and possible meaning, with all their attendant reasons, have become central to our understanding of the kind of serial collaboration we find in *Mothertalk*. Humez has drawn our attention to the possible clash between the agenda of the editor and the storyteller in her discussion of "oral history text creation" in *The Narrative of Soujourner Truth* (35). There, she discusses ways in which critics can use textual evidence of different agendas in their analyses as we have done here. Similarly, Davies examines editor-subject relations and concludes, as we have done, that "the editor becomes co-maker of the text" (12). Following Humez's and Davies's lead, we are aware of some tension between Mary's focus on her family and Marlatt's concern to situate Mary and her family in the history of their times and places. As readers, we work with these tensions in order to provide our own introductory layers of interpretation and analysis.

Our initial desire to understand whose text *Mothertalk* really is has shifted. No single author can account for the many versions we have found exposed or subsumed in *Mothertalk*, the published text. We have accordingly entered *Mothertalk* in our bibliography not under Kiyooka's name as author, nor under Marlatt's name as editor, nor under Mary's name as original storyteller but under "M" for *Mothertalk*. Because we read this work as containing the

readings of so many contributors and changing with each reading, we have chosen also to read the whole work as one, referring therefore to Marlatt's introduction as a part of the whole. In the process of recognizing *Mothertalk* as an example of life-writing produced by serial collaboration and reading the printed book as a work in progress, we have also found ourselves struggling with our own critical discourse, which so often equated succession with improvement or loss rather than with difference. Our discussion of *Mothertalk* has thus revealed and challenged some of our own unspoken assumptions—teaching us not only about Mary, Masutani, Kiyooka, and Marlatt, but also about ourselves.

Even as we close the book, the back cover presents further mediation. The standard blurb reintroduces the possibility of an unmediated text, outlining Mary's life and adventures and closing with her death at age 100 in 1996. The blurb, of course, is what leads the bookshop browser to buy the book for its content. However, appreciative comments on the book by Michael Ondaatje and Hiromi Goto situate this work not only in a recent generation of immigrant literature but also among writers who challenge generic possibilities and boundaries. Recognizing the generic instability of *Mothertalk* and resisting all notions of unmediated transcription, we identify each collaborator as co-maker of the printed text. We read the interference of each one as transforming the project as a whole, which can no longer be read as clear or "singleminded." For each reader of the completed book, as for each participant in its making, we note that *Mothertalk* is a different book, not one but many, and may spin off into different directions with each additional revelation of meanings that is given or withheld.

## NOTES

- 1 We thank Titilope Adepitan, research assistant for this project, and Joanne Saul, whose research work has paralleled ours and been useful to us. We are grateful to acknowledge the anonymous readers for *Canadian Literature* and the questions that have been raised by Noel Currie, Janice Fiamengo, Joel Martineau, Laurie Ricou, and Joanne Saul; they have been most helpful to our work.
- 2 The hybrid nature of this text complicates our use of the name Mary. Mrs. Kiyooka, or Kiyooka-san, was Mary to her Canadian friends, and Marlatt is emphatic about this name being the appropriate one for us to use in the context of this Canadian book. Consulting each other over our choices with all names, we have decided to refer to all participants in this text, including those who have provided very personal help, formally, by their last names. Retaining "Mary" for the original narrator becomes, accordingly, a

signal of her status as protagonist in the text as distinct from a literary figure (like her son or like Marlatt) or an advisor on our academic project.

