Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma and
Post-Internment Japanese Diasporic Literature

Mine Okubo, “Isseis Lost Everything.”

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This thesis is presented for the degree of
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

The thesis examines the literary archive of the Japanese diaspora in North America and uncovers evidence of an intergenerational transmission of trauma after the internment of all peoples of Japanese descent in America during World War Two. Their experience of migration, discrimination and displacement was exacerbated by the internment, the single most influential episode in their history which had a profound effect on subsequent generations. It is argued the trauma of their experiences can be located in their writing and, drawing on the works of Freud and trauma theoreticians Cathy Caruth and Ruth Leys in particular, the thesis constructs a theoretical framework which may be applied to post-internment Japanese diasporic writing to reveal the traces of trauma in all generations, traces that are linked to what Freud referred to as a posterior moment that triggered an earlier trauma which the subject may not have experienced personally but which may be lodged in his / her psyche. An examination of the literature of the Japanese diaspora shows that trauma is carried in the language itself and impacted upon the collective psyche of the entire community.

The theoretical model is used to read the tanka poetry written by the immigrant generation, a range of texts by the first American-born generation (including an in-depth analysis of four texts spanning several decades) and the texts written by the third-generation, many of whom did not experience the internment themselves so their motivation and the influence of the internment differed greatly from earlier generations. The thesis concludes with an analysis of David Mura’s identification of the link between identity, sexuality and the influence of the internment experience as transmitted by his parents. The future of the Japanese American community and their relationship with their past traumatic experience also makes its way into the conclusion.
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A Note on Transliteration

Japanese names are written in the traditional order of family name first followed by the given name. For the names of Japanese immigrants and their descendants, the customary Western style is adopted where the family name follows the given name. Macrons for long vowels on Japanese names and words and all other accents on Japanese and Hawaiian words are not provided in order to preserve readability. Japanese words which are now part of general English discourse are given without diacritics.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the original Japanese texts are by me.
Introduction

In 2001 I visited the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and came across an exhibition entitled “Five Generations: Images of Japanese Canadians.” The exhibition traced the history of Japanese Canadians from their arrival in the late nineteenth century through their evacuation, internment and resettlement during the 1940s to their struggle for redress in the 1980s. I was shocked for even as a half-Japanese person with a vested interest in the Japanese diaspora, and as a former student of North American history, I had never heard of the internment before. When I learned that over 20,000 Japanese Canadians and approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans had been imprisoned by their governments during the Second World War, I decided to research this episode in Japanese diasporic history further. After reading texts by Joy Kogawa and David Mura, I realised that the internment did not just affect those who were imprisoned themselves, the effects were transferred to their descendants as well. This is an under-researched area of internment studies despite the abundance of proof available in the literature of the younger generations. Aware of the application of trauma theory to the descendants of Holocaust survivors, I decided to create a similar theoretical framework with which I could analyse the literature of the Japanese American diaspora.

Freud’s essays provide the foundation of a customised theory of trauma that enables an analysis of both the literature and the culturally-specific silences that characterised the Japanese American community. Cathy Caruth’s texts Trauma: Explorations in Memory and Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History demonstrates the manner in which trauma is carried in language itself and Dori Laub’s recorded testimonies of Holocaust survivors illustrates how the trauma is articulated is just as important as what is articulated. An appreciation of the culturally-specific duality of the elucidated and the obscured, the spoken word and the silent gestures, is crucial to an analysis of the literary archive of the Japanese American diaspora.

Equally crucial to the study of any diasporic community is an understanding of their culture, tradition and history. For example, one unique aspect of the Japanese compared to other immigrant groups in America lies in the name given to each generational group, underscoring the rigid hierarchy of their homeland which the immigrants brought with them. In terms of trauma theory, the history of the Japanese
The attacks on Pearl Harbor mesmerised the American nation and challenged their deep-seated assumptions of western superiority. The reaction of the government, in accordance with racial hysteria and financial opportunism, was to intern all those of Japanese ancestry from the west coast. Economic rationalism prevented the same outcome for the Japanese Hawaiians and, as the wartime experiences of the Japanese American and the Japanese Hawaiians differed so greatly, I examine the factors responsible for this disparity in Chapter Three. Using Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism and John Kelly and Martha Kaplan’s comparative study, Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonisation, I argue that it was the overwhelming number of voluntary acts of blood-sacrifice and their non-(mass)internment that enabled the Japanese Hawaiians to accelerate their post-war progress in the social and political arena. Thus the literature of all generations of Japanese Hawaiians, presented in Chapter Four, is not necessarily characterised by the internment as it was on the mainland.

After a brief examination of the necessity of an intergenerational analysis of the trauma of internment inspired by the studies conducted by Donna Nagata and Gwenn Jensen in Chapter Five, Chapter Six uncovers the traumatic traces in the literature of the first and second generations of Japanese Americans on the mainland. It should become clear that the silence that characterised them was debilitative and perpetuated the insidious nature of their trauma. The poetry and stories of the second generation illustrate the repression of their shame and humiliation, none more so than the four texts that I use for close reading in Chapter Seven. These texts span a period of over fifty years and show the manner in which second generation Japanese Americans came to terms with both their initial sense of vulnerability and the impact of the cathartic experiences of the redress movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The redress movement gave them the opportunity to articulate their trauma so that they could begin to heal the deep wounds caused by the internment.
Chapter Eight is also concerned with the redress movement as it was spearheaded by the third generation who inherited the effects of the shame exhibited by their parents. An examination of a range of their literary and artistic productions illustrates the wide variety of reactions from anger to distress, from frustration to an overwhelming sense of responsibility, that characterised their generation. David Mura was particularly vocal in his expression of anger at the way the internment had affected his formation of identity and sexuality and voiced his concerns at how the trauma would be passed down to his own children. His texts form the basis of Chapter Nine and the future of the Japanese diaspora and the importance of maintaining an open forum of discussion are examined in the concluding chapter. The thesis demonstrates that the internment is not just an event in the distant past; the trauma is still very much alive in the descendants of those who suffered through evacuation, incarceration and relocation.
Chapter One

The Transferability and Repetitious Nature of Traumatic Experience

. . . historically traumatic events simultaneously summon forgetting and remembrance. In their shockingness and extremity of horror, such events impel a forgetfulness or displacement at the same time that they repeatedly return, on emotional and ethical terms, for private and public consideration. This return is encouraged by the way such events resist assimilation into coherent explanatory frameworks. The incessant and insistent re-arrival of the past indicates how such events possess their witnesses, commanding an attention fraught with complex emotion. This return of the past, this traumatization, is experienced not just by the primary witness (the survivor or eye-witness) but by those who hear or read accounts of what others have experienced. (Simon and Eppert, 1997: 178)

1.1 ‘The wound’

The term ‘trauma’ is adapted from the Greek τραυµα meaning ‘wound’. Initially, ‘trauma’ referred to an external and externally-caused bodily injury, as first defined in the second edition of Blancard’s Physicians Dictionary in 1693. Almost two hundred years later it acquired an additional definition in the field of psychiatry and psychoanalysis as a psychic injury rather than a physical one, though the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The Oxford English Dictionary thus altered its definition accordingly to:

A psychic injury, esp. one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed; an internal injury, esp. to the brain, which may result in a behavioural disorder of organic origin. Also, the state or condition so caused.

While the final sentence in the definition may appear to indicate a statement of slightly less consequence, it is in fact very significant when one considers the changing usage of the term ‘trauma’. As Kai Erikson pointed out:

First, in classical medical usage ‘trauma’ refers not to the injury inflicted but to the blow that inflicted it, not to the state of mind that ensues but to the event that provoked it. . . In both clinical and common usage, however, that distinction is becoming blurred. (1995: 184)
In 1889 French neuropathologist Charcot discovered that traumatic neuroses were often indistinguishable from hysteria that affected men and women, civilian and military trauma sufferers alike; this formed the basis of the revolutionary investigations conducted by French psychiatrist Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud in subsequent years. For the purpose of my research, this chapter will focus primarily on specific works produced by Freud and contemporary trauma theorists influenced by him. The recent resurgence in trauma studies makes it clear why the term ‘trauma’ has necessitated a shift from its classical usage; it is now recognised that it is equally as imperative to examine the reaction to the injury, both physical and psychic, as well as the event that provoked it, as it is primarily the reaction that lends it the traumatic quality.

Despite the recognition of trauma as inclusive of psychic injury, the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was not officially recognised by the American Psychiatric Association until 1980. So despite the (temporary instances of) great interest in trauma theory immediately following the two World Wars, they were in turn followed by lapses in interest; it was not until after the Vietnam War that a new approach to trauma theory was established. Even so, it has only had a staggered progress since then. Ruth Leys, author of *Trauma: A Genealogy*, argued that the reason lies with the lack of cohesion within contemporary trauma studies. The focus of research is continually shifting between the mind and the body which affects the significance of autobiographical or symbolic meaning in testimonials produced by the survivors. As my research examines the concept of the intergenerational transmission of the traumatic effects which can continue to be transmitted long after the original trauma victim has passed away, the focus will be on how the traumatic event manifests itself in the psyche, how it is transferred and how it is represented through literature. It follows that there is a great deal of value in both the autobiographical testimonies and oral histories of the survivors themselves as well as in the literary texts produced by their children and grandchildren. Before I begin such an analysis, a comprehensive understanding of trauma theory and its origins is crucial. I shall trace the emergence of the theory back to Freud and will follow the most significant paths the theory takes through contemporary theorists such as Caruth, Leys, Laub and Felman. Using these theorists, I will construct a model of trauma theory which, in Chapters Six to Nine, will be applied to the works of literature produced by Americans of Japanese descent from a range of generations.
1.2 The birth of trauma theory in the Oedipal conflict model

Freud, like Charcot and Janet before him, initially linked trauma to hysteria. He described the dissociative inability to access traumatic memories as a result of the psychological effects of experiencing shame and anxiety. He also shared with them a belief that traumatic hysteria should not be attributed to anatomicophysiological changes but psychological ones. However, he began to move away from his colleagues in 1897 by abandoning the trauma-seduction theory of neurosis, specifically the role of childhood sexual abuse, and replacing it with a renewed study of the effects of repressed infantile erotic wishes which he termed the Oedipal conflict model in 1910.¹

Freud claimed that the Oedipal conflict model formed the basis of the nuclear complex of every neurosis. Under the sway of the Oedipus complex, the infantile wish occurred during the sexual development phase of children where the first choice of an object of desire was directed towards one of the parents. The child’s relation to its parents was “by no means free from elements of accompanying sexual excitation” (1978a: 47) and usually one parent dominated as the sole object of erotic fantasy.

The complex which is thus formed is doomed to early repression; but it continues to exercise a great and lasting influence from the unconscious. It is to be suspected that, together with its extensions, it constitutes the nuclear complex of every neurosis, and we may expect to find it no less actively at work in other regions of mental life. (Freud, 1978a: 47)

Significant doubts were raised about Freud’s emphasis on the role of such sexual drives in the origin of traumatic neuroses. He defended this by suggesting that a neurosis is the consequence of a conflict between different parts of the ego which were, in adulthood, defined as sexually charged. The peace-loving, placid parts of the ego and the war-loving aggressive parts of the ego reproduced an earlier situation that represented the loss of the first libidinal object: the parent. The peril of wartime (or any moment of danger) reproduced the threatening danger of the loss of the mother and her breast and/or the threat of castration from the father. Therefore, Freud argued, the fear of death is analogous to the earlier fear of castration and that association proves the existence of a relationship between the Oedipal complex and the sufferer of a traumatic neurosis by identifying the origin of the nature of the response (to repress, to dissociate) to danger.
1.3 The mourning/melancholic link to trauma

In “Mourning and Melancholia” Freud linked the pathology of the melancholic to that of the traumatic neurotic also, in that they both require high levels of anticathexis to, for the former, win the conflict within the ego and, for the latter, bind the levels of excitations. An understanding of the differentiation between a person mourning and a person having succumbed to melancholia is imperative to understand the variety of outcomes possible for those suffering from a traumatic neurosis. Freud argued that the mental features of mourning and melancholia are the same, with the one notable exception: The melancholic has a marked diminution in his self-regard. In mourning, the reality principle demands that “all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that [lost] object” (1978c: 244) which the body opposes. The orders are carried out piecemeal at the expense of a good deal of time and cathectic energy and, as each of the memories and expectations arise, it is hypercathected and eventually the libido is detached. Once mourning is completed, a “recathexis” of life (LaCapra, 2001: 66) is achieved and the ego is free again. In the case of melancholia, however, the loss may be felt but is not necessarily understood – the patient knows whom he has lost, but not what he has lost. The melancholic is one who suffers an incomplete mourning, cannot carry out the orders of the reality principle and the ego becomes impoverished.

In mourning, the result of the loss is that the world feels poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself that feels that way. Thus the sufferer’s self-regard is lowered, he perceives his ego to be worthless, he vilifies himself and expects to be punished. He may suffer from sleeplessness and may refuse to take nourishment which results in a drawing in of anticathexes which empties the ego until it is completely impoverished. In this impoverished state the defeated libido withdraws into the ego and the object-loss becomes an ego-loss. Thus object-cathexis regresses to original narcissism; the love for the object is not given up, rather it takes refuge in narcissism and hate begins to operate upon the substitutive object. The self-torment is enjoyable for the sufferer but, despite the sadistic pleasure, would the ego’s self-love in narcissism prevent acts of self-destruction? Freud argued that the ego could be overwhelmed if the ego could treat itself as an object, leading to self-harm or suicide. The role and the dangers of the extraordinarily high levels of anticathexis in the case of the melancholic are similar to that of a person suffering with a traumatic neurosis, the internal machinations of which I shall examine next.
1.4 The pleasure principle

The driving aim of contemporary psychoanalytic technique, Freud argued in his 1920 essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” should be the art of uncovering the patient’s memories and inducing in him by human influence (transference) to abandon his resistances, then, within this sphere of transference, the patient must “repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of remembering it as something belonging to the past.” (1978d: 18) Ideally the patient will then realise that these repetitions are only a “reflection of a forgotten past” (1978d: 19) which then replaces the earlier neurosis. Thus the resistance to the treatment, which arises from the ego, is overcome.

When there is an unpleasurable tension, a course of mental events is triggered so that the final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension, resulting in an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure. Freud related (but did not bind) unpleasure and pleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind. That is, unpleasure leads to an increase in the quantity of excitation and pleasure leads to a decrease in the quantity of excitation. The pleasure principle follows from the principle of constancy – “the tendency to keep intracerebral excitation constant” (1978d: 9) – therefore the mental apparatus endeavours to keep the level of excitation low (that is, pleasurable) and constant. Any increases are felt as averse to the functioning of the mental apparatus; thus are felt as unpleasurable. We must remember, however, that the pleasure principle does not dominate the course of mental processes; if it did, then the majority of our mental processes would be accompanied by or lead to pleasure. There exists a tendency towards the pleasure principle which is opposed by other forces so that the outcome is not always in complete harmony with the tendency. What kinds of forces or circumstances then are able to prevent the pleasure principle from being carried into total effect?

The first such circumstance is the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle. The ego’s instinct of self-preservation from the dangers of the external world means it abandons the immediacy of pleasure and instead takes the temporary toleration of unpleasure as one of many necessary steps on a safer and more indirect route to ultimate pleasure. Another circumstance is when repressed impulses turn a possibility of pleasure into a source of unpleasure. While the ego is still
developing into a more highly composite organisation, the innate instinctual impulses are stunted and split from the ego by the process of repression. The impulses are initially cut off from the possibility of satisfaction, thus if they somehow succeed to struggle along an alternate route to a direct or substitutive satisfaction, that event which would otherwise have been pleasure is felt by the ego as unpleasure; it is perceptual unpleasure. However, the source of unpleasure could also come from a recognition of danger such as the original danger of loss of the mother and/or the threat of castration in the Oedipal Complex.

Similarly, a traumatic neurosis can occur after a disaster or an accident involving danger and a possible risk to life. Freud identified the main characteristic of the ‘ordinary’ traumatic neurosis as when the chief weight of causation rests on the factor of surprise, of fright which he defined as the state of a person running into an unprepared danger. It differs from fear, which is the state of a person expecting and perhaps preparing for danger. As fright is the main causative factor of a traumatic neurosis, it is clear that preparedness, or in this case, the lack of preparedness, plays a very important role in the internal machinations of the sufferers of a traumatic neurosis. Although the Japanese American community as a whole are better-defined as having experienced fear rather than fright, they certainly did suffer from a lack of preparedness to deal with the traumatic years that faced them in 1942. As I shall explain, it was that lack of preparedness that defined their community as being characterised by the traumatic events that followed.

1.5 The importance of preparedness

Preparedness offers invaluable levels of protection from an influx of external excitations. Freud explained the importance of preparedness by presenting a picture of a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated substance susceptible to stimulation. Within this organism, consciousness is one of the functions of its perceptual system that lies on the borderline between inside and outside. The surface, turned towards the external world, serves as an organ for receiving stimuli. The external world is charged with the most powerful energies and the stimulation emanating from these would kill our substance were it not for the protective shield which lessens the intensity of the stimulus. “Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than reception of stimuli.”(Freud, 1978d: 27)
Thus the question is raised: Are there any cases that break through this protective shield? Freud’s answer is yes – the external excitations that are powerful enough to break through are classed as traumatic:

Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism’s energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure. At the same time, the pleasure principle is for the moment put out of action. There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead – the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of. (1978d: 29-30)

As a result, in a similar fashion to the processes that occur within the sufferer of melancholia, a great deal of cathetic energy is called upon – an anticathexis on a large scale (which thus impoverishes all other psychical systems) is set up to bind the violent energies causing the breach. The element of fright, then, is crucial because:

The higher the system’s own quiescent cathexis, the greater seems to be its binding force; conversely, therefore, the lower its cathexis, the less capacity will it have for taking up the inflowing energy and the more violent must be the consequences of such a breach in the protective shield against stimuli. (1978d: 30)

A lack of preparedness due to fright means there is a lack of cathexis in the system; therefore an increased amount of excitation can flow in through the breach before the process of binding can begin.

Therefore preparedness for anxiety means a stronger defensive line of binding is ready. A trauma defined by fright means there is no such preparedness; the trauma is too strong for the shield and the binding process is much slower to begin. In order to bind these violent energies, other psychical systems are impoverished, including the pleasure principle, which allows the compulsion to repeat to dominate, usually expressed through dreams. These dreams that occur in obedience to the compulsion to repeat (this is the first exception to the function of dreams as the fulfilment of wishes) are “endeavouring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis.” (Freud, 1978d: 32)
It is clear, then, that the compulsion to repeat is a symptom of a traumatic neurosis. Dreams, for a healthy ego, function as an expression of the desire of the fulfilment of wishes, a wished-for cure and as an expression of a healthy past. Not so for a sufferer of a traumatic neurosis. This is why Freud considered the study of dreams to be the most trustworthy method of studying such deep mental processes, where the patient is taken back to the situation of the traumatic event and awakens with another fright.

1.6 Repetition compulsion

The origin of the ‘compulsion to repeat’ needs clarification. The resistance to treatment arises from the ego and the compulsion to repeat is ascribed to the unconscious repressed, the first instance of which is the Oedipal complex. As I mentioned, this early repression exacts a lasting influence over every aspect of the unconscious and thus constitutes the nuclear complex of any subsequent neurosis, including a traumatic neurosis.

There is no doubt that the resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed. (Freud, 1978d: 20)

The next step is to question how the compulsion to repeat is related to the pleasure principle. When the compulsion to repeat overrides the pleasure principle, most of what is re-experienced causes unpleasure and it simultaneously fulfils (hence gives pleasure to) the compulsion to repeat. The compulsion to repeat is innate in all people. ‘Normal’ people take an active, empowered role towards the compulsion whereas for people suffering from a traumatic neurosis, the manifestation of the compulsion to repeat disregards the tendency towards the pleasure principle and they occupy a passive role towards the compulsion.

The importance of the role of participation, with regards to whether the person takes an active or passive role, is apparent in the case study of Freud’s eighteen month-old grandson’s game – the ‘fort-da’ game – with his toys. The child compensated for his mother’s temporary departure and return (until her death when he was five years old) by staging the departure and return of things within his reach such as his toys. The repetition of the distressing experience of disappearance fits in with the pleasure principle because it was understood that the disappearance was a necessary preliminary
to the return of the toys, the true purpose of the game, the ultimate pleasure. In the beginning, the child was a passive participant but, by repeating it as a game, he was empowered by his active role. The repetition diminishes the strength of the event, empowers the player giving him dominance to master the situation and to enable any possible positive effects to emerge from a traumatic situation.

1.7 Tancred and Clorinda

The Italian poet Torquato Tasso first published several cantos of *Gerusalemme Liberata* in 1573, some of which he wrote in his teens. It is a book of epic poetry that focussed on a group of Christian crusaders, led by Godfrey, and their attempt to recover the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslim invaders. Tancred, one of Godfrey’s warriors, fell in love with Clorinda, a fierce pagan Muslim warrioress. They met on the battlefield and fought ferociously and, although Clorinda knew she was fighting Tancred, he was unaware of her identity under her heavy armour. He finally thrust his blade into her heart and as she slowly died in his arms, he removed her helmet and was horrified to see the face of the one he loved. Although he was in shock, he immediately summoned all his strength and courage to revive her briefly with some water. He fought off his own pain and grief to utter the holy prayers so that she could rise to heaven:

He did not die, not yet, but summoned all the courage of his heart to stand on guard, holding his pain at bay. He gave her life with water, who had slain her with the sword. And while he uttered the sound of the holy prayers she was transformed with joy, and smiled; appeared to say, as filled with life and life’s decease, “The heavens are opening – I go in peace.” (XII.68)

Only after she died did he then allow himself to begin the grieving process:

When he sees the gentle soul has passed away the strength he mustered up begins to fade, and of his own free will he yields the sway to a grief already rendered reckless, mad, pressing to his heart. . . Insensible he lay, his face as white as death, his life withheld in a small room. Blood drained, his colour fled, he lay with all the stillness of the dead. (XII.70)
1.8 The ‘double wound’

What is interesting from a Freudian perspective when reading Gerusalemme Liberata is the notion of the ‘double wound’ which occurred soon afterwards in Canto 13. Tancred struck at a tree in the woods and was amazed and horrified to see blood seeping out of the wound. He swung his blade once again and this time a low moan emanated from within the tree. It was the voice of Clorinda whose spirit had been imprisoned within the tree, alongside the spirits of other warriors. She said to him:

. . . . Ah, Tancred, you have hurt me too deeply. Let it be enough, to drive me from my happy dwelling, the body where I lived, that lived through me. Why should you once again hurt this poor trunk, where I am pent by my hard destiny? How could you be so cruel to resume war with your adversaries in the tomb?