- 3 In his chapter on "The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write" (185-215), Philippe Lejeune examines ghostwriting as a form of collaborative autobiography. Although he limits his discussion to two people who collaborate, his comments on the problems of determining the "author" of such texts and of recognizing the hidden problems of power relations are relevant to our work. Koestenbaum presents a theory of male collaboration, arguing that men redefined authorship in response to changing definitions of sexuality in the nineteenth and at the turn of the twentieth century. Stone points to collaborative autobiography as an "accepted mode in the modern era for recreating one partner's convincing image" (103), but fails to provide a clear definition in light of diverse examples. Stillingr defines collaboration as two or more people acting together or in succession (v). He covers a wide range of texts and elaborates the implications of commonly unacknowledged multiple authorship for literary theory. Davies's notion of "a multiply articulated text" promises to be helpful to our discussion of collaboration, but does not apply to *Mothertalk* because it describes a text that consists of stories by different people which "can be read collectively as one story refracted through multiple lives" (4) or a text that intersperses individual life stories "in an extended discursive interaction with the editorial voice" (5). See also Clark for another example of unpublicized collaboration and Hubert on artistic partnerships. See also Couser. For a useful discussion of the problems involved in defining collaborative writing, see Ede and Lunsford (14-16).
- 4 We find Miki's observation useful about the "importance of seriality in RK's work in poetry, visual art, and photography" (Afterword 320, fn. 28), and see a link here with the serial collaboration in *Mothertalk*. As Kiyooka himself pointed out, "I've always been a serial artist. My books are always whole entities. They're not made up of discrete things" (Miki, "Inter-Face" 74). For further discussion of seriality in Kiyooka's work, see McFarlane.
- 5 We follow Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of utterance here. Bakhtin emphasizes the simultaneous involvement of both speaker and listener in shaping an utterance rather than a reader's interpretation of a text after it is made: "An essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its *addressivity*. . . . Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance" (*Speech Genres* 95, also 121-22). See also Voloshinov: "*word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*" (86).
- 6 Marlatt has collaborated in earlier projects, such as her work with the British Columbia Archives' aural history project, which resulted in *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* with Carole Itter (1979) and in *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canadian History* with Maya Koizumi (1975). For other collaborative projects, see *Steveston* (1974/1984) with photographer Robert Minden and *Double Negative* (1988) with Betsy Warland, as well as her collaboration for *Tessera*. For comments on reciprocity, see, Marlatt and Warland's "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" (133).
- 7 This passage appears as part of the opening prose poem for the published version of *Mothertalk* (11). Reading Kiyooka's poetry as originally distinct from the text of his mother's stories helps us to emphasize the assembled nature of the published text, the

way in which the distinct voices of mother and son have been combined, and the extent to which they shared the same concerns and preoccupations.

- 8 This section from "Gotenyama" may have been an early choice for the Kiyooka poems to be interleaved among Mary's life stories. It appears in Marlatt's typescript before other poems were added. In *Mothertalk*, it precedes Chapter III, which is entitled "All Caught Up in Our Canadian Lives" (57). We reprint it here with the permission of Talonbooks.
- 9 In the heavily edited version of this typescript, Mary's claim on Masutani's understanding has been crossed through with double lines in ink. (One section of Masutani's transcript for which Masutani himself provided no title, is headed "MM's Transcript" in Marlatt's hand.)
- 10 Julie Cruikshank makes this important point about the listener's cultural context in her introduction to *Life Lived Like a Story* (4).
- 11 This heading, "Mrs. Kiyooka No. 2.," appears in Marlatt's lightly pencilled cursive. Masutani's headings vary: Mrs. KIYOOKA (Her Family) no. 5," "KIYOOKA-SAN NO TALE 6," "Mrs. Kiyoka-san no Tale 9," and so on.
- 12 We omit the literal inaccuracies that remain. Clearly, Kiyooka was working on idiom and did not return to each sentence to delete a comma, for example, that had become redundant. Such errors, of course, have not found their way into the printed text. However, we retain every detail of typographical eccentricity in other, earlier transcriptions, disturbing as these may be to read, because we resist insofar as we can, positioning ourselves between our readers and the typescript pages that we have been privileged to read.
- 13 Such delicacy is particularly striking in light of Mary's descriptions of dog fights and "chicken-fights" in Tosa:  
This is also terribly bloody, they don't stop fighting until their neck are half torn up and half dead. I used to watch these bloody fights, that why I am different from women from Tokyo & Yokohama. A woman born & bred in Tosa, a pure Tosa woman, had a strong character like a man. A kind of Tomboy, because she watched rough fights like these from her childhood (Mrs Kiyooka No. 2., 22).  
See *Mothertalk* for contrast: "Cock fights used to be very popular in Tosa. They were also swift and bloody and usually ended in a dead bird" (47).
- 14 In an early transcript, Mary says:  
When they were in Japan my dad saw Roy, and said apparently "This boy has a great fortune, he got big ears." My brother told me that. I still remember this remark. (Mrs. KIYOOKA No. 3, 13).  
Kiyooka has crossed out "dad" and inserted "FATHER," but we have to wonder how Masaji Oe could ever have commented on Kiyooka's ears when he did not live to meet this grandson. Given the context for this passage, in which Harry Shigekiyo Kiyooka had to return to Japan because of his father's illness, it seems likely that the paternal grandfather is the "dad" in question. In terms of Kiyooka's bushido spirit, Mary continues: "I don't mean Roy became great, he's a normal guy. But if he were in Japan, he would be considered a great man."
- 15 Neither the working papers nor the published book provide the happy conclusion to this story. While Kiyooka was still alive and in Mary's very old age, her father's stone was duly erected in a traditional ceremony which Masutani has seen recorded on videotape. Miki also refers to this event: "His renown as a former samurai and in the art of swordsmanship 'as the last great master of the Hasegawa school of Iai' (*Mothertalk* 15) are recognized in a large stone monument erected in his honour by Kochi City" (Afterword 303).
- 16 Kiyooka produced multiple drafts of his own as he coordinated and developed his mother's