I was Clorinda. Other sprits dwell beside me in this rough, hard plant: for all those fighters, Saracen or French, who fell and left their dying limbs beneath the wall, are here pent up by some unheard-of spell, an incarnation, or a burial, I cannot say. Their limbs, ensouled, feel pain, And if you cut you murder us again. (XIII. 42-43. Emphasis mine)

Tancred was both terrified and devastated to hear the moans of his beloved yet again so he backed away and fled from her trapped spirit.

Freud used the example of Tasso’s Gerusalemme Liberata to show how all people, whether suffering from a neurosis or not, are susceptible to the repetition compulsion. In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” Freud stated that ‘normal people’ who experience the compulsion to repeat which ends in sadness usually attribute their actions to fate. These cases only relate to the active behaviour on the part of the person concerned. In the case of Gerusalemme Liberata, it is clearly Tancred who was perpetrator of the active behaviour that ended in sadness and, as Freud suggested, it reveals the discernibly impatient character-trait in Tancred. Freud was more interested in the instances where “the subject appears to have a passive experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality.” (1978d: 22) Superficially, the obvious victim in Gerusalemme Liberata is therefore the one who was passively forced to meet with the repetition of the same fatality, Clorinda.
However I propose that it is Tancred who is the victim carrying the traumatic neurosis. Cathy Caruth’s analysis in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* supports my argument and she also offered an intriguing suggestion about the difficulty of locating the ‘true’ victim.

### 1.9 The unlocatability of victimhood

Caruth similarly positioned Tancred as the victim with the traumatic neurosis by setting him up as the survivor who experienced the reenactment of a traumatic event. While Clorinda was obviously a victim also, as she experienced both a physical death and a second spiritual death, it was Tancred who carried the trauma with him. When Tancred lashed out and wounded the tree (and, in so doing, killed Clorinda once again) the repetition of the violent act was experienced by both Clorinda and Tancred. However, as Tancred was the perpetrator of the act, albeit unwittingly, it was his shoulders upon which the traumatic burden of her death was laid and he was forced to live with an awareness of his responsibility for her death(s). Caruth said the most striking thing about the example of Tasso was the voice of Clorinda that cried out to Tancred after he wounded the tree. “The voice of his beloved addresses him and, in this address, bears witness to the past he has unwittingly repeated.” (1996: 3) I argue that it is in fact Tancred who bears witness to his double wound (that he both inflicted and suffered from) – the voice of Clorinda triggered a repetition of his original trauma, his accidental murder of her. Caruth argued that Clorinda’s voice witnessed a truth that “Tancred himself cannot fully know” (1996:3) and suggested that his experience of killing her the first time was:

> experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (1996: 4)

She implied that it was only after the occurrence of the double wound, when Tancred struck the tree (twice, significantly), that Tancred was finally able to *know* what was impossible for him to know in the first instance. She claimed that he was the survivor of the first traumatic event and suffered with a traumatic neurosis until the second traumatic event provided the trigger for him to re-experience the first event and thus allowed him to understand and to own it.
I disagree with Caruth in favour of Leys’ argument in Trauma: A Genealogy in that it is evident that Tancred was able to understand, to own, to experience and to “know fully” the first, physical death of Clorinda. As shown already in my discussion of Tancred’s reaction to the death of Clorinda, he was very aware of the event and struggled with “holding his pain at bay” (XII.68) as he arranged for her burial. After she died, he allowed himself to begin grieving:

When he sees the gentle soul has passed away
the strength he mustered up begins to fade,
and of his own free will he yields the sway
to a grief already rendered reckless, mad,
pressing to his heart. . . . (XII.70)

His ability to grasp and to comprehend this event meant that, despite the shock he received, it was not enough to overwhelm his consciousness. He indisputably suffered with a traumatic neurosis but, as is evident in his transition into the grieving process, he did not suffer from melancholia or mania; he was simply in mourning.

Leys posed a question regarding Caruth’s reading of the epic poem and the importance she placed on the voice of Clorinda. She asked:

if Clorinda testifies to her own wound [which she does through her voice in the tree] then Tasso’s poem cannot serve Caruth’s purposes as an exemplary literary example of the performative theory of trauma, because according to that theory the victim of trauma is not capable of witnessing or representing anything of what she has experienced. How can these dilemmas be resolved? Caruth’s highly ingenious answer is to suggest that Clorinda’s voice is not exactly her own voice but that of Tancred in the sense that hers is the voice of the traumatized Tancred’s dissociated second self or female “other.” (2000: 295)

Caruth argued that Clorinda was Tancred’s internal ‘alter’ who retained the memory of the trauma that Tancred did not. Thus Tancred-Clorinda represents the figure of difference, of other, so that the trauma always appertains to someone else as well. Caruth ingeniously positioned both Tancred and Clorinda as victims as well as witnesses to the same traumatic events and this makes the victimhood unlocatable. The oscillation between life and death, victim and witness, knowing and not knowing lies in the intersection between the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and this forms the crux of Caruth’s argument.
Caruth replaced Freud’s castration model with notions of traumatic accident and of a latency that she linked to Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action) which she then reduced to the idea of a literal and belated repetition of the traumatic event while ignoring his work on past sexual experiences. Leys argued that Caruth appropriated Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit* by emphasising its temporal aspect:

> What interests her is the idea that traumatic experience is defined by temporal unlocatability. . . . But when she goes on to define repetition in terms of the belated, literal, and unmediated return to the traumatic event she seems to define trauma in more traditional causal terms, as if trauma involved a linear determinism, or direct action, of the past on her present. (2000: 271)

Wouldn’t Caruth’s definition of traumatic repetition in linear deterministic terms therefore contradict her argument that victimhood and traumatic events and repetitions are temporally unlocatable? Wouldn’t it also serve as justification to engage with the Oedipus complex as the first and most influential example of repressed sexual impulses, of a transference of the pleasure principle? Leys criticised Caruth’s model of trauma and her analysis of Freud’s 1939 collection of essays, “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays.” The main issue that Caruth took from Freud was her application of the notion of latency to her model of trauma theory but Leys saw Caruth’s definition of latency as closer to that of an infectious disease than what Freud intended with his discussions of *Nachträglichkeit*. “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays” is a crucial text for my research not only on Freud’s work (and its contemporary interpretations) on trauma theory but also for my reading of the literature of the Japanese diaspora.

### 1.10 Not just a biblical exegesis

Freud wrote “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays” during what was possibly the most turbulent and traumatic years of his life. It can be read, as Caruth did, as a piece of performative literature that elucidated the trauma in Freud’s life as he wrote and published it. It can also be read as Freud’s critical portrayal of the Jewish people as renunciatory, as a type of Biblical exegesis, as a revision of the scrolls or as an example of psychological determinism. What is clear is that it is certainly not any one of those things. It is as complex as the subject matter itself and an appreciation of the context in which it was written, which is precisely what Caruth focussed on, is imperative.
The answer to its ambiguous genre may lie within the dual prefaces that Freud wrote for the third essay. The essays themselves provided a controversial analysis of the great mythic narrative that underlies Judeo-Christian thought and in light of his precarious and unique position as an 82 year-old Austrian psychoanalyst and an unorthodox Jew in exile from anti-Semitic violence, it is interesting to consider whether his position as a materialist philosopher had changed. His first preface to the third essay was written in Vienna in March 1938 where, as a Jew, he was under the protection (although somewhat reluctantly he felt, because of his work) of the Catholic Church. After the German invasion the Church was no longer able to secure his safety so he decided not to publish his third essay until he reached London where he finally wrote his second preface in June 1938 with great sadness:

I should now be persecuted not only for my line of thought but also for my ‘race’ – accompanied by many of my friends, I left the city which, from my early childhood, had been my home for seventy-eight years. (1978e: 57)

His life had been irrevocably changed by the actions of men whose narrow vision of the world, of race and of religion had forced him to leave his home, an unhappy circumstance that was shared by thousands of Japanese Americans a few years later. However, the escape from the severe threat to his life as a member of the Jewish “race” also provided the opportunity to publish his work that had haunted and eluded him for so many years.

1.11 Freud’s personal trauma

As mentioned, the context in which “Moses and Monotheism” was produced is fascinating as it is clear that the environmental factors surrounding Freud greatly affected his work. Freud was not a practising Jew but was so influenced by his background that his essays saw him taking the Judaic commentarial position, assuming the traditionally rabbinical role of keeper (and amender) of the scrolls. When Freud first saw Michelangelo’s statue of Moses in Rome in 1901, he became preoccupied with the man who, according to Freud, created Judaism. In 1934 he completed a draft of The Man Moses, a Historical Novel which haunted him for the next four years as he wrote new drafts and essays and debated over publishing the third and final instalment. Parts I and II were both published in Germany in 1937 and part III was written between March and May 1938 while he and his family awaited permission to leave Austria. In June they arrived in London, Freud finished the essay and it was published in its
entirety in Amsterdam in August 1938 as “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays.” Freud died thirteen months later in London.5

During the writing of “Moses and Monotheism” Freud suffered with an extremely painful cancerous tumour in his mouth that required several operations. He was surrounded by violent acts of anti-Semitism and the interrogation of his daughter Anna by the Gestapo on the 22nd March 1938 spurred his efforts to move his family to England despite the fact that he and his wife had happily occupied their home in Vienna since September 1891. His anxiety about his health, the advancing Nazis, his forced exile and his reluctant diasporic condition is evidenced by the trauma revealed through the discursive repetition in his essays. His conscious choice of rhetorical style is profoundly persuasive but these essays are repetitive and cyclical, at times even tedious. By anticipating scepticism and incredulity and announcing self-hesitation, however, he gains the readers trust and, while his narrative skills are inarguably impressive, this body of work enraged Jewish scholars and evoked cries of despair from the Jewish community.

Caruth’s discussion of “Moses and Monotheism” is based on her theory that the essays themselves are a site of trauma – the trauma of leaving, the trauma of verlassen – and she argued that Freud’s trauma is not in the text but manifests itself in the aporias of reference that she believed defines traumatic experience. The literal space between the two prefatory notes of the third essay marks the date of departure and thus the site of the trauma itself. Caruth further located the moment of traumatic transmission in a letter Freud sent his son in May 1938 discussing his imminent departure. It read: “Two prospects keep me going in these grim times: to rejoin you all and – to die in freedom.” (Caruth, 1996: 23) The last four words were written in English so the moment of traumatic transmission, Caruth argued, is the movement between Vienna and London that is denoted by the movement from German into English. However, hasn’t Caruth identified here a temporal locatability in the traumatic transmission of Freud’s exile? While the trauma of Freud’s verlassen is not pinpointed, thus giving Caruth some space to claim her argument of the unlocatability of trauma, she did locate it to a certain extent within the aporia of the transmission from one language and one country to another.

We have seen that Caruth is committed to demonstrating that Freud’s Moses and Monotheism performatively communicates
the aporia or trauma of history across the generations by
demonstrating how it transmits it to another reader living at
another time and place – a reader who thereby gains access to
the memory of someone else’s trauma through the gaps of the
linguistic-textual transmission. (Leys, 2000: 290)

If this is the case, then all instances of *verlassen* are necessarily traumas of *verlassen*
where the trauma is located within the aporia of transmission across borders, languages
and cultures. It follows that every diasporic community shares a bond forged by the
communality of their collective traumas of *verlassen* which only they can own and
understand. The Japanese diaspora is no different in that respect from the Jewish or any
other diasporic community.

### 1.12 Performativity of language

The moment of Freud’s traumatic transmission is an example of the
performativity of language at the centre of Caruth’s argument which she derived from
Paul de Man. Freud’s traumatic exile is re-enacted through the transformation of his
words from the German into the English and is also located between his two prefaces.
In a more obvious case of trauma, the victim cannot symbolise or represent the trauma
but obsessively re-enacts it – performs it – through flashbacks and dreams. Caruth
defined the flashback as an interruption of an otherwise linear representational mode,
associated with de Man’s deconstruction of language. I will briefly examine de Man’s
notion that the recognition of reference to the reality of the world paradoxically leads to
the production of a fiction, emerging as a result of the performativity of language,
before returning to my analysis of “Moses and Monotheism.”

In response to the concern that linguistically-oriented theories of reading deny
the possibility that language alone would not offer any access to history, de Man stated
in his essay “Resistance to Theory” that language is more complex than just the
question of the relationship between aesthetics and meaning and that historical
reference is not denied.

Literary theory can be said to come into being when the
approach to literary texts is no longer based on the non-
linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations
or, to put it somewhat less crudely, when the object of
discussion is no longer the meaning or the value but the
modalities of production and of reception of meaning and of
value prior to their establishment. . . . (1993: 7)
In his analysis of “Hyperion’s Fall” de Man argued that those who resist theory in the name of perceptual reality are in fact resisting the impact of the fall. When Newton formulated the notion of gravity into a law, represented by mathematical formulae, it explained a previously unexplainable concept. The world of motion then became a world of falling; thus the history of philosophy post-Newton was “a series of confrontations with the question of how to talk about falling.” (Caruth, 1996: 76) The title of Keats’ unfinished epic poem *The Fall of Hyperion* was scrutinised by de Man and he argued that Keats’ inability to complete any version of his poems “manifests the impossibility, for him as for us, of reading his own title.” (1993: 16) The title of Keats’ poem, much like the prefaces to Freud’s “Moses and Monotheism,” also suggests a performativity in its language:

> In “Hyperion’s Fall,” the word “fall” is plainly figural, the representation of a figural fall, and we, as readers, read this fall standing up... And it matters a great deal how we read the title, as an exercise not only in semantics, but in what the text actually does to us. (de Man, 1993: 16)

The conceptual and linguistic freedom of the world of transcendental philosophy that allows us to represent and signify such concepts as gravity and falling is suggested in the limbs of the puppet (Gliedermann) in Kleist’s *The Marionette Theatre*. De Man suggested that behind philosophy’s silhouette lay an unknowable event, the ideal of a mechanism that transforms the laws of force and motion into a figure of superhuman grace and agility. And the gracefulfulness of these marionettes lies in the transformations that occur between puppet and puppeteer. The “aesthetic power” lies in the text of the relationship between puppet and puppeteer which represents that of the author and his work. The freedom of movement for the puppet is due to the elimination of any referential weight of a personal authorial self which de Man referred to as a “transformational system.”

Yet Caruth noted that the loss of referential particularity appears in the figure of a body - “the paradox of this writing system is that it produces the human figure of the author in the very elimination of authorial referentiality.” (1996: 82) *The Marionette Theatre* fits in with this autobiographical paradox precisely – the body is Kleist himself, resurrected in his writing after a series of crises and death experiences. The system allows him to exchange rising for falling, life for death “because all are equally free of referential weight.” (Caruth, 1996: 83) De Man offered an alternative autobiographical reading of Kleist’s text – one that centred on the series of crises in Kleist’s life from
1801 to 1810 when he wrote *The Marionette Theatre*. De Man argued that the figure for a Kleistian autobiography should not be the graceful figure of the marionette, rather the smashed pieces of *The Broken Jug*, a play Kleist wrote in 1805. De Man thus created a break in the continuity of the abstract, traditional Kleistian autobiographies by interrupting the marionettes with the broken body and this is where “a shadowy autobiographical reality first begins to emerge.” (Caruth, 1996: 87) He associated this shadow, this break, with death, and it is in the death-like break where the writing system will encounter the resistance of reference. Can we infer, then, from Caruth’s reading of Freud and de Man, that the trauma of *verlassen* in 1938 was Freud’s deathlike break exhibited through both his letter to his son and in the dual prefaces (another example of a double wound) to the third essay of “Moses and Monotheism”?

Kant described the human body as an example of an ununified system of non-purposive parts. The disarticulation of the body occurs in philosophy in its attempt to be free of reference and, while it may appear as mutilation, the naming of parts in fact establishes “the very specificity of a human, as opposed to puppet, body.” (Caruth, 1996: 88) The reappearance of the mutilated body in de Man’s work is paradoxically a referential reality that is neither fictionalised nor formalized. Is this mutilation something we ‘must do’ when reading a text when we know of the specific corporeal deaths of the authors?

In naming a befalling, de Man’s text no longer simply knows what it says, but indeed does more than it knows, and it is in this that we can read the referential significance of his own theory. (Caruth, 1996: 89-90)

In the same way, we can learn to assign referential significance to autobiographical and fictional texts that each have a ‘voice’ that, as Caruth put it, longs to cry out to testify to a wound.

1.13 The metonymic myth of Moses

Like de Man’s text, Freud’s reading of the text of the myth of Moses also reveals a text that “does more than it knows.” In the same way that myths work metonymically, so too did Freud construct his argument that Moses was originally not a Jew but an Egyptian. He apparently wanted to be the reviser of the scrolls in his argument that the Moses of the Old Testament was an Egyptian who had tried to enforce his severe monotheism on the primitive ancient Hebrews. The original legend of Moses saw him
born to modest Jewish Levites but raised by the princess of the royal house of Egypt. While some argued that the original legend must be correct as it dutifully followed the formula of the hero, Freud argued that it could not have existed as such. Firstly, the Egyptians had no motive for glorifying Moses as he was no hero to them and, more importantly, the Jewish people would not have embraced the legend of a great man if he was a foreigner. Thus the most obvious conclusion must be that the legend as was told was incorrect. Moses must have been an aristocratic Egyptian; he did not rise up to conquer but began his heroic life by “stepping down from his exalted position and descending to the level of the children of Israel.” (Freud, 1978e: 15)

Moses introduced a monotheist religion to his people which was derived from the Egyptian Aten religion, introduced to Moses by the Pharaoh Akhenaten. Freud enforced his argument by comparing the modern Jewish and the ancient Aten religions and concluded that as both were strict monotheisms and neither dealt with the afterlife or the dead at all, it was not difficult to reach the conclusion that Judaism may have derived from the Aten religion. Moses led the Exodus from Egypt but was betrayed and murdered by his people, an important event to remember when I discuss the intergenerationalism of trauma theory. His religion was renounced and only re-emerged several centuries later.

1.14 The latency period

Freud questioned why there was such a delayed effect before the Mosaic doctrines became permanently established. At the group level, he compared the group psychology with the example of Darwin’s theory of evolution. At the individual level, he argued that the time between learning something new which one ought to recognise as true but which contradicts his wishes and convictions, and accepting it as true is the time it takes for “the reasoning activity of the ego to overcome the objections that are maintained by strong affective cathexes.” (Freud, 1978e: 67)

He cited an example of a man who leaves the scene of a train crash apparently unharmed but over the course of the next few weeks exhibits severe psychical and motor symptoms of shock – he is suffering from a traumatic neurosis. The time between the accident and the first symptoms is the ‘incubation’ period; here lies the similarity between the problem of traumatic neuroses and that of Jewish monotheism – they share the characteristic of latency. “The phenomenon of latency in the history of
the Jewish religion. . . may be explained. . . by the circumstance that the facts and ideas which were intentionally disavowed. . . were in fact, never lost.” (1978e: 69) They were merely stored, incubated, for several generations, only to emerge at a later date after an event which triggered a re-enactment of the original trauma, the murder of Moses. Similarly, a traumatic event in childhood is also usually followed by:

a period of apparently undisturbed development – a course of things which is supported or made possible by the intervention of the physiological period of latency. Not until later does the change take place with which the definitive neurosis becomes manifest as a belated effect of the trauma. . . . The phenomenon of a latency of the neurosis between the first reactions to the trauma and the later outbreak of the illness must be regarded as typical. (Freud, 1978e: 77-78)

How can we link the latency of a group of people over several generations to the latency within an individual during their own lifetime?

1.15 Transference from individual to group

A traumatic event triggers the subject’s originary ‘invasion’ which occurred prior to any conscious perception or repression. The originary invasion for the individual subject is the archetrauma of birth (followed very quickly by the Oedipal complex) whereas the originary ‘invasion’ for the group is the murder of the primeval father. In “Moses and Monotheism” Freud argued that the originary invasion and subsequent traumatic events are repressed therefore exist in the individual as memory-traces. These are present but isolated by anticathexis and the repressed struggles to force its way into consciousness. What is fascinating is the notion that there may also be present traces of experiences that were innately present from birth – an “archaic heritage” (Freud, 1978e: 98) which the individual inherited and which represents what Freud referred to as the “constitutional factor” in the individual. (1978e: 98)

the archaic heritage of human beings comprises not only dispositions but also subject-matter – memory-traces of the experience of earlier generations. In this way the compass as well as the importance of the archaic heritage would be significantly extended. (1978e: 99)

If we can accept the possibility that these memory-traces can and do survive in the archaic heritage, then we can accept Freud’s claim to have bridged the gulf between individual neuroses and group psychology. Freud returned to the incident of the murder of the primeval father and answered two questions that he had posed earlier. Firstly, he
asked under what conditions a memory of this kind could enter the archaic heritage. He
decided that any event that is important enough, or repeated often enough, is susceptible
to the formation of a memory in the heritage. He then asked under what circumstances
that memory then becomes active. There are a number of influences but of decisive
importance to Freud (and to my own research) is when there is a recent, real repetition
of the event that serves as a kind of ‘trigger’ event, or a Freudian ‘double wound.’

1.16 The return of the repressed

The third essay of “Moses and Monotheism” was published, with the others, for
the first time in 1938 after Freud had safely reached London. After the two prefaces
and a repetitious summary of the first two essays, the third essay sought to establish a
link between the group psychology of the Israelites and the individual psychology of a
man suffering a traumatic neurosis using the aforementioned analogy of a man who
survives a train accident. Herein lies their similarity – they share the characteristic of
‘latency’. Freud expanded on this theory further and developed a formula of the
individual neurosis which he then applied to Jewish monotheism:

```
Early trauma
↓
Defence
↓
Latency
↓
Outbreak of neurotic illness
↓
Partial return of the repressed
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The early trauma for Jewish monotheism was, of course, the betrayal and
murder of their primeval father, Moses. As an entire race, their period of latency lasted
for centuries (instead of the shorter time span endured by the individual) before they
exhibited their neuroses. This model can be applied to any number of groups of people
whose ancestors endured some form of traumatic event in their history. Within these
groups of people who have inherited these memory-traces within their own archival
history there could be one, or a number, of individuals who succumb to a neurosis
singularly. Any member of any generation after the initial trauma may suddenly be
faced with a repetition of that event, a ‘double wound,’ a trigger which allows for the
return of the repressed to develop and envelop them, resulting in a traumatic neurosis so
great that it requires a specialised form of psychiatric assistance in the form of involved
witnessing and testimonials which I will discuss shortly. So Freud’s logic of
Nachträglichkeit trauma, or deferred action trauma, was:

constituted by a relationship between two events or experiences
– a first event that was not necessarily traumatic because it came
too early in the child’s development to be understood and
assimilated, and a second event that also was not inherently
traumatic but that triggered a memory of the first that only then
was given traumatic meaning and hence repressed. For Freud,
trauma was thus constituted by a dialectic between two events,
neither of which was intrinsically traumatic, and a temporal
delay or latency through which the past was available only by a
deferred act of understanding and interpretation. (Leys, 2000:
20)

In her discussion of “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays”, Caruth tried to
turn the notion of trauma into a critical concept in order to support her de Manian
performative theory of language; thus it was crucial for her to make the case for the
literal. Caruth argued that after a traumatic event, there occurs a material, literal
registration that can only return belatedly in the form of some kind of repetitive
phenomena. But she demanded that the origin of trauma be presented as a literal or
material truth. This is a misinterpretation of Freud’s intention when he requested that
we exact an historical truth from the myths, legends and theories that he proposed.
While he espoused the concept of an historical truth, he did accept that “knowledge of
the past is available retrospectively only through distortion and falsification. (Leys,
2000: 280) For example, when Freud compared the religion of monotheism to the
delusions of psychotics, Leys argued that the force of his argument lay “in the claim
that even the extreme distortions or delusions of the psychotic contain a fragment of
historical truth.” (2000: 282) Freud recognised that there can be no simple return to the
origin since the commencement is only accessible through substitutions, displacements
and so on imposed upon it through Nachträglichkeit. Thus the origin of trauma
presents itself as a “psychical or ‘historical truth’ whose meaning has to be interpreted,
reconstructed, and deciphered.” (Leys, 2000: 282)

The historical truth presents itself through both written histories and oral
traditions. The obvious distinction that Freud made between the two was that the
written ‘murders’ the historical experience while the oral has the ability the preserve it.
However, this distinction collapsed when Freud came to realise that even oral traditions
are subject to distortions as it is passed on through the generations, even if they are not
as injurious as those that he believed affected written biblical exegeses. So how can the
historical truth of traumatic events be preserved faithfully and passed on generationally with as little distortion as possible? How are the memory traces in the archaic tradition transmitted?

1.17 The possibility of an undistorted intergenerational transmission

Historical past that has never been experienced personally can be transmitted through the generations and made to become a part of the individual’s own experience. Freud believed in the transmission of intergenerational experience and argued that was how the tradition of monotheism was passed on – through a Lamarckian mechanism of an inheritance of acquired characters and characteristics. Caruth did not discuss this theory because, as Leys pointed out, “her de Manian version of that technology explain how texts themselves performatively achieve the same transformation of history into memory and its transmission across generations that Lamarckianism accomplishes for Freud.” (2000: 286) Caruth believes in the transmission of a trauma through a face-to-face encounter between the victim who re-enacts (performs) the traumatic event and the witness who, through listening, is contaminated by the trauma. Caruth’s is a model of transmission that conformed with physicians such as van der Kolk and Laub (whose work I shall examine later) who espoused that those who witness the suffering of others are putting themselves in a vulnerable position by opening themselves up to the dialectic of trauma that the victims ‘perform’. Caruth realised that this model could be expanded to accommodate the transmission of trauma across space and time to include the trauma that haunts later generations. “The result is that individuals or groups who never experienced the trauma directly themselves are imagined as “inheriting” the traumatic memories of those who died long ago.” (Leys, 2000: 284)

If I accept that the survival of the memory-traces in the archaic tradition provides the crucial link between the individual and group psychology, I am then able to deal with groups of people on the basis of the experiences and testimonials of a few individuals. I am then able to analyse the generational diasporic and traumatic condition by applying Freud’s trauma theory to the testimonials and literature provided by the survivors of traumatic events and diasporic cultures. I am fascinated by the discursively repetitious nature of Freud’s work in “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays.” His own passages are repeated several times within the three essays and his life is replicated in his work. That is, the notion of the double wound, introduced to us in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” when Freud discussed the fate of Clorinda in
Gerusalemme Liberata, is replicated in Freud’s own double wound (his forced exile) which is expressed and embodied in his writing of “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays” made especially apparent in his second preface. I seek to find similar such replication not merely within the literature and testimonials of survivors in the Japanese diaspora but also in the literature of their descendants. I believe there is evidence of such memory-traces in the archaic heritage of the Japanese diaspora which will prove the possibility and the existence of a generational diasporic and traumatic condition.

1.18 A Lacanian awakening

In the final chapter of her book Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History, Caruth demonstrated the unique nature of the ethical burden of survival; a crucial aspect of the role of witness and testimony. She identified a paradox in Freud’s definition of traumatic experience: the inability to know the violent attacks although it has been seen, the immediacy of the symptoms that take the form of belatedness and the repetitions unavailable to consciousness but that intrude on sight repeatedly. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud narrated the dream that a father had of his burning child. If, as Caruth suggested, Freud was asking the questions of what it means to sleep and what it means to wish to sleep, then Lacan posed a contradictory question – what does it mean to awaken? With regards to the story of the burning child, I think Lacan’s question is certainly more pertinent.

Lacan saw a contradiction in Freud’s analysis of the father’s dream of his burning child. If consciousness itself desires not to awaken, then waking is in conflict with that conscious wish; thus this is another example of an exception to the theory discussed earlier that dreams are a means of expressing one’s desires. Yet what awakens the father is not an external force – rather an internal one through the words of the child. If for Freud it is the dream that keeps the father asleep, Lacan saw the dream as a function of awakening as it is the dream itself that awakens the dreamer; thus Lacan posited the following question:

If the function of the dream is to prolong sleep, if the dream, after all, may come so near to the reality that causes it, can we not say that it might correspond to this reality without emerging from sleep? After all, there is such a thing as somnambulistic activity. The question that arises, and which indeed all Freud’s previous indications allow us here to produce, is – What is it that wakes the sleeper? Is it not, in the dream, another reality? (1978: 57-58)
By conflicting with the wishes of consciousness, the sleeper must confront the reality of a death from which he cannot turn. Lacan identified another paradox – that the father is attempting to respond by awakening to his son’s call that can only be heard in sleep. Caruth proposed that it is in this paradoxical awakening that Lacan extended the meaning of the confrontation with death contained within a Freudian notion of trauma. The awakening, for Lacan, represented the paradox of the necessity and the impossibility of confronting death. To awaken is only to awaken to a repetition of a previous failure to see in time. Thus awakening, the moment between dreaming and awareness, between conscious action and subconscious expressions, is itself the site of trauma.

Lacan read the awakening of the father as a survivor inextricably bound with the death of his child. The father’s story of survival is therefore not his own but his child’s, told as a mode of response. In this instance the father carries the trauma within him in much the same way that Tancred carried the trauma of Clorinda’s death(s). Another similarity between the two stories lies in the repetition, the second symbolic death which was witnessed by he who then shouldered the burden and trauma of witnessing. Clorinda’s second death occurred when Tancred lashed out at the tree in which her spirit was imprisoned and the child’s second death occurred simultaneously in the father’s dream when he asked, “Father can’t you see I’m burning?” and in reality when his sheets were set alight. The words of his son signify the father’s double wounding in the same manner that Clorinda’s cries signified Tancred’s repetition also. Lacan resituated the psyche’s relation to the real not as the matter of knowing/not knowing empirical facts but as a story of urgent responsibility, as he said, an *ethical* relation to the real.

The story of father and child is therefore, for Lacan, the story of an impossible responsibility of consciousness in relating to the deaths of others. Caruth said that Lacan’s interpretation could be representative of Freud’s movement in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”:

> In this work, Freud indeed moves from a speculation on consciousness that explains trauma as an interruption of consciousness by something, such as an accident, that comes too soon to be expected, to an explanation of the origins of life itself as an ‘awakening’ from death that precisely establishes the foundation of the drive and of consciousness alike. (1996: 104)
The pathos and significance of the child’s words come not just from the repeated loss of the child but from the fact that it is the child itself who commands the awakening. The father would rather stay inside the dream so that he can see his child alive again. But the child commands him to see him outside the dream to see him, in his inaccessibility and otherness, so that the father can leave him, survive him, and tell his story: “To awaken is thus to bear the imperative to survive.” (Caruth, 1996: 105) Therefore the father’s response to the child’s words is not a knowing but an awakening that can carry and transmit the child’s otherness.

The implications of such a transmission will only be fully grasped, I think, when we come to understand how, through the act of survival, the repeated failure to have seen in time— in itself a pure repetition compulsion, a repeated nightmare— can be transformed into the imperative of a speaking that awakens others. (Caruth, 1996: 108)

Hence the ‘ethical burden’ of survival. Caruth argued that the dream of the burning child shows that transmission cannot be reduced to a mastery of facts in simple knowledge or cognition that would be straightforward to locate. The location of the trauma is problematic and in Lacan’s text as in Freud’s, it is not just the meaning of the words that are spoken that pass on the traumatic experience but the performance of the words themselves.

1.19 Trauma of transmission

The very act of bearing witness to a trauma, through listening, reading and interpreting, allows the victim’s testimonial to emerge. As the horror of the Holocaust is the watershed event of the modern age and, because it is so unspeakable, it has “precipitated, perhaps caused, an epistemological-ontological crisis of witnessing, a crisis manifested at the level of language itself.” (Leys, 2000: 268) Language can testify to the traumatic horror by transmitting not the facts of the horror but the horror itself. The transmission of the unrepresentable therefore implicates those of us who were not there by forcing us to become participants of the traumatic event by our witnessing of the transmission.

As Dori Laub discussed in Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, the listener of the traumatic narrative becomes a participant of the traumatic event, a co-owner. A successful listener must participate in all the emotions and feelings that perplex the victim and, in so doing, can make possible
the formerly impossible act of witnessing. By knowing the event from within, the narrative then assumes the form of testimony. If this isn’t challenging enough, the listener also has to find a way to preserve his own space, his own position and perspective and allocate a place to allow the forces of the survivor to rage without affecting the listener to the point of traumatising him also. The listener must erect a protective shield of his own to preserve against “unproblematic identification with the experience of others and the possibility of being traumatized by it.” (LaCapra, 2001: 40) In other words, he must be both a witness to the trauma victim and a witness to himself. He can then become “the enabler of the testimony – the one who triggers its initiation, as well as the guardian of its process and of its momentum.” (Laub, 1992: 58) The listener must learn to hear both the speech and the silence which emerges from behind and within the speech. He must understand that while “silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath.” (Laub, 1992: 58) The significance of silence is a concept that I discuss throughout the thesis.

Laub recounted a testimony he recorded for the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale. It was a woman who spoke of her experience in whispers, leaving a presence that was “barely noteworthy” (1992: 59) until she told the story of the explosion of the chimney at Auschwitz. As her story was factually inaccurate, historians claimed that her story must be dismissed. However, what was interesting and more important was the way that she recounted her story and the meaningful silence that followed:

She was relating her memories as an eyewitness of the Auschwitz uprising; a sudden intensity, passion and color were infused into the narrative. She was fully there. . . . the meteor from the past kept moving on. The woman fell silent and the tumults of the moment faded. . . . The gates of Auschwitz closed and the veil of obliteration and of silence, at once oppressive and repressive, descended once again. (1992: 59)

Laub argued that a lesser import should be placed on empirical factuality. What was so remarkable about this woman’s testimony is that she bore witness to the “reality of an unimaginable occurrence.” (1992: 60) She had experienced, witnessed and now testified to an event that broke all previous frameworks and that, Laub insisted, constituted historical truth. The woman’s testimony was her way of breaking free of Auschwitz:
This was her way of being, of surviving, of resisting. It is not merely her speech, but the very boundaries of silence which surround it, which attest, today as well as in the past, to this assertion of resistance. (1992: 62)

But the very act of testimony can also further traumatise the victim. Nadine Fresco’s article “Remembering the Unknown” explained that any further tragedies in the lives of survivors are experienced not as simple misfortunes but as a second Holocaust, as the final corroboration of the defeat of their powers to survive. This notion of a second Holocaust, or a Freudian double wound, could trigger the emergence and the return of the original trauma intergenerationally through its repetition and transference. Thus the second Holocaust is, in itself, testimony to the compulsion to repeat throughout history and through the repetition, “the trauma of the second holocaust bears witness not just to a history that has not ended, but, specifically, to the historical occurrence of an event that, in effect, does not end.” (Laub, 1992: 67) Thus the fear that fate will strike again is crucial to the memory, and the inability to talk about, trauma.

1.20 “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” - Adorno

The difficulties and complications associated with the transference, the realisation and the representation of a traumatic memory or experience into spoken words, images, sounds or any other text, is an obstacle that must be overcome if the victim is to experience any kind of healing. While the testimony may be traumatic in itself, the repetition in the recollection of memory may be a cathartic avenue that the victim could pursue in order to stop the repetitive cycle of traumatic experience. As one Holocaust studies researcher reminds us, “in trying to put a face on survival, we must not fail to recognize life. The survivors who tell their stories here have not merely endured a horrible experience and gone beyond it, they have, in fact, transcended the experience.” (Appel, 1996: 87) The victim must actively seek the path that is most conducive to their personal healing process, whether it is to fight for justice and compensation, to raise awareness in the community, to include all future generations in discussions so that the memory is never forgotten, or to express their emotions and memories through literary texts. Theodor Adorno wrote:

The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and
barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation. (1967: 34)

In order to escape from absolute reification absorbing our minds entirely, we must challenge the totalization of society and shake our consciousness awake from its “self-satisfied contemplation.” We can only do that by continually engaging in dialectics that are all-inclusive and challenging. A consciousness of doom would not degenerate into idle chatter if that consciousness was consistently reminded and shocked back into alertness of past traumas and future possible repetitions. Thus I propose that it is not the case that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric; rather that not writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric and would have far more significant and long-lasting implications for both survivors and the future generations.

1.21 A customised model of trauma theory

Adorno later retracted his statement concerning the barbarism of poetry after Auschwitz. The value of textual or oral productions by an affected party (either survivor or survivor-descendant) of a traumatic event is inarguably invaluable. For the purpose of my research, I will utilise a customised model of trauma theory, drawing on the theorists I have discussed in this chapter. This theoretical model will provide the framework in which I will examine the literary archive of the Japanese American diaspora written from a range of generations and occupations. The texts that I examine will illustrate the repetition and transferability of trauma in a variety of ways and show how they continue to mould and influence a community several decades after their defining traumatic event.

I use Freud and Leys to identify those who are exhibiting signs of a traumatic neurosis as I search for examples of double wounds and repetitions in their texts. As traumatic memory may involve belated temporality and a period of latency, it is crucial to examine the texts of all generations of the Japanese American diaspora. Caruth is used to identify the trauma that is carried within the language and silences themselves thus exemplifying the performativity of language. My examination of the texts of the younger generations will facilitate the theory of latency and the existence of memory traces in the archaic heritage that allows for the transference between individual and
group. The trauma that is embodied within the Japanese American community is triggered and remembered belatedly and has been captured in their language and texts.7

Notes
1 The name comes from the myth of King Oedipus who killed his father and took his mother as his wife. Thus was revealed the King’s infantile desire to possess his mother which, in his case, was not successfully opposed and stopped in adulthood by the barrier against incest.
2 One thinks of Hamlet and Goethe’s Werther in this example.
3 Freud further distinguished the neurotic subject that possesses manifest trauma in his history from the subject who simply has abnormal reactions to common experiences. Those with a manifest trauma, he argued, must have experienced it in early childhood during the years before the repression of the Oedipal complex. The trauma itself, which is often of a sexual and/or aggressive nature, is then completely forgotten and is inaccessible by memory. The effects of which, within a neurotic phenomenon, are either positive or negative: positive effects lead to a compulsion to repeat and the manifestation of subsequent character traits, whereas negative effects and its compulsion to repeat lead to phobias. They both, however, have a compulsive quality – their great psychical intensity is not at all/insufficiently managed by external realities indicating “domination by an internal psychical reality over the reality of the external world and the path to a psychosis lies open.” (Freud, 1978e: 76)
4 Sigrid Weigel identified an interesting parallel in her Freudian reading of the Tasso epic. She claimed that the scene in the forest when Clorinda cried out bears a clear correspondence with the scene of Clorinda’s death in that “the sounds that emanate from the tree can be read not only as the resonance of his repeated action, but also as the echo of Tancred’s own cry in the moment of recognition and shock immediately following the deed [Clorinda’s murder] itself.” (2003: 91)
6 The father fell asleep in the room next to the one in which the corpse of his son lay. His son died of fever, and his body was being watched over by another man. The father dreamt that his son had arisen and asked him, “Father, can’t you see I’m burning?” He awakened to discover that the candle next to his son’s body had fallen over and the sheets had been set alight.
7 A paragraph in LACAPRA’S Representing the Holocaust summarises the core of my model of trauma theory: “trauma is effected belatedly through repetition, for the numbingly traumatic event does not register at the time of its occurrence but only after a temporal gap or period of latency, at which time it is immediately repressed, split off, or disavowed. Trauma then in some way may return compulsively as the repressed.” (1994: 174) The trauma of the Japanese American diaspora was ‘acted-out’ and ‘worked-through’ (to borrow Freudian terms) in a variety of ways. For example, many sought to identify with and assimilate into the dominant society, many chose to testify when an appropriate venue was available to them and many wrote about their personal trauma in order to educate and inform others. Past possibilities were actualised and discriminations rectified by different generations differently.
Chapter Two

An Historical Account of the Japanese Diaspora

Map from Weglyn, 1976: frontispiece

2.1 History as a continuum of events

To be in the position to understand, appreciate and value the literary and filmic contributions made by members of the Japanese diaspora, it is imperative to know their history. From the uncertain beginnings faced by the brave Issei, or first generation, as they established themselves on American soil, to the long days spent in internment camps in remote and desolate regions of America during World War II. From the proud moments when the American-born Nisei, or second generation, soldiers returned from battle in Europe and the Pacific and became the most highly decorated unit of its size in U.S. military history, to the emotional battle for redress. From the triumph of being granted the right to naturalisation, to the continuing battle against racism, exemplified by events such as the tragic and brutal slaying of Vincent Chin,¹ this chapter will examine the complex history of the Japanese diaspora in North America.

As New Historicism has taught us, these are events that embody the reasoning behind why history cannot be relegated to simply that which provides “either stable
antithesis or stable background” (Greenblatt, 1988: 95) to literary or filmic texts. One cannot employ a totalising reading of history as a linear, grand narrative that merely forms a background against which a text is produced and received. History is rather a continuum of events where each event bears consequence upon another and each generation impacts significantly upon the next; hence the inevitability of gradual ideological and cultural transformation. As the texts are produced and received in unique and specific contexts, they are influenced by them and are thus characterised by unique systems and modes of signification. Conversely the texts themselves impact upon a multifaceted history such as that of the Japanese diaspora. Therefore it is clear that an understanding of the text is as important and as valuable as an understanding of its context, as they are and always will be inextricably joined. Or as New Historicist Louis Montrose argued, there is a reciprocal concern between the historicity of the text and the textuality of history and this is our means of having access to the past. Therefore this chapter will be dedicated to the history of the diaspora beginning in Japan just as their self-enforced isolation from the West was about to be forcibly terminated.

2.2 The isolationist Tokugawa period

During the Tokugawa period several pre-conditions for Japan’s modernisation were developed as a result of Japan’s nationalistic, self-improving ideals. The most important events that took place during the Tokugawa era that shaped Japan’s relationship with the West were the demise of its policy of seclusion, the unequal and unfair treaties signed with several foreign nations and the shift in Japan’s migration policy. Prior to Commodore Matthew Perry’s arrival in Tokyo in 1853, Japan was a peaceful, isolated and insular country that kept the perceived damaging and immoral foreign influences at bay. A decree issued in 1633 forbade Japanese to leave the shores of their homeland and Japanese sailors who were shipwrecked on other lands would face possible execution if they returned to Japan after being exposed to the ‘exploitative ways’ of the foreigners.

However, towards the end of the Tokugawa reign, several Japanese politicians, intellectuals and businessmen called for the policy of isolationism to be relaxed in order to capitalise on opportunities in the West. Although the Japanese initially adhered to their ancestral laws that forbade the establishment of treaty relations they closely observed the surging strength of the West’s economic and military powers and when Perry’s ‘black ships’ steamed into Tokyo Bay demanding treaty negotiations, the