stories. His files are labeled Folder A, Mother 2, Mother 3, and so on. They seem repetitive, but contain curious contradictions and variations. As the files are not marked consistently, and as Kiyooka's pencil marks up the computer printout at each stage, it is not always possible to tell which version supersedes which. Mother 3, for example, contains small variants on Mother 2, and also appears in tidy paragraphs, suggesting that it supersedes Mother 2. However, close comparisons suggest that Kiyooka worked back and forth through his files rather than sequentially with one version superseding another.

17 Another example of slippage of information in transition, comparable to the seppuku story's loss of its foreigners is that the young Kiyooka family apparently both did and did not suffer from the German flu epidemic of 1917. However, in contrast to the seppuku story, variants on the flu story seem accidental and serve no political purpose.

Masutani's transcript (Mrs. KIYOOKA No. 3, 9) reads as follows:

We also caught the flu of 1917. I & my husband and Gorge all of us were lying in the bed. Fortunately, a friend of us didn't catch the flu, and he bought us a bottle of whisky. That saved us. You know there wasn't any Aspilea available. They were all sold out in the drug-store. It cost us 2 dollars to a Aspilea. It was a hard time.

In contrast, *Mothertalk's* version reads as follows:

Papa, baby George and I didn't catch the German flu though lots of people we knew came down with it and some of them died. Luckily one of Papa's buddies came by with a big bottle of whisky. Papa always swore it was that scotch that saved the three of us. He even put a teaspoonful in George's milk bottle. (64)

18 Kiyooka commented on his focus on Japan in his earlier work in an interview with Miki in 1991: "all my texts have started in Japan. I don't know why that is so but that's true" (Miki, "Inter-Face" 66).

19 Saul describes Marlatt's focus as "the biographical and the documentary impulse at the heart of *Mothertalk*" (9).

20 Our observation here is the flipside of Cruikshank's conclusion that "the way we tell stories largely determines who will hear them" (356).

21 Saul explains why Marlatt relies on chronology in her aural project, *Steveston Recollected* but not in her poetic work *Steveston*, arguing that the difference reflects Marlatt's concern with the "what" in her documentary and with the "how" in her poetic writing (23). Saul also places *Mothertalk* in the larger context of immigrant autobiographies, pointing to the teleological narrative as a political practice.

22 We should add that Marlatt has written repeatedly about immigration both creatively and critically; see, for example, *Ana Historic* and *Taken* as well as "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination," which has been republished in *Readings from the Labyrinth*. Unfortunately, we are not able to explore these connections between Marlatt's and Mary's preoccupations with immigration more fully in this paper.

23 See *Mothertalk* 20, 25, 62, 64, 96, 116, 125.

24 It is also possible, of course, that the photographs were grouped together for economy in printing, a decision that would have involved Marlatt even if it did not originate with her.

25 Kiyooka sometimes spelled "Mothertalk" as one word, sometimes as two. Together with the publisher, Marlatt decided that one word was more interesting as the book's title (Interview). Eliding speaker and word and suggesting a generic form of talk, this neologism that encodes both oral transmission and its historical role and value, even, in the end, a certain tenderness in the one word, seems to us, too, more richly effective than the phrase created by two separate words.

- 26 Davies's discussion raises similar questions about textual marginalia (13).
- 27 The Japanese Canadian Redress Foundation was established as part of the settlement in order to allocate the \$12 million intended for "educational, social and cultural activities or programmes that contribute to the well-being of the community or that promote human rights" (Miki and Kobayashi 139).
- 28 We thank Joanne Saul for sharing the information she received from Tony Tamayose.

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