government recognised their own vulnerability and in 1854 signed the ‘General Convention of Peace and Amity’ committing Japan to direct relations with the United States. Similar treaties with other foreign powers followed suit and as several trade concessions were granted to the Americans and then the Europeans, it was clear that all remnants of the Tokugawa restrictive foreign policy were slowly being eliminated.

2.3 The Meiji restoration

The collapse of isolationism, the frail market economy, the apparent meekness of the Tokugawa government and the unfair nature of the treaties led to conflict and rebellion within Japan’s domestic sphere. After two centuries of peace the first fighting broke out in 1863 and in 1868, after nearly five years of rebellion, the Tokugawa shogunate was seized. The city of Edo was renamed Tokyo and the name of the period was changed to Meiji, meaning ‘enlightened rule’. With the Meiji restoration (so named because of the restoration of imperial rule) came a greater acceptance of foreigners in Japan but it did not solve the issue of the unequal stipulations of the treaties which clearly positioned Japan in a “primitive colonial category. . . at risk of being overrun, a Darwinian loser.” (Totman, 2000: 321) The inequity of the treaties was a great embarrassment to the Japanese and to prevent further humiliation, the government determined to keep its citizens out of the coolie trade, an exploited Asian labour resource.

The Japanese wanted to distinguish themselves from their Asian neighbours so, in addition to refusing to participate in the coolie trade, they also revolutionised their public education system to match those of European nations. The newly appointed Education Minister devised a system of ruthless centralising during the 1880s and by 1906 ninety-five percent of children in Japan had attended the six-year mandatory system. (Totman, 2000: 350) By 1910:

children of both sexes from all over the country attended local co-educational schools between the ages of six and twelve. This achievement took forty years. It had no equivalent in Asia, and paralleled developments in the most advanced societies in Europe. (Mason and Caiger, 1972: 253)

As a result, the Japanese immigrants were more educated than their counterparts from other Asian countries.
2.4 Early Migration

Migration was another aspect of Japanese society that underwent a massive transformation after the Meiji Restoration. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the predominant view regarding migration was that it was an ideal way to establish good relations with foreign powers. It was also thought that it would ease overpopulation at home while “establishing Japanese control of territories abroad, in the manner of the European diaspora of recent centuries.” (Totman, 2000: 314) In 1868 the decree that forbade the Japanese to leave their homeland was lifted and a boat carrying 148 Japanese contract labourers departed Yokohama bound for the Hawaiian Islands. These men were known as *gannenmono*, or ‘first-year men’ referring to their date of departure which was the first year of the Meiji era. Their traumatic boat journey took about ten days to reach Hawaii and up to four weeks to reach San Francisco. Takahashi Korekiyo (later Japanese finance minister) recalled the journey:

> The steerage was dark and filled with a foul odor. . . . A large number of us were crowded into it. . . . We had to eat our meals out of a large tin can together with Chinese laborers. And steerage passengers were provided with three or four large barrels that were placed on the deck where the paddlewheel was, for their need to ease nature. Straddling over two wooden boards on top of these barrels, one had to obey the calls of nature. (Mattern, 2003: 39)

Their traumatic ordeal continued when they found conditions in Hawaii to be so appalling that they complained to the Japanese government who sent representatives out to investigate. However, it took several years to improve the conditions and Chinzen Kinjo wrote of his harsh life on a Hawaiian plantation:

> we worked like horses, moving mechanically under the whipping hands of the *luna* [foreman]. There was no such thing as human sentiment. At night, instead of a sweet dream of my wife and child left in Okinawa, I was wakened up frightened by the nightmare of being whipped by the *luna*. Because of the perpetual fear of this unbearable whipping, some other workers committed suicide by hanging or jumping in front of the oncoming train. (Mattern, 2003: 46)

Although some labourers returned to Japan at the end of their three-year contracts many others remained to start their own farms. In 1885, a few years after King Kalakaua of Hawaii visited Japan, a treaty was signed which marked the beginning of officially supervised, large-scale emigration to Hawaii. The Japanese government was quickly inundated with 28,000 applications despite the known
hardships. (Mattern, 2003: 31) Between 1882 and 1902 the number of Japanese plantation workers in Hawaii increased from just 15 to 31,029 and the percentage of Japanese on the plantations increased from 14% in 1886 to 69% in 1893. (Chinen and Hiura, 1997: 10) By 1914, Japanese-owned plantations produced about 80% of the coffee and 50% of the pineapple supply.

Despite the known hardships, the situation facing the Japanese at home was so dire that the government was flooded with requests from men and women desperate to try their luck overseas. Their desperation was caused by the Meiji government’s thrust towards modernisation and industrialisation, the deflationary period of the 1880s which resulted in huge tax increases, severe agrarian distress and high levels of poverty. So the Meiji government eased restrictions on emigration to allow farmers to seek opportunities overseas. Some farmers saw the chance to emigrate as a way to start a new life in another country, others thought they could earn enough money to eventually return to Japan and pay off all family debts and start afresh in their homeland. For example, Inouye Asakichi left Japan after his family’s home burnt down and, although he stood to inherit his family’s land as the eldest son, his filial duty demanded that he relocate to Hawaii to pay back the debts his family had accumulated as a result of the fire. His recollection illustrates the inevitable shift away from traditional homeland values (in this case, Japanese values) in any diasporic community:

> I sacrificed myself for my father for the first ten years in the States. I paid back all his debts. At that time I took it for granted that a child would sacrifice himself for his family, although such a situation is almost inconceivable today. (Mattern, 2003: 30-31)

In the early phase of immigration, it was relatively easy to leave Japan for America. In 1899, there were nine emigration companies in Hiroshima alone (Mattern, 2003: 35) and by 1906 there were thirty companies and private brokers (Ichioka, 1988: 48) who specialised in emigration to the United States, Hawaii and Canada.

In 1914 overpopulation in Japan became an issue as never before. Emigration was proposed as the best solution to the problems of Japan’s surplus population and the establishment of large Japanese communities abroad was justified by the earlier examples of the European migrants.

> It was, after all, a policy that demonstrated a society’s Darwinian virility. Furthermore, it was fully legitimized by the
European diaspora, which had during recent centuries employed cunning, force, and disease to wrest entire continents from the grasp of forager and non-intensive agricultural populations in the Americas and elsewhere. (Totman, 2000: 383)

Despite the relaxed migration laws, emigration never became a major social trend in Japan compared to European nations. If the statistics are expressed as a percentage of population increase, the figure for Japanese migration of 1% pales in comparison to the figures for England (74%) and Italy (47%). (Campbell and Noble, 1993: 334)

Immigration into America, Canada and Hawaii played a prominent role in Japanese migratory patterns. Sadly, a financially and racially motivated American rebellion against the early wave of Japanese immigration emerged, bolstered by the ludicrous and paranoid notion that the Japanese were entering in numbers too large to control. But as historian Bill Hosokawa pointed out, in the first nine years of the twentieth century, only about 139,000 Japanese immigrants arrived in America compared to the arrival of nearly 10 million European immigrants during the same time period. (2002: 96) The percentage of Japanese in America never rose above 0.11% of the entire population of the United States before their entry into the Second World War.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Japanese in the U.S.</th>
<th>Total U.S. Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38,558,371</td>
<td>0.000014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>50,155,783</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>2,039</td>
<td>62,947,714</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>24,326</td>
<td>75,994,575</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>72,157</td>
<td>91,972,266</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>111,010</td>
<td>105,710,620</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>138,834</td>
<td>122,775,046</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>126,947</td>
<td>131,669,275</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentage of Japanese in the United States, 1870-1940

Yet despite these revealingly conservative figures, the notion of a massive influx of Japanese into America played a prominent role in the exclusionists’ scare tactics used to fortify their argument to exclude the Japanese in the same manner as the Chinese were excluded in 1882. This invariably had a great impact upon the turbulent relationship between the white Americans and the Japanese; an impact that still has repercussions today.
2.5 Growth of the Japanese diaspora

In 1790 the U.S. Congress enacted the first naturalisation law that restricted the right to naturalisation to an alien who was a “free white person” but it was not until 1952 that persons of Japanese ancestry were eligible for naturalisation. This is just one example of the inequities and injustices faced by the Issei as they struggled to create stability in their lives and provide opportunities for their families on American soil. Historian Yuji Ichioka defined two periods of early Japanese immigration prior to 1924 when all Japanese immigration was abruptly halted.

The demand for cheap labour was great after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which sent American farmers scrambling for more workers. Between 1885 and 1907, immigration was characterised by a pattern of transient workers known as dekasegi workers who left Japan temporarily to earn money. These itinerant workers were defined by their intention to return home once they had made enough money overseas but that was rarely the case. They were mostly young, single men from poor farming backgrounds and sadly, like the gannenmono in Hawaii, many suffered a great deal. They were often forced to travel from place to place, working in exchange for low wages, food and shelter. Many carried blankets on their backs as bedding, which gave rise to their name buranke-katsugi, or ‘person who shoulders a blanket.’ (Mattern, 2003: 49) One worker described a migrant camp in Fresno, California in 1900:

The camps are worse than dog and pig pens. They are totally unfit for human beings to sleep in. Rain and moisture seep down from the roofs. Winds blow nightly through all four walls. It’s like seeing beggars in Japan living beneath bridges. No one, not even dirt-poor peasants, wants to live in such unpleasant and filthy surroundings. These camps are the reason why so many robust workers become ill and die. (Mattern, 2003: 49)

Between 1908 and 1924, the pattern shifted from transient labourers to permanent farmers and residents. In spite of the tremendous physical and financial obstacles, the Japanese were finally able to enjoy unprecedented success on the rich agricultural resources of the west coast. In Japan, migration propaganda received a boost with the publication of popular guides to life in America which painted alluring pictures such as this one in Kitare, Nihonjin:

Come, merchants! America is a veritable human paradise, the number one mine in the world. Gold, silver, and gems are scattered on her streets. If you can figure out a way of picking
them up, you’ll become rich instantly to the tune of ten million and be able to enjoy ultimate human pleasures. . . Come students! Working during the daytime, you’ll have time to attend night school in the evening. And if you earn your school expenses by persevering for two to three years, it’s not far-fetched to think of graduating from a college. (Ichioka, 1988: 11-12)

Changes in the Japanese conscription laws also played a part in the surge of emigrants. The 1889 amendments to the Japanese constitution meant that overseas students were the only men exempt from conscription which became an added incentive for young men to emigrate. Thus students contributed to the initial wave of Japanese immigrants into America after the Meiji government relaxed their emigration restrictions.¹¹ Most were dekasegi-shosei, or student-labourers who, lacking the funds to travel eastwards, settled down in San Francisco. They established the foundation of Japanese immigrant society and constituted the majority of the Japanese residents until the boom of farmers and labourers in the late 1890s. They were most commonly employed as ‘school boys’ where they lived with an American family and in exchange for food, board and a nominal wage, would perform domestic services and be allowed time to attend school. This form of employment was blamed for the development of a subservient mentality among the immigrant students that affected fellow students and labourers and is commonly thought to be reflected in their acceptance of their mistreatment during the later internment years.

Under the influence of prominent Issei leaders, the students and dekasegi workers realised they needed to shed their transient identities in order to pursue permanent status. This transition was also influenced by the various exclusionary clauses, most notably the Acts of 1908 and 1924 which I discuss later, the effects of which are evident in the figures below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>No. of Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861-1870</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1880</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-1890</td>
<td>2,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1900</td>
<td>25,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1910</td>
<td>129,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1920</td>
<td>83,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1930</td>
<td>33,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1940</td>
<td>1,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-1950</td>
<td>1,555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Japanese immigration to the United States, 1861-1950.¹²
Canada followed a similar pattern of growth to America albeit on a much smaller scale. The first settler in Canada is believed to be Nagano Manzo who arrived in 1877. He was accompanied by a steady stream of migrants which, as in Mexico and Hawaii,\(^{13}\) was augmented by a large, transitory wave of migrants whose final destination was America. The Japanese population in Canada was mostly contained within British Columbia (BC). By 1941, the census showed that of the 23,000 Japanese living in Canada, over 96% lived in BC and 60% were Canadian citizens (the Canadian government did not enforce the same denial to naturalisation that the U.S. government did). The concentrated nature of the Japanese population, their importance in the fishing and agricultural industries and their obvious physical and cultural distinctions made them easy targets for the exclusionists whose campaigns, like those in America, erupted in about 1900.

### 2.6 “Japs Keep Moving!” The anti-Japanese campaign

Anti-Japanese sentiment erupted on the west coast with the establishment of many anti-Asian groups who had the support of key influential figures, most notably the mayor of San Francisco (and later senator) James Phelan, who was instrumental in passing various anti-Asian laws. These groups were responsible for the incendiary signs hanging on the houses in white neighbourhoods proclaiming “Japs: Don’t Let the Sun Set on You Here: Keep Moving” and “Japs Keep Moving: This is a White Man’s Neighbourhood.” The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was at the forefront of Anti-Asian exclusionary movements and successively opposed Chinese, then Japanese, Korean, East Indian and Filipino immigration.\(^{14}\)

Private citizens began to take action against the Japanese too. In 1905, a group of white Californians formed the Asiatic Exclusion League and attempted to minimise further Asian immigration. The ethnic communities that the Japanese immigrants formed, dubbed ‘Japantown’ and ‘Little Tokyo’, allowed them to hold on to their ethnic past, to share a feeling of community once again and provided goods and services but these ethnic enclaves also provided further ammunition for the assimilationist argument that the Japanese were not attempting to integrate into American society. The Native
Sons of the Golden West pitched slogans to endorse segregation in schools such as: “Would you like your daughter to marry a Japanese? If not, demand that your representative in the legislature vote for segregation of whites and Asiatics in the public schools.” (Mattern, 2003: 54) Unfortunately this overtly discriminatory method gained much support in California and in 1906 the San Francisco school board planned to segregate Japanese children in public schools, precipitating an international crisis. After the Japanese government complained furiously to President Theodore Roosevelt, he issued an Executive Order on the 14th March 1907 which cancelled the policy but, in order to appease the exclusionists, he set the foundation for restricting Japanese immigration.

2.7 Exclusionary tactics

The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1908 which resulted from Roosevelt’s Executive Order pressured the Japanese government to deny passports to manual labourers and to only issue passports to a limited category of people including:

- merchants, students, diplomats, and tourists;
- bona fide Japanese residents in the United States who returned to visit Japan and wished to go back to the United States; parents, wives, and children of such residents; and so-called “settlement agriculturalists” who were special farmers bound mainly for Texas. (Ichioka, 1988: 71)

The American government also reserved the right to deny admission to Japanese immigrants whose passports were issued for any destination other than America, thereby ending the practise of entering through Canada, Mexico or Hawaii. By the time the Gentlemen’s Agreement was signed, Japan had already suffered the indignities of a total exclusion act from Australia and a restrictive act from Canada, concurrent with that of America. During the years leading up to the Gentlemen’s Agreement in 1908, the nature of Japanese immigration was in a transitory phase. It was slowly evolving from being characterised as a period of sojourners to a period of permanent settlers that was hastened by the conditions set in the Gentlemen’s Agreement which caused the decline of the labour contracting business.

Just five years after the Gentlemen’s Agreement the Japanese were dealt another harsh blow. The 1913 California Alien Land Law prohibited immigrant Japanese (as “aliens ineligible to citizenship”) and businesses where the majority stockholders were Japanese from purchasing agricultural land and their leases were restricted to three
years. Through loopholes in the Law, however, Japanese agriculture continued to grow between 1914 and 1920 as land was bought in the names of the American-born generation who, as citizens, were permitted to own land. For the Issei, it confirmed their self-identity in American society as aliens ineligible for citizenship, forever subject to discriminatory treatment and reinforced their belief that the family was the key social institution. Therefore the Issei men worked hard to start their families in America knowing that their futures depended on it. By 1910, there were 5,581 women in immigrant society and by 1920 that figure had grown to 22,193 women (Ichioka, 1988: 164), a large proportion of who were ‘picture brides.’ Most of these women entered the workforce as soon as they arrived and their American-born children finally secured their status as permanent settlers and allowed them to establish their roots into American soil.

In 1919 the campaign against picture brides was agitated by Senator Phelan who was anticipating his re-election the following year. He attacked it as a barbaric custom which only resulted in the production of children, a ‘dangerous element’ to American society as it allowed the Japanese to circumvent the 1913 Land Law. The Japanese government bowed to American pressure and on the 6th December 1919, the Japanese Foreign Ministry agreed to cease issuing passports to picture-brides effective the 1st March 1920. There was a flurry of appeals, anger and confusion especially amongst the 24,000 single adult men in immigrant society (Ichioka, 1988: 175) who appeared doomed to perpetual bachelorhood as they could not afford to send for a bride before the deadline. The termination of the picture bride custom was viewed as:

an unforgivable instance of the Japanese government sacrificing the welfare of Japanese immigrants on the altar of what it perceived as diplomatic necessity. (Ichioka, 1988: 175)

As a result of the new legislation, families were forcibly divided and the emotional reaction both in Japan and in America was widespread and intense. It had a great psychological impact on the Japanese in America, especially on the bachelors as they had no real hope of finding themselves a wife or starting a family. Even the rare interracial relationships could not establish themselves as families due to the antimiscegenation laws that were still in effect.
2.8 The 1924 Immigration Act

The focus on the future of the Japanese in America had now well and truly shifted to the *Nisei*, American citizens with more opportunities than their parents had.

Japanese immigrants “have only one hope left,” the *Taihoku Nippo* said, “and that is the maturation of our American-born children. Thus Japanese immigrants came to attach extra significance to the American-born generation.” (Ichioka, 1988: 253)

The *Issei* continued to fight against exclusionary forces by encouraging their children to assimilate into American society. In order to refute the exclusionists’ view of Japanese unassimilability, Japanese leaders proposed two forms of assimilation. The most favoured was called *gaimenteki doka* which was an outward, external assimilation. For example, they wore American clothes, furnished their homes in an American fashion and celebrated holidays like Thanksgiving while retaining their Japanese values and ideals. The lesser-favoured form of assimilation was called *naimenteki doka* which called for deeper assimilation, adopting secular values such as democratic principles and religious morals based in Christianity. These two forms of assimilation would later cause friction between the *Issei* and *Nisei* generations, as their in/ability to assimilate continued to form the basis of the exclusionists’ argument.

Clearly, then, the *Nisei* children were caught in the middle of a very confusing time. They were encouraged to assimilate as much as possible, yet many were forced to attend Japanese schools in addition to attending American schools. Some *Issei* argued that their lack of homeland knowledge was shameful, while others argued that the Japanese schools were pointless if the idea was to assimilate fully. (Even at the Japanese schools the students recited the Pledge of Allegiance, as shown in this photo courtesy of Professor Dennis M. Ogawa at the University of Hawaii.) The education of the mostly-bilingual *Nisei* continued to be deeply contested with continual debate about the most effective form of education. After the exclusionists proposed a constitutional amendment to “deny citizenship to those children whose parents were aliens ineligible to citizenship, even though the children were born on American soil,” (Ichioka, 1988: 205) the *Issei* urged the *Nisei* to protect and exercise their rights of citizenship. Many *Issei* even renounced the Japanese
citizenship of their children in an attempt to prove their unequivocal loyalty to America.

Despite the remarkable efforts to prove their assimilability, on the 1st July 1924 the U.S. government passed the Immigration Act which excluded Asian immigration entirely, thus nullifying the Gentlemen’s Agreement and effectively ended all Japanese immigration. While it had been clear for some years that the family was the Japanese community’s key social institution, the future of the Japanese community depended entirely on the Nisei. Although some Nisei worked alongside their parents in the fields, their primary responsibility was their education as knowledge could never be taken away. Hawaiian-born Nisei George Ariyoshi became the first Japanese American governor in the United States when he was elected governor of Hawaii in 1973 and fondly remembered his father’s advice:

Early on, my father encouraged me to attain a good education. He once told me that one can earn a fortune but that can be lost as well. An education, however, can never be taken away. (Mattern, 2003: 64)

The Issei insistence upon a good education is evident in the generally high educational achievements of the Nisei throughout the community. By 1940, the median educational level of the Nisei was 12.2 years compared to 10.1 years for white Americans on the west coast. (Fugita and O’Brien, 1991: 84) While some immigrants sent their children to both Japanese and American schools, most sent their children only to American schools to enforce the ideal of assimilation. It was the first time many Nisei had interacted with whites and they soon felt the sting of discrimination. Mary Nagao, born in California in 1920, remembered:

If the new textbooks ran out as they were being passed out, we got the older ones. We were always last in the cafeteria food line . . . So although no one was physically abusive, there was that quiet snobbery. “You stay in your place and we’ll leave you alone.” It started in the lower grades and you learned to work around it. (Mattern, 2003: 64)

As the Nisei grew up, sharp contrasts began to show between them and the Issei. The Nisei felt that they were true Americans and deserved to be treated as such. They formed organisations during the 1930s such as the American Loyalty League and a very important organisation, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), was formed in Seattle in 1930 to fight racism and unjust laws. One of the early leaders, James
Sakamoto, said the *Nisei* should not think of themselves as Japanese or as Japanese Americans but as Americans and encouraged them to be patriotic:

> Only if the second generation as a whole works to inculcate in all its members the true spirit of American patriotism can the group escape the unhappy fate of being a clan apart from the rest of American life. Instead of worrying about anti-Japanese activity or legislation, we must exert our efforts to building the abilities and character of the second generation so they will become loyal and useful citizens who, some day, will make their contributions to the greatness of American life. (Mattern, 2003: 68)

Between 1930 and 1940, the JACL grew from eight to fifty chapters with 5,600 paying members.

### 2.9 The impact of Japanese foreign relations

Part of the reason that the *Nisei*, despite being American citizens, still faced harsh exclusionary measures and hurtful racism was due to the negative image that Japan presented to the rest of the world. After the 1924 Act halted Japanese immigration into America, the Japanese government was forced to look elsewhere to enable both the need for a solution to their surplus population as well as their expansionist, imperialist desires. After the closure of the promising avenues of Hawaii and America, this prompted many Japanese to believe that Japan’s future lay in an East Asian empire instead. Colonel Hashimoto Kingoro drafted an essay in the mid-1930s in which he wrote:

> there are only 3 ways left for Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. . . namely emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. . . It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door. (Totman, 2000: 384)

That remaining door led to the forced expansion into Asia. By the 1930s roughly three million Japanese had emigrated abroad. Although that number was much less than the empire builders would have liked and paled by comparison to the numbers of the British diaspora for example, it was still a substantial measure of the difficulties faced by the Japanese in their homeland. Expansion into the poorly protected neighbouring countries seemed to be the obvious solution. During the decades leading
up to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America’s entry into World War II, there were several key events that had a significant impact upon the relationship Japan had with the rest of the world and especially the United States.

Bolstered by their success in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, Japan launched a diplomatic offensive against China in 1915 when Foreign Minister Kato Takaaki presented an outrageous set of demands to the Chinese President that included the employment of Japanese political, financial and military advisers. Historian Richard Storry described it as “an opportunistic and maladroit attempt by Japan to bring China under her supervision, if not control.” (1976: 151) Interestingly, the most negative response came not from Britain but from America:

> There was already some anti-Japanese sentiment in California, where certain politicians had played on racial prejudice to inflame public feeling against Japanese immigration. . . . The unfortunate Twenty-One Demands were a turning point in American-Japanese relations. After 1915 Japan never recovered, in the eyes of the American people, the moral prestige – so high in 1905 – that was lost at that time. (Storry, 1976: 153)

Not only did Japan’s actions engender fear and hatred of them in the Chinese people but they also aroused great suspicion and inflamed already-present feelings of prejudice in the American people.

There was a strong anti-Oriental immigration sentiment in the U.S., Canada and Australia where talk of the ‘yellow peril’ or the ‘yellow menace’ was especially popular. In 1919, Japan’s image in the West declined further after the birth of the Korean independent movement. The violent Japanese suppression of the various uprisings (recent Korean studies suggest 7,500 dead and 16,000 wounded (Takafusa, 1998: 23)) was reported to the rest of the world by Western missionaries resident in Korea and this aroused further anger towards Japan. Conversely, during the 1920s, Japan fell under the spell of Western popular culture, especially literature, film and jazz. Romanticism and humanism, inspired by artists such as Rodin and Renoir and writers such as Tolstoy, enjoyed great popularity and publishing houses competed to mass-produce cheap collections of Japanese and world literature. The popularity of the naturalist school established the precedents for the style of writing known, after 1920, as the ‘I-Novel,’ an experimental, quasi-autobiographical type of confessional prose. So despite the fact that anti-Japanese sentiment was gathering momentum in the West, the
influence of the ideals of the Americans and the Europeans made the idea of migrating and starting afresh in a country that espoused freedom of ideas and creativity the likes of which Japan had never experienced was extremely tempting for the younger generations.

The Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 were major events that impacted greatly on Japanese relations with the West. In Manchuria, the Japanese army leaders were eager to adopt a firm stance and even as Japanese representatives in the League of Nations assured the world that their aggressive advancement through Manchuria was a temporary military measure, the Chinese provisional capital was bombed. This blatant contrast of delivered prose and violent conflict led the world to believe that the cabinet in Tokyo practised deceit and lies. As Manchuria fell to the occupying forces, there was a surge in nationalist emotion in Japan fanned, strangely enough, by world disapproval that was symbolised by the hardened stance of the League of Nations. When Shanghai was bombed and the last Chinese Emperor, Pu Yi, was installed as chief executive of the new state of Manchukuo (Manchuria). When their actions were condemned by the League of Nations, Japan responded by storming out.

It appeared that Japan was steadily retreating into a state of isolation. In August 1937 fighting broke out again in Shanghai. In less than three months the Japanese prevailed and, by December 1937, they had reached the outskirts of Nanjing, a city whose population had swelled to over 1 million inhabitants, consisting mostly of refugees trying to flee the advancing Japanese troops. On the 13th December, in a show of brute strength, Nanjing was taken in one day but it was the following six weeks that were to stun and horrify the world. The troops moved through the city mercilessly torturing, beating, raping and murdering the Chinese citizens, troops, women, and children alike. In the weeks between December 1937 and March 1938 it is estimated that at least 360,000 were killed and over 80,000 women were raped, many of whom were brutally murdered afterwards. (Yin and Young, 1997) The worldwide reaction to this infamous period, also known as the Rape of Nanjing, was disbelief and shock and constituted possibly the most important factor in the disintegration of U.S.-Japanese relations before the war. The imperialist, nationalist and vicious actions of the Japanese Army, along with the seemingly cunning, deceptive and depraved government, fuelled
the fire of anti-Japanese sentiment and served as justification for the call to halt to spread the ‘yellow peril’ by any means necessary.

2.10 The spreading “yellow peril”

The (irrational) fear of Oriental conquest was referred to as the fear of the ‘yellow peril’, a term coined by German Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1895. In 1915, the Hearst newspapers, historically hostile to Japanese, resurrected and intensified it’s ‘yellow peril’ campaign with sensational headlines and editorials, fuelling the anti-Japanese sentiment. The number of Asians immigrating into America had ceased after 1924 and even though their numbers were insignificant compared to European migration, no such phraseology existed for the ‘hordes of conquering Europeans.’ Their acceptance was exemplified by the lyrics of the song “Ballad for Americans” which was popular during the war.


The Japanese are conspicuously absent from this list, due in part to their tiny population. By 1941 there were roughly 127,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living in the western states of America, 113,000 of whom lived in California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona. Approximately 47,000 were Issei ineligible for citizenship, 80,000 were Nisei (a small proportion of whom were Kibei) and there were also a few Sansei, or third generation. (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 1) In mid-1941, all Japanese assets in the United States were frozen and there was already discussion of the forced detention in Hawaii of some of the alien Japanese. In early December, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. Army Intelligence drafted a report stating that “widespread sabotage by Japanese is not expected. . . identification of dangerous Japanese on the West Coast is reasonably complete.” (Daniels, 1982: 249) As action had not yet been taken against the “dangerous Japanese” before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the hysteria and public pressure built to such an extreme that all Japanese were considered dangerous and the findings of the report were quickly forgotten. The fear of the ‘yellow peril’ was fuelled by rumours of possible Japanese fifth column activities, rumours that were ‘actualised’ by the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor.
2.11 The attack on Pearl Harbor

At 07:55 local time on Sunday, 7th December 1941, Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field, Ewa Field, Wheeler Field, Schofield Barracks and Fort Kamehameha, all situated on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. The bulk of the American Pacific Fleet was anchored at Pearl Harbor that morning when, out of the western skies, formations of fighters and bombers belonging to the Imperial Army swooped down and destroyed the U.S. airfields and planes while torpedo bombers simultaneously launched a furious assault on the warships. In less than two hours, two waves of Japanese planes decimated America’s pacific fleet. Three battleships and 162 aircrafts were destroyed and thirteen other ships suffered serious damage. By the end of the surprise attack, 2,403 U.S. Armed Services personnel were dead and 1,178 injured. The Japanese Imperial Army only suffered 129 fatalities and one prisoner. (Slackman, 1990: 308-309) It was a significant turning point in the history of the world, marked by the entrance of the United States into World War II on the following day.

While the attack on Pearl Harbor was a devastating shock to America, it was much more so for the Americans of Japanese ancestry. For months beforehand, the Nisei realised that the tension between the United States and Japan signalled an inevitable clash and many tried to prove their loyalty to America by disparaging the ‘Japaneseness’ of the Issei which exacerbated the tension that existed between them. Nisei newspaper editor Togo Tanaka, for example, declared that true loyalty could only come from the Nisei, as the Issei were “more or less tumbleweeds with one foot in America and one foot in Japan.” (Daniels, 1982: 247) On the day of the attack, the JACL president Saburo Kido sent a telegram to President Roosevelt to pledge the support of the Japanese community. It read in part:

In this solemn hour we pledge our fullest cooperation to you, Mr. President, and to our country... now that Japan has instituted this attack upon our land, we are ready and prepared to expend every effort to repel this invasion together with our fellow Americans. (Hosokawa, 2002: 225)

The media, already guilty of assisting in the spread of false rumours of sabotage and scare-tactics,28 went into overdrive after the attacks and especially after Roosevelt’s ‘day of infamy’ speech to Congress on the 8th December 1941. (See Appendix One) Everyday for the next few months, the main newspapers on the Pacific Coast spewed forth racial vilification, employed racist language and printed obscene letters about the
now-indistinguishable Japanese and the Japanese Americans. Both groups were
discriminately referred to as ‘Japs’, ‘Nips’, ‘mad dogs’ and ‘yellow vermin’ and,
especially in a time of crisis that predated the advent of television, the population relied
heavily upon newspapers as a source of information and expected journalistic
integrity. Numerous studies have shown that many newspapers served instead as a
vehicle to spread false rumours and offensive public opinion. Indeed Walter
Lippmann, possibly the most influential American journalist at the time, wrote of the
‘imminent danger’ on the west coast and, in an article on the 20th February, contended
that the fact that the Issei and Nisei had not committed any acts of sabotage was actually
a sign of their disloyalty as it signalled a forthcoming attack; it was a “sign that the blow
is well organized and that it is held back until it can be struck with maximum effect.”
(Hosokawa, 2002: 278) As historian Page Smith pointed out, it was the combination of
the reports from the Pacific Theatre and the “barrage of hostile journalistic commentary
[that] helped to swing the tide of public opinion toward some form of evacuation.”
(1995: 119)

2.12 The push towards mass evacuations

While distinctions were made between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Germans and Italians,
such distinctions were not made of the Japanese; the homogeneity of the Japanese race
made them easy targets and scapegoats. “The evil deeds of Hitler’s Germany were the
deeds of bad men; the evil deeds of Tojo and Hirohito’s Japan were the deeds of a bad
race.” (Daniels, 1982: 254) President Roosevelt condemned such generalised racism
against the Japanese population when he called on Americans to remember what they
were fighting for and not to allow the evil seed of prejudice infiltrate their country:

> It is one thing to safeguard American industry, and particularly
> the defense industry, against sabotage; but it is very much
> another to throw out of work honest and loyal people who,
> except for the accident of birth, are sincerely patriotic. . . .
> Remember the Nazi technique: ‘Pit race against race, religion
> against religion, prejudice against prejudice. Divide and
> conquer.’ We must not let that happen here. We must not
> forget what we are defending: liberty, decency, justice. (Smith,
> 1995: 100)

These words, spoken in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, provided a temporary
sense of relief for the Japanese community but quickly became meaningless when the
Department of Justice, working with the FBI and the local police force, began to round
up those suspected of subversive activities, mostly Issei who were leaders of various
Japanese organisations and religious groups. Taking away all the leaders inevitably led to confusion and distress and the breakdown of the social order of the Japanese community.

Five days after Pearl Harbor 1,370 Japanese had been rounded up on the west coast. (Smith, 1995: 95) The arrests multiplied and two months later nearly 2,200 had been placed under arrest. (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 5) ‘Japanese individuals’ were prohibited to travel by plane, bus, train or vessel, the Canadian and Mexican borders were closed off to them and the Treasury Department froze all assets, credits and businesses owned by enemy aliens. Many Japanese destroyed or hid any possessions that could signify strong affiliations with Japan; mainly family heirlooms such samurai swords, kimono, artwork and books. Nisei Frank Chuman remembered one sad day in Los Angeles:

My father went to a dresser in his bedroom where he kept two samurai swords. . . . family treasures which had been handed down to him. His ancestors had been samurai, warriors of the Satsuma clan. . . . My father removed the swords from the beautiful inlaid cases and he and I took them out into the back yard. There he thrust both blades, bare and glistening, deep into the ground and we buried them. I was sad and disconsolate. . . . It was as though a tangible cultural tie with Japan was being severed. (Hosokawa, 2002: 233)

Contrary to their expectations, the Nisei were not differentiated on grounds of citizenship – they were referred to as descendents of the Japanese enemy rather than American citizens and were therefore subject to the same exclusionary and radical actions. They were fired from their jobs, lost their businesses, evicted from their homes and refused various goods and services. They were placed under strict curfew that required them to remain at home between 9pm and 6am and during the day they were only permitted to be at work, at home, or travelling between the two. If they disobeyed, they would be “subject to immediate apprehension and internment.” (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 7)

The Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox made some terribly disingenuous remarks of the ‘Japanese situation’ that added fuel to the rising fear and hostility towards the Japanese. Returning to a press conference on the 15th December 1941 after he inspected the damage at Pearl Harbor, he spoke of the treachery in Hawaii and insisted it was caused by “the most effective fifth column work that’s come out of this
war, except in Norway.” (Daniels, 1982: 255) But the truly crucial and mendacious statements came from Lieutenant General John Lesesne DeWitt, commander of the Western Defense Command and the 4th Army, stationed in San Francisco. The first proposal by the army for any large-scale internment of the Japanese was mentioned at a DeWitt staff conference on the 10th December 1941. DeWitt was soon in touch with the Army’s Provost Marshal General, Allen W. Gullion, who would play a key role in the internment. DeWitt advised that the military “does not have jurisdiction to participate in the arrest and temporary holding of civilians who are citizens of the United States.” However, he indicated that if federal troops were in control, as was the case under martial law in Hawaii, then they would have jurisdiction. (Daniels, 1982: 259) When the Chief of Staff George C. Marshall declared the Pacific Coast region a “Theater of Operations” on 11th December 1941, this gave DeWitt the opportunity to designate the area a war zone, thus giving the Army the legal right to place American citizens under military control.

Historian Roger Daniels describes DeWitt as ‘blowing hot and cold’. When asked to recommend a mass roundup of Japanese, DeWitt initially replied:

I’m very doubtful that it would be common sense procedure to try and intern 117,000 Japanese in this theater. . . . An American citizen, after all, is an American citizen. And while they all may not be loyal, I think we can weed the disloyal out of the loyal and lock them up if necessary. (1982: 259)

DeWitt resisted calls for mass evacuation at first as he did not want to alienate the loyal Japanese who had support from such high ranking officials as J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI. However, he began to waver in his belief that the disloyal could be weeded out and, as his doubts grew, he clashed with his adversary Attorney General Francis Biddle who was an outspoken opponent of any plans for mass evacuations. When Biddle argued that the evacuation of American citizens was unconstitutional and that “if such a policy was to be pursued it must be under the color of military necessity and must be carried out by the military” (Smith, 1995: 111), the feeling that the evacuation was racially-motivated was confirmed in the minds of Japanese Americans when DeWitt, in 1943 after all Japanese had been evacuated, was quoted in the press as stating before the House Committee on Naval Affairs in San Francisco:

The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted. . . . A Jap’s a Jap. They are a
dangerous element... There is no way to determine their loyalty... It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen; theoretically he is still a Japanese, and you can’t change him... You can’t change him by giving him a piece of paper... I don’t want any of them.36

While Biddle felt that the proposed evacuation was not a military necessity and refused to approve of it on behalf of the Department of Justice, DeWitt’s use of the phrase ‘military necessity’ was how the government was able to circumnavigate the questionable constitutionality of their actions. Initially, alternatives to mass evacuations were considered but were cancelled due to logistical unfeasibility and the potential for the disintegration of thousands of families (which occurred anyway). DeWitt also proposed the evacuation of certain Italians and Germans but this proposal was extremely unpopular.37 Not only were the populations of Italians and Germans much larger than that of the Japanese but there were also a number of politically powerful men (the mayor of New York, for example) and popular figures (such as Joe DiMaggio) of Italian extraction whose internment would have caused a public uproar. In fact, Joe DiMaggio’s father, an Italian non-citizen, was often cited as an example of a man that America would not want to see evacuated and interned. So the potential public outcry was kept to a dull murmur by restricting the evacuation to the Japanese population.

2.13 Executive Order 9066

In early February 1942, Biddle pushed for a press release that stated in part that the “Department of War and the Department of Justice are in agreement that the present military situation does not at this time require the removal of American citizens of Japanese race.” (Smith, 1995: 115) It was never released however and DeWitt’s ‘Brief Estimate of the Situation’ dated the 14th February 1942 was the last step before the internment orders. He argued that all Americans of Japanese descent were potential enemies of the United States, regardless of citizenship. By the time Biddle sent a memo to the President on the 17th February which summarised the situation and asked for more time for further consideration (see Appendix Two), it was already too late. Executive Order 9066 was issued on the 19th February 1942 (see Appendix Three) and it set in motion what the American Civil Liberties Union called “the greatest deprivation of civil liberties in this country since slavery.” (Fleming, 2001: 110)

The following day, Secretary of War Stimson sent DeWitt a letter confirming his authority, requesting that he not disturb those of Italian ancestry “except where they are,
in your judgement, undesirables or constitute a definite danger to the performance of your mission.” (Smith, 1995: 128) It is interesting to note here that the Italians were the main rivals to the Japanese in the agricultural industry and to intern them as well would have created a serious food shortage. Assistant Secretary of War McCloy also wrote to DeWitt, stressing the importance of protecting the property of the evacuees but was vague and unrealistic on how to do so. In fact, at a Cabinet meeting on the 27th February, Stimson confessed to Roosevelt that many issues were still alarmingly vague and confusing. Stimson’s own notes after the meeting read:

There was general confusion around the table arising from the fact that nobody had realised how big it was, nobody wanted to take care of the evacuees, and the general weight and complication of the project. (Hosokawa, 2002: 337)

The non-evacuation of Americans of German and Italian extraction was clearly supported by San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi during the Tolan Committee hearings which began on the 21st February. These hearings were held ostensibly to investigate the necessity of the evacuations but were “more of a justification for the evacuation than an investigation into whether or not it was necessary.” (Zelko, 1992: 59) Many Japanese Americans, especially the Nisei, saw the hearings as their last ray of hope against mass evacuation but they were quickly disappointed. Even though the committee interviewed men like JACL representative Mike Masaoka and expressed surprise to learn that he spoke English so well, that he could neither read, write nor speak Japanese, that he never attended a Japanese school, had never been to Japan and was a practising Mormon, it did not sway their determination to vilify an entire race in order to provide a scapegoat for the huge tragedy at Pearl Harbor. The Tolan Committee hearings continued for a month but were only half complete when, on the 2nd March, DeWitt issued Public Proclamation Number One ordering the first voluntary evacuation.

Those residing in the prohibited zones (of which there were 135, including the area by the San Francisco waterfront, near all airports, dams, power plants, harbours, military installations and so on) were asked to voluntarily resettle outside these zones; where they went and how they got there was up to the evacuees. However, the Japanese were extremely reluctant to evacuate voluntarily. The threat of hostility and violence in other communities, especially inland from the west coast where they were encouraged to go, as well as the insecurity of their family’s future and the lack of housing and
employment did not encourage them to leave their homes and businesses. Many felt that if an evacuation were to occur, then at least the government would then be in charge of their safety and would be forced to provide for them. A voluntary evacuation led to a very uncertain immediate future.

The reaction of the Nisei, in particular the JACL which, by definition, was closed to the Issei, to Public Proclamation Number One contributed to the tension between the two generations. The Niseis’ determination to prove their loyalty to America often served to undermine the loyalty of the Issei and because they denigrating their beliefs, the Issei gave some JACLers the nickname inu, meaning ‘dog’. Some members of the JACL cooperated with the FBI by providing private information about the Issei which, to a notoriously private group of people who were firm in their beliefs that elders should at all times and in all situations be treated with the utmost of respect, was quite a shock to the Issei. They were forced to rely on the kindness of Caucasian friends and Nisei relatives and friends to provide them with food and the simplest necessities as their accounts had been frozen. This reversed the normal and accepted Japanese family structure in which the father was the provider for the family, not the sons and daughters. The family structure played an extremely important part in the Japanese psyche and the Issei brought this, along with the reverence for elders and other beliefs, to America and instilled it in their children. The internment left the Japanese family structure in complete disarray throughout the entire community, so many Issei and Nisei were understandably upset when the national president of the JACL, Saburo Kido, publicly accepted the evacuation orders and said:

we are going into exile as our duty to this country because the President and the military commander of this area have deemed it a necessity. We are gladly cooperating because this is one way of showing that our protestations of loyalty are sincere. (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 21)

2.14 Evacuation

Finally the decision was made for a controlled, compulsory mass evacuation. For some, it was almost a relief as they believed their immediate safety and well-being would be taken care of by the government. They thought that the uncertainty and confusion of the voluntary evacuations were over. Forced evacuation was accomplished through a series of Civilian Exclusion Orders that were posted on notice boards in communities on the western seaboard detailing the impending evacuation of all
residents of Japanese descent within certain areas. The heads of families had to report to ‘control stations’ to register the names of all family members to receive their new ‘identities’ in the form of serial numbers and tags for their baggage and children:

![Image of identification pass](image)

_Courtesy of the Manzanar Historic Society_

They were only given a few days to liquidate all property and possessions as they could only take what they could carry by hand. They were forced to sell their homes, businesses, land, vehicles and so on at unfair and ludicrous prices to the opportunistic people who came to profit from their situation.41 Author Jeanne Wakatsuki’s mother was so outraged when a dealer offered her $17 for her china set worth several hundred dollars that she smashed it to pieces in front of him. These stories were not uncommon during a time when junkmen and thieves profited from misfortune. (Smith, 1995: 132)

On the 11th March, DeWitt created the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) to handle all matters relating to the evacuation. In an attempt to protect the evacuees from unfair sales, the Federal Reserve Bank and the Farm Security Administration were given the task of protecting the property of the evacuees and were given authority to ‘freeze’ transactions. Evacuees were told:

> no Japanese need sacrifice any personal property of value. If he cannot dispose of it at a fair price, he will have opportunity to store it prior to the time he is forced to evacuate by Exclusion Order. Persons who attempt to take advantage of Japanese evacuees by trying to obtain property at sacrifice prices are un-American, unfair, and are deserving only of the severest censure. (Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 15)42

However, nearly all of the property stored was either vandalized or stolen by 1945. The Federal Reserve Bank never used the safeguard of ‘freezing’ transactions (The Farm Security Administration only used it once) and of the nearly 2,000 vehicles they stored on behalf of the evacuees, all were confiscated by the army within one year in the ‘nation’s best interest.’
The mismanagement of the property of the evacuees was a fairly small issue when compared to the titanic obstacle that faced Roosevelt: Where would all the evacuees go? The decision was made to build ten new ‘cities’ to house them, in some instances, for the duration of the war. Roosevelt quickly issued Executive Order 9102 to establish a civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), to oversee and organise the evacuation, internment, relocation and resettlement of the Japanese Americans. The agency was directed by Milton Eisenhower, younger brother of Dwight, who took charge of the massive task of sorting the 120,000 Japanese Americans into one of fifteen assembly centres first and then into their more permanent ‘relocation centers’ or internment camps. After they had been registered and ‘tagged’ evacuees were then herded onto buses and trains in groups of 500 or so. They did not know where they were going and they struggled with their heavy bags and distressed children. One man remembered later that at the entrance to Tanforan the troops surrounded the evacuees with their fixed bayonets pointed at them and, “overwhelmed with bitterness and blind with rage, I screamed every obscenity I knew at the armed guards, daring them to shoot me.” (Hershey, 1988: 7) Some evacuees were sent directly to the internment camps that were near completion but the majority of evacuees were sent to assembly centers set up in fairgrounds or racetracks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSEMBLY CENTRE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>DATES OCCUPIED</th>
<th>HIGHEST POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayer</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>May 7 – June 2</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marysville</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 8 – June 29</td>
<td>2,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinas</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>April 27 – July 4</td>
<td>3,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turlock</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>April 30 – August 12</td>
<td>3,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>May 2 – September 10</td>
<td>3,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 10 – October 17</td>
<td>4,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 6 – September 15</td>
<td>4,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 6 – June 26</td>
<td>4,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinedale</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 7 – July 23</td>
<td>4,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulare</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>April 30 – September 4</td>
<td>4,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 6 – October 30</td>
<td>5,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomona</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 7 – August 24</td>
<td>5,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puyallup</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>April 28 – September 12</td>
<td>7,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanforan</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>April 28 – October 13</td>
<td>7,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Anita</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>May 7 – October 27</td>
<td>18,719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The dates of occupation of each assembly centre and their highest population

Some stayed in these centres for a few days, some for a few months. Although the conditions were terrible (in Santa Anita, for example, families lived in converted horse stalls) and the humiliation great (one evacuee remembered how Caucasian
children would line up at the gates of Puyallup to “look at the Japs” (Hosokawa, 2002: 333) as though they were animals in a zoo), there was a palpable fear of leaving not only because of the unknown landscape of the camps in the deserts but also because of the unknown hostility outside the centers. That was another factor in their stoic acceptance of their evacuation orders. In fact, they were so cooperative that Stimson commended them by stating, “great credit is due our Japanese population for the manner in which they responded to and complied with the orders for exclusion.” (Smith, 1995: 162) Between the 2nd March and the 31st October 1942, 117,116 persons were evacuated, of which 6,393 went directly into an internment camp. Of the total number evacuated, there were roughly 38,500 Issei and 72,000 were American citizens of whom only 22,400 were above 21 years of age. (Smith, 1995: 161)

In the assembly centers, schools, churches and recreational activities were established in an attempt to create some kind of normalcy. In fact, baseball was an incredibly important activity with teams quickly being created with names such as ‘Modesto Browns’ and ‘Turlock Senators’ and they carried on into the new camps. They had huge Fourth of July celebrations and thousands of people enjoyed, despite the obvious irony, their ‘Independence Day’. Smith correctly identified that “after the initial trauma of arrival, life in the centers settled into a pattern.” (1995: 200) This uneasy pattern was soon to be shattered once again, however, with another traumatic departure for their new homes in the internment camps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAMP</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>PREDICTED CAPACITY</th>
<th>HIGHEST POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Granada</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>7,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topaz</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>8,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohwer</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>8,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>8,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minidoka</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>9,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manzanar</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Mountain</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gila River</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>13,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poston</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>17,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tule Lake</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>18,789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The predicted capacity and the actual population of camps at their highest points.

All evacuees were moved into one of the camps over the course of six months. Most camps had not been finished and all were a depressing sight. They were located in extremely isolated, windswept parts of the country, surrounded by barbed wire and
guard towers. The structures typically shared a common plan based on a collection of one-storey, wood-framed, tar-papered buildings housing 200-300 people each. Each building was divided into sections called ‘blocks’, each block housed around fourteen barracks, each barrack divided into four or six ‘apartments’ which were either sixteen by twenty feet for a small family (of three people) or twenty by twenty-four feet for larger families. Each ‘apartment’ was furnished with a stove, a droplight, steel Army cots and mattresses – it was left up to the occupants to furnish it with spare lumber, arrange for privacy and make it more bearable. Each block had a dining hall, a recreational hall, latrines and a laundry room. For the very private and hygiene-conscious Japanese, it was very shameful and humiliating to have to share toilet facilities and became a recurring theme throughout their literature. The dining halls also had a huge impact as many internees referred to the breakdown of the family meal, a very important aspect of Japanese family life, as one of the most demoralising and damaging aspects of camp life.

While the plans for the camps were similar, they varied greatly in terrain and climate. The severe climate change was yet another challenge – for example, some of the older internees may have lived in the sunshine of California or Hawaii for forty years before the war and being forced to live in the freezing temperatures and snow in inadequately furnished camps without proper clothing or shoes was physically very difficult for them. The other climactic challenges were dust storms and the intense heat in camps like Poston:

Located in the Arizona desert and uncomfortably hot in the summer, Poston’s three units, officially Poston I, II, III, were commonly referred to as Poston, Toastin’, and Roastin’. (Smith, 1995: 243)

Again, in an attempt to maintain some form of dignity and normalcy, the occupants (encouraged by the WRA) turned their camps into functioning, nearly self-sufficient little cities. Robert Redfield, writing just twelve months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, noted the irony of the self-democratisation of the camps where the camps were a “strikingly un-American thing” yet it “may be added that we have done it in a
strikingly American way.” (1943: 153) He identified further irony in that “the evacuees who have been drawn in from states with absentee voting laws are encouraged to vote by mail in their home elections.” (1943: 154)

Farming took place in all the camps (some even grazing cattle) and all had at least one food processing plant. All had their own tofu-making operations and Manzanar made its own soy sauce. All had warehouses for vehicles and property, cold storage and dried foodstuffs. Cooperatives were the most common form of business enterprises in the camps and they ranged from small shoe repair stores to barbers to moderate sized department stores. They had hospitals, jails, schools, Christian churches, Buddhist temples, post offices, employment centres and so on. They made large sporting fields for the ever-popular baseball games and turned parts of the barren land into successful vegetable and fruit patches and created beautiful gardens. Each camp had their own newspaper which created a sense of solidarity and community in an otherwise extremely disruptive time which created an imagined community, a theory I explore further in the next chapter. They even had ‘outside’ field reporters; stories sent in by those who had been relocated to the east coast. As they had all the agencies and instrumentalities of any community (barring, of course, freedom), these camps really did become what Smith referred to as ‘cosmoses’.

2.15 Initial signs of an intergenerational disunity

In spite of these impressive feats, there existed an underlying current of dissatisfaction, anger, resentment and fear that built up and either exploded in violent riots or manifested itself in a more subtle yet equally damaging way through silence and repression which forced the gradual division between generations. There were big strikes in both Poston and Manzanar, the latter resulting in a violent riot between the pro-Japanese Kibei and the Nisei labelled as inu which resulted in the death of two internees, both shot by MPs stationed at Manzanar. The rift between the Issei and the Nisei was not as sensational as the riots but it clearly had long-term detrimental effects on their community.

When the camps were first established, the WRA encouraged the internees to create their own democratically elected councils which would oversee all the day-to-day issues in the camps. This was done quickly with a high proportion of Issei men on the councils. This was to be expected for a number of reasons – the majority of the Nisei
were still under twenty-one and the Issei men as elders were respected for their experience. However, Dillon Myer (who took over from Eisenhower as the director of the WRA) forbade any non-citizens from sitting on the council, thus ruling the Issei out. The authority of the Issei was completely undermined and, although steps were usually taken by the councils to ensure that their advice and consul were given due respect, it was still a humiliating act that forced the Issei into a position of political subservience to their Nisei children. Prior to the evacuation and internment most Issei felt strong loyalty to the United States even though they never denied their affiliation with Japan. However, the events leading up to and during the internment made them realise that the government of their adopted homeland would never treat them or their children as equal to Caucasians. Hence many of them began to believe that their loyalty should lie with Japan. The majority of the Nisei, however, did not feel the same way despite the fact that their citizenship had been completely violated. That factor, along with the dissolution of the family structure and power definitions within the Japanese community, exaggerated the rift between the Issei and the Nisei. On the 19th April 1943, Myer lifted the ban on Issei serving on the community councils, but much of the damage had already been done.

Myer’s plan for the internment camps was to eventually phase them out. He explained his anxiety to relocate the evacuees:

We recognized that loyalty could not flourish in an atmosphere of restriction and discriminatory segregation. Such wide and enforced deviation from normal cultural and living patterns might very well have lasting and unfavorable effects upon individuals, particularly children and young people. . . . [and] fostered suspicion of evacuee loyalties and added to their discouragement. (Hosokawa, 2002: 355)

He wanted to resettle the Japanese community across America (not on the west coast which was still out of bounds) but realised that his desire for a complete phasing-out was doomed due in part to the great fear the internees, especially the Issei, had of the outside world. Such fears were articulated by Nisei student Jobo Nakamura, who reluctantly decided to resettle:

doubt and fear disturb my mind. Would I be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire? . . . It means to tear myself away from a life of comparative ease and security to start life all over again. It makes me feel weary. I hope this will be the last time I have to move again. (Smith, 1995: 284-285)
To add further insult, those who were forced to return to the camps if their employment ended were forced to pay room and board in the camps! Little by little, however, offers of jobs – not just labouring jobs – began to filter in and both workers as well as students accepted into east coast universities began to leave the camps.

2.16 The controversial loyalty questionnaire

As early as July 1942 Myer began campaigning for the Nisei to be allowed to volunteer for an all-Nisei military unit. The Nisei Hawaiian National Guard Unit – the 100th Battalion – was already in special training in Wisconsin and the JACL backed his proposal as they thought it would indisputably prove their loyalty to America. The call for volunteers to join an all-Nisei unit to be combined with the 100th Battalion was issued and in order to determine loyalty and eligibility, the War Department collaborated with the WRA to form a questionnaire that would also determine if they should be allowed leave clearance. The now-infamous registration form ‘Application for Leave Clearance’ was handed out and was obligatory for all Issei and Nisei aged over seventeen years to complete. It proved to be a catalyst for great dissent, anger and violence within the camps, further widening certain divides. The intense difficulty of this question was summed up by the speaker of a Nisei group, the Citizen’s Congress, which conducted an open forum to debate the issue.

Although we have yellow skins, we too are Americans. We have an American upbringing. Therefore we believe in fair play. Our firm conviction is that we would be useless Americans if we did not assert our constitutional rights now; for unless our status as citizens is cleared and we are really fighting for the high ideals upon which our nation is based, how can we say to the white American buddies in the armed forces that we are fighting for the perpetuation of democracy, especially when our fathers, mothers and families are in concentration camps, even though they are not charged with any crime? (Smith, 1995: 296)

It was a very intrusive form with the most damage caused by Questions 27 and 28, ostensibly worded to determine loyalty. Shown below are the questions faced by the Nisei men; the women and the Issei were given slightly altered questions:

Q. 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

Q. 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any
form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

There were four possible responses: one could refuse to register at all; one could answer these two questions ‘no, no’ (those who did were later labelled ‘no-no boys’); one could answer ‘yes, yes’; or one could answer them ‘yes, yes’ with a condition attached such as the reinstatement of constitutional rights. In all, of the 77,842 persons required to register, 87% gave an unqualified ‘yes’ answer and 13% either refused to register or answered ‘no’ to both questions (a few months after the forms were issued over 2,000 more switched from ‘no’ to ‘yes’). (Ngai, 2004: 184 and Smith, 1995: 301-302) For the Issei, answering ‘yes’ to Question 28 would render them stateless as they were still ineligible for American citizenship. Further, expressing disloyalty to their homeland would indicate a lack of personal integrity. They were also worried that should their sons answer ‘yes’, they would be drafted into the army or at least separated from the rest of their family. They tried to influence the decisions made by their sons one way or the other and many of the Nisei who answered ‘no’ did so out of filial duty and will be discussed at greater length in Chapters Three and Seven. The complexity of the situation and the multifarious reasons for their varied responses will become clearer as I return to this issue a number of times throughout the thesis.

The questionnaire forced these difficult issues to the forefront during a very traumatic period in their lives and caused irreparable damage to many families. One immediate effect of the questionnaire was the relocation of those who answered ‘no, no’ (sometimes with their families) into Tule Lake51 which had been designated a ‘segregation center’ for disloyal Japanese. The stigma attached to being a resident of Tule Lake and, therefore being branded ‘disloyal’, was a stigma that was felt for several decades after the end of the war.52

For those evacuees whose natural bent was subtlety and indirection, intense reserve, and family and ‘clan’ loyalty, the experience was especially painful and in many instances inflicted wounds that would never heal. The carefully maintained façade that, in the main, had concealed the depth and degree of conflict among the Japanese themselves was permanently shattered. (Smith, 1995: 307)

The WRA had hoped for 3,600 volunteers. They got 1,200.
2.17 Reintroduction of the draft

President Roosevelt drafted a letter to Stimson applauding the decision to form a Nisei combat team. The letter was edited by Elmer Davis, head of the Office of War Information and sympathiser to the predicament of the Nisei, to include the oft-quoted passage:

No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy. . . . I am glad to observe that [there is a collaboration of] a program which will insure the opportunity for all loyal Americans, including Americans of Japanese ancestry, to serve their country. . . (Hosokawa, 2002: 366)

On the 20th January 1944 Stimson announced that the Nisei in the camps would be subject to the Draft. A great wave of anger and frustration rose in the camps. Petitions were sent to Myer, Stimson and Roosevelt which listed demands of guaranteed financial security for their families, reinstatement of their voting rights, equal wages and conditions, equal opportunity for advancement and employment, freedom to travel to the west coast during their leave, the right to entry into mixed units and an assurance that the government would take steps to “protect any and all minorities against the possibility of future mass exclusion and evacuation.” (Smith, 1995: 338) JACL leaders travelled between the camps trying to persuade the Nisei to comply with induction. The relationship between the JACL and the WRA represented to many Nisei a betrayal of their rights as American citizens. As academic Raymond Okamura phrased it, the alliance between JACL leader Mike Masaoka and Myer “was an attempt by the colonized to assume the identity of the colonizer . . . and represented the classic symbiosis of jailer and trustee.” (1986-87, 159) When the JACL told one Nisei he had to fulfil his obligations to his government, he replied:

Look, the government took my father away, and interned him someplace. My mother is alone at the Granada camp with my younger sister who is only fourteen. If the government would take care of them here in America, I’d feel like going out to fight for my country, but the country is treating me worse than shit! (Smith, 1995: 339-340)
His response was characteristic of the sentiment of many Nisei and the JACL encountered great hostility. There were many Nisei who resisted the draft and defied the stereotype that they were a quiet and meek generation. 315 Nisei men refused induction and used the opportunity to protest the unconstitutionality of their internment. They demanded that their citizenship status be restored before they would comply with draft orders. 263 men were convicted and sentenced to at least three years in a federal prison. (Ngai, 2004: 185) However, once the inevitability of the Draft was accepted, the general feeling in the camps began to change. As Smith pointed out, the “warrior image was so powerful in the Japanese psyche that even an American uniform stirred strong emotions.” (1995, 340) By the end of the Draft in December 1945, 25,778 Japanese Americans were inducted in the armed forces; 13,500 from the continental United States and 12,250 from the Hawaiian Islands.

2.18 The unique case of Hawaii and their reaction to Pearl Harbor

The figures of those in the armed forces from the continent and the islands are similar, yet the experiences of the Japanese Americans in the two areas were vastly different. Of the approximately 127,000 Japanese living in the western states of continental America, all were either evacuated and interned or were forced to resettle in interior or eastern states. In stark contrast, of the approximately 158,000 Japanese living in the Hawaiian Islands, only approximately 1,700, just over 1%, were sent to the internment camps on the mainland. The experiences of the Japanese in Hawaii after the attacks on Pearl Harbor were so different to those on the mainland that it is worth dedicating a section of this chapter to how and why that was the case so that the literary archive can be examined with an understanding of their significantly different histories.

I would like to recall the population statistics of the Japanese on the mainland and in Hawaii as they were very important factors in the decision of evacuation, internment and relocation. Table 5 shows that there were about 30,000 more Japanese living in the Hawaiian Islands than on the entire mainland:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAINLAND</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>2,039</td>
<td>24,326</td>
<td>72,157</td>
<td>111,010</td>
<td>138,834</td>
<td>126,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAWAII</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>12,610</td>
<td>61,111</td>
<td>79,675</td>
<td>109,274</td>
<td>139,631</td>
<td>157,905</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The numbers of Japanese immigrants on the mainland compared to Hawaii.
That in itself may not seem significant until the population percentages are examined. The 126,947 Japanese living on the mainland in 1940 made up only 0.09% of the entire population on the mainland. Contrastingly, the 157,905 Japanese living in the Hawaiian Islands made up 37.3% of the population of Hawaii, making them the single largest racial group (the second largest was the Caucasians, making up 24.5%). (National Archives, RG 210) Their large population and their importance to the economic stability to Hawaii would play a crucial role in the decision of whether or not to intern them, a decision I discuss in Chapter Three. But another reason why the Japanese Hawaiians were not persecuted to the same extent as the Japanese Americans may lie in their immediate response to Pearl Harbor.

Six months before the attack, thousands of Nisei rallied to demonstrate their support and loyalty to Hawaii and Dr Shunzo Sakamaki, chairman of the Oahu Citizens Committee for Home Defense, said:

> We want to carry our full share of the burden of national defense, and tonight we wish to think together how best we may serve our country, to determine what definite steps we can take to uphold and preserve those democratic traditions which represent our nation at its best. We are met tonight also to re-pledge, one with another, our unreserved loyalty to the United States. We do this freely, gladly, proudly. (Hosokawa, 2002: 463)

Immediately after the attack, thousands of Nisei volunteered in emergency medical units and the University of Hawaii R.O.T.C. Battalion (mostly Nisei) was converted into the Hawaii Territorial Guard (HTG) and deployed into the hills to oppose the rumoured attacking Japanese forces. Even those who could not fight, such as the elderly Issei, stood in line for hours to donate blood. However, after the initial danger was over, some white Americans swept up in the fear, confusion and panic looked at their Japanese neighbours with apprehension and anger. The antagonism towards them in Hawaii existed more as a rumbling undercurrent than the publicly and state sanctioned hostility that existed on the mainland. Those Japanese suspected of subversive activities were detained hours after the attack and there were calls for drastic action to be taken against the huge Japanese population in Hawaii.

On the 19th January 1942 the War Department ordered the Nisei members of the Hawaiian National Guard and the HTG be disarmed and relieved of their duties. Although discouraged by their inability to aid the war effort, a Chinese Hawaiian named
Hung Wai Ching who had established the Committee for Interracial Unity in December 1940 to prepare the Hawaiian community for the possibility of war with Japan, convinced the Nisei to petition the Hawaiian Military Governor General Delos C. Emmons to permit them to serve as a labour force. Their petition was accepted and they formed the Varsity Victory Volunteers (VVV) and performed essential defence work from February 1942. Meanwhile, Roosevelt considered transporting all the Japanese onto the island of Molokai, the former leper colony, and were it not for the efforts of a few brave men such as Emmons to persuade the President otherwise, the situation of the Japanese in Hawaii may have been very different indeed. The Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, sent a memo to Roosevelt on the 23rd February 1942, stating the Japanese Hawaiians ought to be removed:

> for the sake of the security of that most important outpost of American defense. . . . I have in my files a long letter from General Emmons arguing against any such wholesale movement of Japanese. . . . Have you any suggestions to make on this matter. (Chinen and Hiura, 1997: 54)

Roosevelt replied in a memo three days later:

> Like you, I have long felt that most of the Japanese should be removed from Oahu to one of the other islands. This involves much planning, much temporary construction and careful supervision of them when they get to the new location. I do not worry about the constitutional question – first, because of my recent order [9066] and, second, because Hawaii is under martial law. The whole matter is one of immediate and present war emergency. I think you and Stimson can go ahead and do it as a military project. Ask the Director of the Budget how we can finance it. (Office of the Chief of Military History, File 244)

Emmons was thoroughly convinced of the loyalty of the Japanese in Hawaii and consistently resisted the calls for mass internment. Robert L. Shivers, the FBI agent responsible for determining which individuals were to be detained, as well as chief intelligence officer Fielder, both supported Emmons by resisting the pressure for internment also. If only DeWitt had been as strong as these men were to stick to their convictions that the Japanese were, in fact, loyal Americans, the situation for the mainlanders may have been very different indeed.

The Niseis significant contribution to the war effort was also recognised and, as such, thanks again to the efforts of Hung Wai Ching, they were able to re-volunteer and create a new all-Nisei combat team, based on the success of the 100th Battalion. When
the War Department called for 1,500 volunteers for the new 442nd, 10,000 men rushed to enlist. This was in stark contrast to the 1,200 volunteers from the camps. The eagerness of the Japanese Hawaiians to fight for their country was not just to prove their loyalty but also because they were, for the most part, not hampered by the incredibly difficult and divisive situation faced by the Japanese on the mainland. 99% of the Japanese population in Hawaii were not interned and therefore were not traumatised by the loss of freedom and dignity of life in an internment camp, the consequences of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Notes
1 On the 19th June 1982 a young draftsman named Vincent Chin was attending his own bachelor party in a suburban Detroit strip club. An altercation ensued when Ronald Ebens, a white autoworker, yelled to Chin “It's because of you little motherf*\*ers that we're out of work!” Ebens' stepson, Michael Nitz, who had recently lost his job at another Detroit autoplant, joined in but the fight was broken up. Twenty minutes later Ebens and Nitz caught up with Chin in front of the local McDonalds and proceeded to beat his skull in with the baseball bat they had retrieved from their car. He murmured “It’s not fair” to a friend before he slipped into a coma and four days later – five days before his wedding – he died. Ebens and Nitz had presumed that Chin, a 27-year-old Chinese American, was Japanese whom they blamed for the ailing auto industry. The beating was emblematic of both the ignorance and the hatred of Asians in America at a time of economic difficulties but it was the subsequent trial and verdict that once again challenged Asian Americans’ faith in the American system. Ebens and Nitz pleaded guilty to manslaughter. For this, they each received a sentence of three years probation and a $3,000 fine - a sentence that outraged the Asian communities in America. Judge Kaufman, who handed down the ruling, defended his verdict saying of Ebens, stating, “We’re talking here about a man who’s held a responsible job with the same company for 17 or 18 years and his son, who is employed and a part time student. These men are not going to go out and harm somebody else. I just didn’t think that putting them in prison would do any good for them or society.” ([http://us_asians.tripod.com/articles-vincentchin.html](http://us_asians.tripod.com/articles-vincentchin.html) Date accessed: 19/03/2004) Two weeks later, the American Citizens for Justice (ACJ) was formed to pursue justice for Chin but faced defeat at every turn. As they pointed out, the punishment for killing a dog in Detroit was 30 days in jail – yet the premeditated murder of Vincent Chin went virtually unpunished. 2 A phrase coined by Montrose which refers to the way in which all texts are culturally specific and socially embedded.
3 The Tokugawa period was 1600-1868 and is also referred to as the Edo period. Edo was the name for Tokyo where the seat of the military governments, or bakufu, was situated, controlled by the ruling shogunate (the system of government of the feudal military dictatorship) Tokugawa family. This period is also occasionally referred to as the kinsei era, meaning ‘recent times.’
4 The 1633 decree not only forbade Japanese to leave her territories, it also forbade Portuguese to land in Japan, banned Christianity and restricted the Dutch and Chinese residents to specific locations; the Dutch were only allowed within Nagasaki. No general policy had at this stage been articulated with regards to other foreigners in any specific detail.
5 Between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Kuroshio, or Black Current, swept many helpless Japanese sailors eastwards from Japan to dump them on the Hawaiian archipelago. The first recorded Japanese sailor in Hawaii was in 1804 when Tsudayu and three other men were shipwrecked and picked up by a Russian ship who took ashore. Tsudayu returned to Japan and wrote about his experiences in Hawaii. More famous is the story of Manjiro, better known by his Anglicised name John Mung, who was also able to return to Japan after being shipwrecked in Hawaii in 1841. He was educated in America and, upon his return to Japan, argued that Japan would benefit greatly from an exposure to American knowledge and skills. (Ogawa, 1980: 2-3)
6 The ‘General Convention of Peace and Amity’ opened the two ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to foreign vessels in need of provisions and a safe haven; it assured the safety and fair treatment of shipwrecked sailors; it also granted the Americans a priori any and all concessions that other nations might secure in the future, thus granting the United States the ‘most-favoured-nation’ status.
7 He was the grandfather of U.S. senator Daniel K. Inouye whose tremendous achievements will be discussed in the next chapter.
In 1870 following the Civil War, Congress extended it to include former slaves, making those of African births and of African descent eligible. In 1940 the privilege was extended to the Native Americans, the Chinese in 1943 and the Filipinos and East Indians in 1946.

There were two types – the government scholarship holders who were mostly sent to Europe or New England and returned to high posts in Japan and the private students who were self-funded. Most had to work to see themselves through their studies and, according to Ichioka, were the “pioneers of Japanese immigrant society.” (Ichioka, 1988: 7)

Takao Ozawa filed for application. He had lived in America for twenty years, had graduated from an American high school and had attended the University of California. His non-status as a white or a black Americanised than the those who had been sent to Japan from America for the whole or part of their education thus were far less disadvantaged as they felt very much linguistically and culturally displaced in America, especially compared to their more Americanized generational counterparts.

For example, during the period 1901-1907, the 42,457 Japanese immigrants who were admitted directly into the mainland were augmented by over 38,000 who entered via Hawaii. (Matern, 2003: 14)

The AFL denied membership to all Asians, regardless of skill. In early 1903, 500 Japanese and 200 Mexican workers in California formed the first ever bi-racial labour organisation, the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (JMLA). They went on an historic strike but without the support of the AFL, they were forced to disband after a few years. The AFL had linked the Japanese and the Chinese together – the Chinese being a race that had already been successfully banned from the U.S. – and the AFL were looking to do the same to the Japanese, the crux of their argument being that they could not be unionised and therefore could not be Americanized.

The following excerpt from respected newspaper Mainichi Shimbun used the segregation policy to inflame the growing nationalistic fervour and foreshadowed their attack on Pearl Harbor. “The whole world knows that the poorly equipped army and navy of the United States are no match for our efficient army and navy. . . . Stand up, Japanese nation! Our countrymen have been HUMILIATED on the other side of the Pacific. Our poor boys and girls have been expelled from public schools by the rascals of the United States, cruel and merciless like demons. At this time we should be ready to give a blow to the United States.” (Bailey, 1964: 50)

Picture brides were Japanese women whose marriages were arranged by matchmakers. They were often married by proxy in Japan and were given photographs of their husbands for when they eventually disembarked. The husbands had to provide proof of their savings, the wives had to be entered into the family register at least six months before departure and there could not be an age difference of greater than thirteen years as it would otherwise not be conducive to a harmonious marriage.

Original quote from Taihoku Nippo, 7th May 1924.

Despite the extraordinary lengths the Issei and the Nisei went to, to prove their worthiness of naturalisation and citizenship, the U.S. government continually refused to shift from their hard-line stance. In 1914, when only two classes of people were eligible for citizenship – whites and blacks – Takao Ozawa filed for application. He had lived in America for twenty years, had graduated from an American high school and had attended the University of California. His non-status as a white or a black person however meant that his application was denied despite the fact that he was declared “in every way eminently qualified under the statutes to become and American citizen.” (Matern, 2003: 14) He argued that as Asians were not specifically excluded from the right to citizenship, he ought to be eligible. The Supreme Court disagreed, replying “even though the lawmakers had failed to exclude the yellow races of Asia, it would be necessary to name them in addition to the free white persons if they were to be included among the favored.” (Matern, 2003: 69)

The Russo-Japanese War brought Japan to the forefront of international attention. After the war they were the most powerful nation in Asia and their unexpected defeat of such a powerful nation as Russia in a large military conflict forced the West to sit up and take notice.

In fact, Roosevelt’s grandfather lived in Canton for several years as a merchant and his experiences may have influenced Roosevelt’s feelings towards the Japanese.

The decade between the Manchurian Incident and the bombing of Pearl Harbor was sometimes referred to as kurai tanima, or ‘dark valley’, to describe this time of surging ultra-nationalism and the destruction of liberalism and personal freedom.

Kibei literally means one who has returned to America from Japan. The term referred specifically to those who had been sent to Japan from America for the whole or part of their education thus were far less Americanised than the Nisei. For the most part, it was the Kibei who found themselves the most disadvantaged as they felt very much linguistically and culturally displaced in America, especially compared to their more Americanized generational counterparts.

Statistics originally taken from the Sixteenth Census of the United States, April 1940.

Original quote from Stetson, Conn, “Notes.” Office of the Chief of Military History.

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Two such studies include those by Ronald Bishop in 2000 and Brian Thornton in 2002. Bishop argued that wartime print journalists eventually embraced the role of “guard dog”, acting as the government’s sentry enforcing the official version of events, becoming “willing pawns in the government’s attempts to paint Japanese-Americans as a threat to national security.”(70) Thornton studied eight different wartime newspaper publications between March 1942 and June 1942 and discovered that 70% of published letters approved of the internment, the most vociferous criticisms of the Japanese Americans coming from the west coast readers. Of the eight newspapers examined, only one (the New York Times) was an east coast paper and the differing opinions on the two coasts was made clear by their editorials. Thornton identified only five editorials in the New York Times during that period that addressed the internment, four of which opposed the move and one was neutral. Contrastingly, the seven west coast newspapers collectively printed twenty-five editorials in favour of the internment. So not only did the west coast newspapers not fulfill its “watchdog” duties but, as Thornton argued, “what is worse is that many West Coast newspapers’ editorials went beyond even what the military demanded. These editorial writers urged the government to imprison any and all Japanese. . . . Rather than offering a voice of reason during a time of severe crisis, these newspaper editorials poured kerosene on the flames of social hatred.” (108)

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transportation was US$88,679,716. And as Hosokawa pointed out, it took the Army nearly eleven months to complete the evacuation and relocation program by which time the tide of war in the Pacific had turned, thus nullifying the argument of ‘military necessity.’ (2002: 351)

45 Information for this table came from both Melendy, 1972: 162 and Thomas and Nishimoto, 1946: 27.
46 Hereinafter all images from Something Strong Within are screenshots.
47 On the 14th November 1942 a suspected Kibei informer was beaten. Two popular young Nisei were arrested and crowds gathered around the jail demanding their release. In the meantime a strike ensued, the community council and block managers resigned and an emergency committee was formed consisting mostly of Issei. Negotiations lasted for a week between the emergency committee and the staff at Poston, some of whom hysterically demanded the military be called in. Fortunately a compromise was reached and the prisoners were released with one to be tried by the evacuee judicial commission.
48 In December 1942, Harry Ueno, a Kibei who worked in the kitchens, discovered that the guards or administrators were stealing provisions meant for the internees to sell on the black market. On the 6th December, a JACL leader, suspected of being an informer, was beaten by six masked men. When Ueno confronted the authorities about the thefts, he was arrested as a suspect for the beating. That night, a riot broke out between the military who had been called in and the large crowd of internees, mostly young Nisei and Kibei. Unfortunately tension spilled over into violence and the guards fired shots into the crowd. One seventeen-year old youth was killed instantly and another twenty-one-year old man died later in hospital. 65 ‘troublemakers’ were immediately removed from the camp and jailed in nearby towns. (Myer, 1971: 63-65 and Tateishi, 2001: 134-135)
49 Myer eventually came to realise that while the evacuation of some Japanese suspects from the west coast may have been justified, he stated his opposition to the mass evacuations quite strongly in 1971: “reasons advanced by General DeWitt for urging mass evacuation are found to be tenuous, highly arguable, or wholly unfounded. . . . I do not believe that a mass evacuation was ever justified. . . .” (285)
50 Articles such as the one in Life magazine in May 1944 by Faith Fair entitled “Mr. Yamamoto – New Jersey Town Runs Him Out” fuelled speculation about their undesirability even on the east coast.
51 Yamamoto secured work on a farm in Great Meadows, New Jersey and was working towards securing the freedom of his wife and children to join him. However, “the telephones in Great Meadows were already ringing. ‘A Jap is in town. Saw him with my own eyes. Got slant eyes and looks mean.’ There were tales of arson and rape. . . . A vigilant committee had been formed to handle the Japanese. It’s members were secret, but everybody knew about it. There was open talk of violence.” (Shaffer, 1998: 1455-1456) There were, however, other places that welcomed the Japanese in the east coast, most notably Seabrook Farms in New Jersey, a large frozen foods processing plant that suffered from the wartime labour shortage. They eagerly accepted Japanese American workers and their families wishing to leave the internment camps. By 1947 more than 2,500 Japanese Americans relocated to Seabrook where they lived and worked in a peaceful community. Seabrook was also one of only a few places that accepted the displaced Japanese from South American countries during the war and, after the war, continued to accept refugee workers from a war-torn Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. By the 1950s, Seabrook had residents and workers from over twenty-five countries making it the most culturally diverse rural area in the whole of the United States. John Fuyuume, current Museum Director of the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center, worked at Seabrook (where his family had moved to in 1945) during his summer vacations from college. He embarked on a relationship with Seabrook Farms that continues today by devoting his retirement years (and his entire $20,000 restitution cheque) to educating others about the unique history of Seabrook Farms.
52 It was determined that Tule Lake should become the centre for disloyals as entire blocks there vowed not to register in protest. Despite mass arrests, up to one-third of residents there refused to register so it was thought that it would be easiest to move all ‘disloyals’ there.
53 The stigma was not aided by a series of events in Tule Lake 1943 that resulted in violence, martial law and several hundred arrests. In October, eight hundred workers went on strike following the death of a worker in an accident. Demonstrations were held protesting working conditions and violent confrontations ensued. On the 4th November the army arrived, declared martial law, arrested eighteen men and put nine in the stockades. During the army’s occupation for the next two months, they detained 350 men, some for as long as eight months, even though no charges were ever laid. (Ngai, 2004: 185-186)
54 See Muller, 2001.
55 It was not until the 24th December 1947 did President Truman issue a presidential proclamation granting amnesty to all draft resisters acknowledging the legitimacy for their resistance. (Emi, 1991: 50)
57 Hung Wai Ching, affectionately known as the ‘Father of the VVV’, was tireless in his campaign to prove the loyalty of the local Japanese. While ‘his VVV boys’ were working in Schofield Barracks, he
often showed them off to spread the word of their war efforts. One day in December 1942, he escorted Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy past the working VVV and a few weeks later, the War Department approved the reclassification of the Nisei so that they could volunteer for the 442nd Battalion. When the 442nd set off for training on the mainland, Hung Wai not only saw them off from Honolulu but was waiting for them in San Francisco when they arrived a week later. He had persuaded DeWitt “not to insult and humiliate the 442nd by placing armed guards along the embarkation route, saying: ‘These are American soldiers, not prisoners of war.’ ” He travelled to a town near Shelby where they were to be trained where scathing editorials were written about the Japanese and ‘Go home Japs’ signs hung in the streets. He spoke to the chief of police and the signs and editorials disappeared. After the war, he continued to work for their rehabilitation and return to civilian life. (Chinen and Hiura, 1997: 56-57)
Chapter Three

The Impact of Blood-Sacrifice on the Transmission of Trauma

What matters in the long run is that both individuals and groups retain partial memories from personal and collective experiences, and that memory-images and narratives provide both the content and impetus of political and moral claims about historical oppression in the past and present. (Ball, 2000: 8)

For all his non-violence, there was one situation of violence Gandhi celebrated, namely of victimhood. The suffering of the victim could reach into the consciousness of the oppressor, and it could inspire anyone with sympathy to comradery. For Gandhi, the pain of suffering people, notably including the shedding of blood, could reveal the truth. (Kelly and Kaplan, 2001: 75)

3.1 Breaking the cycle of trauma

As discussed in Chapter Two, the events following the attacks on Pearl Harbor differed greatly for the Japanese Americans the Japanese Hawaiians. The complete and systematic incarceration of all peoples of Japanese ancestry on the mainland, regardless of citizenship, was the most significant event that characterised their traumatic history. The internment was another instalment, an example of a ‘double wounding’ as discussed in Chapter One. It was a repetition of the Isseis initial trauma of departure, a trauma of verlassen, from their homeland and a repetition of the constant acts of discrimination endured by the Nisei. The betrayal and the brutality exhibited by the governing bodies of their hostland had several widespread ramifications, ranging from internees requesting deportment to Japan to others heading a redress movement seeking justice on behalf of their community. The trauma of the internment has been transmitted to the younger generations on the mainland; even those born after the war exhibit signs of having absorbed the trauma experienced by earlier generations. Such intergenerational transmissions of trauma are revealed through literary and artistic contributions, such as those I will discuss in Chapters Six to Nine.

The Japanese of wartime Hawaii were not subjected to the same treatment of mass incarceration and, as a consequence, most of their contemporary literary and
artistic contributions are devoid of the same pattern of traumatic repetition. The reason for this difference is not simply a result of the non-(mass)internment of Japanese Hawaiians, however. I propose that there is a cessation in the cycle of trauma for the Japanese diaspora in Hawaii after World War II which is directly related to the degree to which the Japanese Hawaiians voluntarily sacrificed themselves for the good of their country. Although acts of blood-sacrifice were also made by thousands of Japanese Americans, for various reasons that I will examine, the outcome was profoundly different. Therefore in this chapter I examine two theories. First, the blood-sacrifices made by the Japanese Hawaiians became a collective act that hastened the end of their own cycle of trauma. Second, both the internment and the inability to volunteer for military service in the manner of the Japanese Hawaiians meant that the traumatic experiences of the war are links in a still-continuing chain of trauma for the Japanese on the mainland.

The chain of trauma for both the Japanese Hawaiians and the Japanese Americans began with the initial traumatic departure from Japan. For the establishing members of any new diasporic community, there awaited a manifest and recurring pattern of suspicion, hostility and prejudice when they attempted to resurrect their lives in a new country. This seems especially true when the diaspora possessed immediately identifiable physical characteristics that differentiated them significantly to those already established in the hostland. Skin, hair and eye colour, for example, as well as other physical and sometimes even cultural characteristics immediately identified the waves of African immigrants into Europe, Eastern Europeans entering Western Europe and America, Asians into America, England and Australia and so forth. Their clearly discernible ‘otherness’ made them readily identifiable targets for discrimination, exclusion, even acts of violence. The only path to achieving a level of acceptance then possibly to gaining some political and social power seemed to be for the diaspora to display patience and fortitude and to exhibit an exemplary record as hard-working and law-abiding members of the wider community. Consequently, their actions were governed by the presumed attitudes and expectations of the majority group who forced upon the diasporic community their preconceived assimilationist attitudes. These ranged from complete segregationary and exclusionary tactics to an accelerated and forcibly imposed program of didactic assimilation based on a disposal and disavowal of prior cultural beliefs and traditions; a tactic that would prove impossible when dealing with an immigrant community of remarkably different physical characteristics.
However, there is one exception that seemed to hasten the desired result of total inclusion and acceptance: the act of blood-sacrifice.

I refer of course to the self-sacrificial action intrinsic to war-time volunteers who willingly risk their lives for the good of their country. For a diasporic community, such acts of blood-sacrifice can be viewed as acts of redemption: it is an opportunity to prove their loyalty, love and gratitude to their hostland, their new home and, most importantly, it is an opportunity to prove their right to live in that country alongside those with birthright-privileges. In this chapter I will illustrate the importance of acts of blood-sacrifice in the establishment and continuation of a nation-state and will also examine the significance of the link between such acts and the subsequent positioning of a diasporic community within that nation-state. I propose that the very act of blood-sacrifice can be examined as an integral element of a diasporic community’s assimilationist thrust. I will be focussing on the remarkably unique situation of the Japanese diaspora in Hawaii and how they were able to escape from the systematic and unconstitutional removal and incarceration suffered by those on the mainland and how this difference may have affected their social and political position in the post-war years.

The link between acts of blood-sacrifice and the diasporic community is unfortunately under-theorised and under-researched. With the notable exception of Kelly and Kaplan’s work on the Indo-Fijians and the Japanese Hawaiians, scholarly studies of this nature are rare. The case of the Japanese Hawaiians offers a unique insight into the consequences of acts of blood-sacrifice. Using Kelly as Kaplan as my theoretical framework, I will offer examples of literature and oral histories to illustrate the impact these acts had on their community. I will also use the theories presented in Anderson’s Imagined Communities to examine the pre-war and wartime periods of their history in order to discern at what point the arousal of feelings of patriotism and nationalism, which he defined as “an imagined political community” (6) emerged for the Japanese Hawaiians. Anderson argued that the imagined community is an example of a cultural artefact of a particular kind which has evolved to command a profound level of emotional legitimacy and arouse deep psychological attachments; I will use this theory to offer a more lucid explanation of the willingness of wartime volunteers, especially in Hawaii. Despite the justifiably prominent position Anderson’s text occupies in the discourse of nationalism, it is incomplete without the addition of Kelly
and Kaplan’s work, especially when examining the non-imaginary origins of camaraderie and passion for one’s country. Slavoj Žižek’s *The Sublime Object of Ideology* also plays with the notion of the imaginary – he identified a traumatic core that exists between the real and the imagined. I use Žižek’s work at the end of this chapter to examine the retrospective acts of sacrifice that were also integral to the self-identification of the Japanese diaspora.

### 3.2 The ‘Aloha spirit’

In Chapter Two I examined the events that occurred on the mainland following the attack on Pearl Harbor, such as the FBI arrests, the months of uncertainty and waiting and eventually the call for the removal and evacuation instigated by Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066. In Hawaii, however, events following the attack on Pearl Harbor were quite different; these were also examined in Chapter Two. In this chapter, I examine how the non-(mass)internment of the Japanese Hawaiians affected the creation, motivation and success of the all-*Nisei* combat teams and how their experiences continue to affect subsequent generations even today. Before such an analysis, however, it is crucial that I elucidate the reasons and motivating factors behind *why* they were not interned *en masse*.

Firstly, as mentioned already, the Japanese in Hawaii clearly constituted the largest ethnic group.\(^1\) It follows that the prominence of the different Asian races, especially the Japanese, in Hawaii, meant the distrust of the ‘inscrutable Oriental’ and the fear of the ‘yellow peril’ was not felt as strongly in the Hawaiian Islands as it was on the mainland. That is not to say that the Japanese immigrants and their children did not experience severe discrimination and racial abuse, there are certainly several such accounts of the hardships they endured. As the ethnic majority from a statistical perspective, however, they could not be as easily targeted and scape-goated as the Japanese on the mainland. But more important than their strength in numbers was their integration into the local culture. Indeed, one of the reasons that King Kalakaua of Hawaii approached the Japanese Meiji Emperor in 1881 for more labour was because he felt that the Japanese and the Hawaiians shared similar genetic characteristics and he believed the Japanese would be the ideal race to augment his languishing Hawaiian race. On the mainland most *Issei* wanted to maintain a homogenous line in their families and, of course, anti-miscegenation laws were still in place. Intermarriage rates in Hawaii were consequently much higher than on the mainland.
Due in part to these intermarriages and their mixed race children, by the 1940s the Japanese Hawaiians were not struggling to gain acceptance from their fellow Hawaiians. By the time of the attacks on Pearl Harbor they were already deeply ingrained into Hawaiian society. From the early twentieth century, it was predominantly the immigrant Japanese and aboriginal Hawaiian cultures that merged, along with some Chinese, Portuguese, Filipino and ‘haole’ (Caucasian) cultures, to create what the locals call the ‘aloha spirit.’

There are several characteristics of the ‘aloha spirit’ that are clearly derived from Japanese customs and traditions. For example, removing one’s shoes before entering a home, foods such as sushi and onigiri (rice balls – in Hawaii sushi and onigiri are often served with local favourite grilled spam!) and clothing such as geta (wooden sandals) became localised items and customs. The most important aspect of the ‘aloha spirit’, however, was language.

Hawaii was an oral culture but, especially after the annexation in 1898, the Americanisation of Hawaii was swift and unfortunately much of the native language and oral traditions were lost. The native Hawaiians were so eager to learn English that by the end of the nineteenth century they were one of the most literate nations on earth. While English was the official language of Hawaii, the importance of Hawaiian pidgin, which was created by merging the different languages of the early plantation workers, cannot be underestimated. In this case, not only was it crucial to communicate amongst themselves, thus creating a strong solidarity between themselves and the Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese and Hawaiian labourers, but it also enabled them to exclude the lunas (‘foremen’ in Portuguese), their bosses in the fields.

The strength of the ‘aloha spirit’ was exhibited by the few Japanese Hawaiians who were sent to the concentration camps on the mainland. They instinctively sought each other out and formed solidarities amongst themselves as they saw themselves as different to the mainlanders. They found comfort and solace in their shared culture, history and language, as is demonstrated by this excerpt from an internment camp report:

Hawaiian cohesiveness – and separation from the “mainlander group,” is shown in distinct clothing (geta, colors in certain variety, flowered shirts for men, lei worn around neck at parties). . . the use of Hawaiian pidgin. . . and a difference at points in manners, musical instruments and recreational forms.
The Hawaiians are a tight in-group, cohesive, and apart from all other locality groups. (National Archives, RG 210)

While an understanding of the ‘aloha spirit’ is crucial to my thesis, it must be made clear that what saved the Japanese in Hawaii from mass internment was in fact primarily based on economic rationale. Not only was the proposal to transport and house over 150,000 people on Molokai a logistical nightmare but their large population meant they were the backbone of the labour force and, ironically, the war effort. Governor General Emmons sent a radiogram to the Adjunct General on the 11th February 1942, outlining the problems facing the proposed mass internment:

The skilled labor in Hawaii is approximately 95% Japanese and there is no available soldier or civilian replacements. Neither Japanese nor anyone else has committed any overt act up to the present time. The discharge of these workers in a body will either stop almost all high priority and non defense construction and work, or will cause pro Japanese sentiment, disloyalty, a feeling of desperation and encourage sabotage. [An] idle Jap with a family to support is more dangerous than one under supervision and working with other races. The handling of the Japanese question here should be done by those in direct contact with it. (Ogawa Collection, File 356)

Secretary of War Henry Stimson concurred in a letter to the House of Representatives on the 8th July 1942:

Our greatest difficulty in dealing with this problem is the economic aspect. The Japanese population is so interwoven into the economic fabric of the Islands that if we attempted to evacuate all Japanese aliens and citizens all business, including that concerned with the building up of our defenses, would practically stop. (Ogawa Collection, File 362)

While it was recognised that due to their integral role to the aforementioned ‘aloha spirit’ their removal would be extremely harmful to the all-important spirituality of the wider Hawaiian community, it is clear that it was their importance to the economy of the islands that saved them from the organised persecution that the Japanese Americans on the mainland endured.

So while it was the population demographics and their work ethic that made them so important to the economic stability of the Islands, how did the Japanese Hawaiians become so indispensable to the spiritual aspect as well? Anderson posits that the two most important forms of imagining that first emerged in Western Europe in the eighteenth century were the novel and the newspaper. For the readers of a newspaper,
a simultaneous imagining occurs – a society is created consisting of those in the articles and their readers; the different articles and the ‘characters’ in them are connected in the minds of the readers who, in turn, are connected to all other readers who are reading the same newspaper on the same day. The arbitrariness and juxtaposition of the articles and the simultaneity of the readers creates an imagined community:

[The reader is] well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. (Anderson, 1991: 35)

The importance of the fraternity created by the rapidly expanding newspaper readership within the Japanese diasporic community both on the mainland and in Hawaii is undeniable. But when Anderson carried on to argue that the most important aspect of language is “its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities,” (1991: 133) it seems more applicable to the fraternity created amongst the Japanese Hawaiians whose bond was strengthened by their unique pidgin language (which also widened their society to include other diasporic groups in Hawaii). Their significant contribution to the common language and the feeling of fraternity in Hawaii, their role in the ‘aloha spirit’, meant their removal would have had a debilitating effect on the spirituality of the islands. The Japanese Hawaiians were far more integrated and assimilated and something that strengthened that bond, that differentiated them further from the Japanese on the mainland, was their willingness to make the supreme sacrifice for their country. Before I examine the personal stories and experiences of the men who made those sacrifices and the circumstances surrounding them, I will examine the motivation behind their actions first.

### 3.3 Inventions of the imagination

It is interesting to examine the rationale behind the Japanese Hawaiians who felt such a deep attachment for their country, for what Anderson termed “the inventions of their imaginations. . . [and] why people are ready to die for these inventions.” (1991: 141) Whilst the community is imagined and those within will most likely never know every other person within that same community, they each share an image and an understanding of their communion. Theirs is not a tangible, corporeal relationship but an imagined one. This creates deep, emotional ties between friends, family and strangers and it is this fraternity that makes it possible for so many to make the ultimate sacrifice, to die for their country, for what is ostensibly just a limited imagining. While
it is common practice to refer to the roots of nationalism as being embedded in fear and hatred and of its affinities with racism, Anderson argued that the nation also inspires great love and patriotism, evident in the national cultural productions of art, literature and music. But most significantly, it also spurs acts of self-sacrifice. Thus dying for one’s country, he argued, assumes a moral grandeur and exemplifies the extent to which the nation inspires love within its people, a love that is often captured in a special language: it indicates a “special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and songs.” (1991: 145)

A good example of the predominance of poetry and songs in early Japanese Hawaiian society is the Hole-hole Bushi – the songs of the plantation workers. It is a mixture of the Hawaiian term ho’ole ho’ole meaning to strip or peel the sugar cane leaves and the Japanese word bushi for melody. These simple songs had been popular in Japan for several generations with those working in the fields such as the Cha-kiri Bushi, sung while picking tea leaves and the Tanko Bushi, sung by coal miners. This style was brought to Hawaii, sung in the canefields and passed down to their children. These are some examples:

Hawaii, Hawaii,
Like a dream so I came
But my tears are flowing now
In the canefields.  

My husband cuts the cane,
I do the hole hole.
By sweat and tears
We get by.

The passing on of these cultural productions, which is examined in more depth in Chapters Six to Nine, is important because, as Anderson argued, as individuals we possess awareness not only of our own mortality but of being embedded in a secular, linear time. As a nation we also possess a need for narratives of ‘identity’ because we understand the implications of continuity even when we forget the experiences. The continuing narrative of the nation is marked, not terminated, by deaths and to serve its narrative purpose, these deaths must be claimed and remembered as our own so that they can be preserved. The claiming of these deaths then does not mean that the memory, the narration and the transmission of the traumatic event necessarily ends but it could result in the cessation of the repetitious cycle of traumatic events.
On the mainland, both the internment and the exploits of the *Nisei* soldiers served as momentously traumatic events in their history. In Hawaii, it was mainly the feats of the soldiers that served as the significant traumatic event that altered the future of Japanese Hawaiians. Due to their eagerness to volunteer (remembering of course that although the number of volunteers on the mainland was low, this did *not* indicate a lack of desire to defend their country nor a sign of their loyalty, rather it was indicative of their tragic and extraordinary circumstances which must be taken into account when comparing the two statistics) and their bravery in battle, they were able to strengthen and consolidate their rightful position in Hawaiian and American society. Before I discuss the implications of the actions of the soldiers, I will first give an account of their exploits and successes.

### 3.4 Creation of the 100th/442nd

After the attack on Pearl Harbour, thousands of Hawaiian *Nisei* were deployed to the hills and shorelines to oppose the rumoured Japanese invasion. Early in the morning of 8th December 1941, the first Japanese prisoner of war, Ens. Sakamaki Kazuo, was picked up by the *Nisei* guarding the shoreline at Bellows Air Force Base as he struggled out of the ocean after leaving his malfunctioning mini-submarine. I have already written at length about the Hawaiian *Niseis* contributions to the war effort in the previous chapter therefore in this section, I will examine the rationale behind their actions.

The crux of the spirit of the Japanese Hawaiians is captured in this anonymous essay written by a young Hawaiian *Nisei* just before he volunteered:

> Remember, it is one of the prime duties and obligations of a citizen to bear arms in defense of his country. You don’t want to be a member of a conquered nation. . . . Remember you’re fighting to preserve decency and the right to a peaceful pursuit of life for all mankind. It is your duty to fight for home, country, and humanity. (Ogawa, 1980: 334-335)

This was the commonly-held belief as the Japanese Hawaiian *Nisei* were not faced with the conflicting emotions associated with the crisis and trauma of internment they way the mainlanders were. As only 1% of the Japanese Hawaiians were interned, and they were mostly *Issei* community leaders, only a small number of *Nisei* men were forced to contend with the unjust internment of their fathers. Therefore their considerations for volunteering were wholly based on a sense of duty for their country, defence of their
homes and their fellow Americans. In fact, there is a well-known quote that every young Japanese schoolboy knew; a quote that was undoubtedly passed on through the generations. Eight hundred years earlier, Shigemori Taira was urged by his father to lead forces against an Imperial faction. He was torn between filial duty and military duty. He said, “If I am filial, I cannot serve the Emperor. If I serve the Emperor, I cannot be filial.” Man’s loyalty in Japan had to go to the higher authority; thus Taira served the Emperor. In the same way, the Nisei knew they had to choose America over Japan or their parents. (Crost, 1994: 166-167) This was a much easier decision for the Japanese Hawaiians to make as their decision was not complicated by the betrayal of their higher authority.

The uncertainty of the future and the unjust incarceration faced by the Japanese Americans on the mainland are two reasons why the number of initial volunteers from the mainland was disappointingly low. The main reason, however, was the devastating ‘loyalty questionnaire’ forced upon the internees in 1943 that I discussed in Chapter Two. Some were pleased to be given the opportunity to volunteer for service but their situation as prisoners in their own country must have been a very bitter pill to swallow indeed. Others saw the questionnaire as a great affront to their loyalty and regarded it as the final insult causing them to turn their backs on America completely. All were torn between the decision to uphold their traditional filial duty and their duty to serve their country and prove their loyalty. Their decision, exacerbated by the situation in which they were trapped, was further complicated by the traditional fatalistic Japanese attitude that if a man was to go to war, he was not expected to return home. The Issei embodied such a belief and in many cases transferred them to their sons. Thus the Nisei were forced to question the fate of their families and their elderly parents (shown above in their horse-stall ‘home’) if they were to go to war; if they died while fighting overseas, would the U.S. government take care of their families? It seemed extremely unlikely, given their current situation and the precarious nature of their parents’ alien status. Thus although 67,000 men were deemed eligible to volunteer from the camps, and the WRA hoped for 3,600 volunteers, only 1,200 did so. Once the draft was reinstated in the camps,
however, many described it as a sense of relief – the decision was taken out of their hands and they were able to go and fight for their country with a clear conscience.

3.5 Bravery of the $100^{th}$/442$^{nd}$

The overwhelming response of the Japanese Hawaiians allowed the War Department to increase their quota. When the final count was taken, 2,686 men were accepted from Hawaii.\(^{10}\) (Crost, 1994: 63) The 100$^{th}$ Battalion had been in training and fighting overseas since June 1942 and, although they suffered horrendous casualties, they were deemed a resounding success. In fact, their high casualty rate meant that in the internment camps, there were rumours (that still persist today) that the 100$^{th}$ were used as ‘shields’ and cannon fodder for the rest of the U.S. Army. There was a fear that they were considered expendable and there were understandable concerns that the men of the 442$^{nd}$ were to be used in the same manner.

When the Nisei from the internment camps were sent to the army training Camp Shelby in Wisconsin, the division between Hawaiians and mainlanders was palpable. The mainlanders thought the Hawaiians were inferior because of their pidgin language and their relaxed attitudes; the Hawaiians thought the mainlanders were condescending with their proper English and polite manners. The Hawaiians called the mainlanders ‘kotonks’ – that being the sound their heads made when knocked on the floors of the barracks! In retaliation, the mainlanders called the Hawaiians ‘buddhaheads’ – a term of contempt derived from the Japanese term buta meaning pig. However the two factions quickly found peace and solidarity when it came to fighting the enemy in Europe and the mainlanders even began to learn pidgin. When a ‘kotonk’ was complimented on his pidgin, he explained, “I spent five days in a foxhole with a couple of buddhaheads and had to learn it.” (Crost, 1994: 67) Again, language was the theme of solidarity here – there already existed a fraternity between the Hawaiians and through language, they were able to extend that feeling of community to the Japanese Americans.

When the 100$^{th}$ landed at Salerno, Italy, on the 22$^{nd}$ September 1943, they had over 1,300 men. Five months later, after the extremely costly Battle of Cassino, they could only muster 521 men. (Crost, 1994: 115) This excerpt of what the men faced at the height of battle explains why their squads were so devastated:
the two-mile stretch of marsh with its picket mines; the four flooded irrigation ditches; the concrete wall rising seven to twelve feet above the riverbank; two fourteen-foot river embankments, sheathed in double aprons of barbed wire laced with mines; the Rapido River bed covered with mined barbed wire; a fifteen-hundred-foot mountain permeated with dug-in enemy weapons; the watchdog fort on Castle Hill protecting the monastery; and the monastery itself, looming high and huge in the light of bombardment flares. (Crost, 1994: 103)

Indeed, the Battle of Cassino decimated the 100th so badly that recruits from the 442nd were instructed to fill in the empty places. Historian Lyn Crost described this specific battle as “the final, bloody proof they could give of their loyalty to America and the fulfilment of pledges to their families that they would, above all, fight with honor.” (1994: 97-98) Both the 100th and the 442nd had such high casualty rates because they fought with such bravery and abandon for personal safety. When the men of the 100th learned more about the fate of the families of the mainlanders, they were incensed with the same frustration and anger that drove the mainlanders to fight the way they did.14 They were in effect fighting two wars – the war against fascism and the war against the persecution that faced their friends and families back home.

After two years of bitter fighting, the 100th Battalion was integrated into the 442nd which was attached to the 34th Infantry Division. Despite their heroic battles and tremendous losses, they continued to face discrimination. Their central role in the liberation of Bruyeres was censored, so Americans at home never knew of their accomplishments. The recommendations they received for Medals of Honor after Bruyeres were all downgraded to the lesser Distinguished Service Cross. They were forced to stand back and allow the Fifth Army to triumphantly enter Rome after they had secured it’s entry from the South and, most contentious of all, was their rescue of the ‘lost Texas Battalion.’ After a tremendous battle to liberate Bruyeres and Biffontaine, they were immediately ordered to rescue a trapped Battalion who were surrounded by Germans with orders to ‘take-no-prisoners’. General Dahlquist ordered the 100th/442nd to charge the Germans with their bayonets only but Lieutenant Allan Ohata risked his job by refusing those orders and planning the rescue on his own terms to save his own men from obliteration. They fought continuously for five days and nights and suffered over eight hundred casualties to rescue 211 Texans (all that was left of the original 275 entrapped). Sergeants were forced to command the Nisei companies
because there were no officers left; in fact Company K was down to seventeen riflemen, Company I was down to just eight.

After their return, Dahlquist ordered a dress review to offer his thanks for the rescue. When those who were left standing after the carnage were presented, he rebuked their officers for not having all the men turn up. He was so ignorant of their losses in the rescue campaign that he did not realise that of their 4,000 men at full strength, 2,000 were on the casualty list and most of the others had already been sent on further missions in the Maritime Alps or were on guard duty. Although Dahlquist remains a bitter memory to some veterans, Daniel Inouye remembered Dahlquist as full of emotion when faced with the ragged remains of the 100\(^\text{th}\)/442\(^\text{nd}\):

General Dahlquist looked at us for a long time. Twice he started to speak and choked on the overpowering feelings that took hold of him. And in the end, all he could manage was an emotional, ‘Thank you, men. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.’ And the saddest retreat parade in the history of the 442\(^\text{nd}\) was over. (Ogawa, 1980: 343)

Back at home, there continued shameful acts of discrimination against the Japanese Americans, even as their sons were fighting overseas. The American Legion Post in Hood River, Oregon, painted over the names of all sixteen Japanese American servicemen who had enlisted there from the municipal memorial honour roll in the courthouse and they announced they would support efforts to prevent former residents of Japanese ancestry from returning to their town. Nisei Sergeant Masa Sakamoto died of wounds near Sospel in early 1945 and the chaplain who was sent to get his body and collect all his personal effects recalled:

I found a letter. . . . All of his brothers were in the army in Japan. . . . Some vandals had burned down his father’s home and barn in the name of patriotism. And yet this young man had volunteered for every patrol that he could go on. You know, you can’t give a medal high enough for a man like that. (Crost, 1994: 231)

There were also several hundred Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians working for the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). As the Japanese army arrogantly believed their language was far too complex for foreigners, they rarely encrypted their military communications. Thus the bilingual Nisei were sent all over the world attached to various units and were often found in the heart of battle. Within months of the first Nisei being sent into the Pacific, military units were begging for their indispensable
help. However, due to the secrecy of the MIS, their contributions would remain hidden from the public for decades:

[They] had swallowed their pride, accepted the harsh rebuffs and the incarceration of their families, and pitted their unique skills and knowledge against America’s enemies. But the secrecy they had to maintain denied them public acknowledgement of their deeds. . . . Americans would hear urgent, daily radio reports, read hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles, and even see a movie about Guadalcanal. But nowhere did they learn that the Nisei were there, too. (Crost, 1994: 45)

Despite the secrecy, the censorship and the ongoing acts of discrimination at home and in the battlefield, the Nisei soldiers understood that the future of their communities and their families lay on their shoulders and they had to remain stoic. Charlton Ogburn, an officer serving in Burma, marvelled at the resilience of the Nisei soldiers in the face of such adversity. “What were their thoughts in the solitude of soul that jungle warfare enforces? I have no way of knowing,” he mused. (Crost, 1994: 132) Indeed, how could any of the non-Japanese soldiers serving in the U.S. Army understand what they were experiencing? Perhaps because it was so hard to comprehend the level of their sacrifice, the exemplary behaviour of the Nisei earned them the support of most of their fellow American soldiers of all ethnic backgrounds. As the official history of the 34th Infantry Division stated:

As men of the 34th observed the battle conduct of the Nisei, they grew to resent the treatment accorded the parents and relatives of these little, brown American fighters. They resented the confiscation of their property and the herding of their families into concentration camps at home, while their sons were dying by the hundreds in the cause of human liberty. (Crost, 1994: 148)

Before battle, the segregated 442nd Combat Team and the 100th Battalion was comprised of some 33,000 Japanese Americans from Hawaii and the mainland. Together, with 18,143 individual decorations for valour (including over 3,600 Purple Hearts, 810 Bronze Stars, 342 Silver Stars and 47 Distinguished Service Crosses and one Congressional Medal of Honor (Mattern, 2003: 73)) and seven Presidential unit citations, the 100th/442nd was the most decorated unit in American military history for its size and length of service. The 100th was awarded 1,703 Purple Hearts, more than the number of men in its Battalion, earning them the sobriquet “Purple Hearts Battalion.”
The performance and attitude of the 100th/442nd were instrumental in changing the attitudes of their fellow Americans after the war. On Memorial Day 1945, Hawaii’s Governor Ingram A. Stainback dedicated a temporary War Memorial in Honolulu with a speech, this excerpt being especially touching:

Over a test of time Hawaii has proved to the nation and to the world that people of every race and every creed can dwell in harmony in peaceful pursuits. Now, under the strain and stress of war, the question has arisen whether those of alien parents, or alien cultures, of many nations, many races, white, black, brown, yellow, red, can really and truly be knit by a common idealism into a nation, whether they have entered into and really become a part of the warp and woof of the pattern of our national life or whether they are merely a heterogeneous mass of clashing colors. You, William Anderson, Lawrence Murphy, William Kamaka, Shiro Toho, William Goo, George Bergstrom, Ernest Damkroger, Douglas McNair, Kyotoshi Watanabe, Alvin Wong, Ralph Yang, Howard Vierra, and all others listed on this monument have answered that question. Your deaths should silence for all time those preaching racial intolerance – should forever still the tongues of discord that would divide our people. (Hosokawa, 2002: 468)

Mainland Nisei author Yoshiko Uchida concurred and stated that their “brilliant record . . . helped alleviate to some degree the hatred directed against the Japanese Americans during the war.” (Mattern, 2003: 78)

3.6 The value of the stories of martyrdom

I turn to Kelly and Kaplan in order to explore why the Nisei’s actions on the battlefield were so instrumental not just for ensuring the survival of their traumatic history, but also for the future prosperity of their diasporic community as a whole – two aspects which are, in fact, intertwined. It is clear that it was not just the ‘aloha spirit’ and the fact that they were not interned en masse that explains the phenomenal rise in social and political standing of the Japanese Hawaiians. The most important factor in determining their post-war status was the fact that several thousand young men made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Thus political power was not just taken by those with “claims of priority for primordiality” as Kelly and Kaplan phrased it but also by those involved in the Pacific and European “theatrics of bloodshed” (2001: 64-65). Where Anderson argued that it is patriotism that motivates the individuals of a nation to make these supreme sacrifices, Kelly and Kaplan argued instead that it is the value of the stories of martyrdom that motivate individuals and the abundance of these stories will never allow for the death of memories. The narratives of the suffering of the victim
and the death of the martyr inspired comradery and strengthened the bonds within a suffering community. The longevity of these narratives would determine the future of the Japanese diaspora and would later be recalled when required.

The Nisei knew that their actions would have a huge impact on the future of the entire community. It was an opportunity to prove their worth to those who discounted them as second-class citizens. Although the elders were worried about their children serving in the military, especially given their unique situation, their brave exploits in Europe were proudly reported in the various camp newspapers and the stories of their sacrifices are still cited today as examples of great loyalty in the face of tremendous hardship. Even as one Hawaiian Issei tanka poet expressed his sadness at his family’s unjust situation:

Sailing on the same ship –
The son,
A U.S. soldier;
His father,
A prisoner of war.
(Nakano, 1983: 29)

another Issei woman wrote in her internment diary of the importance of sacrifice and determination for the privilege of citizenship:

Someone who sincerely desires to become a citizen of the United States – before he could claim that right, must exert an earnest endeavor to develop an attitude of humility and faith toward acquiring this privilege. (Gorfinkel, 1996: 101)

Journalist John Terry spent time with the soldiers and their families in the camps and was able to use the media to help build public support by writing favourably about the Nisei soldiers during their training period:

over and beyond the normal loyalties of a Caucasian citizen whose place is secure and unquestioned, these men feel they have to furnish striking proof of their Americanism, and that the battlefield offers them that opportunity. . . . Their future place in America, and the future of their brothers, sisters and children. . . . is bound up in their record in battle as members of the 442nd combat team. They know it. . . . the boys of the 442nd are a credit to their country, to Hawaii, to their parents, to their uniform. . . . They are good citizens, ready to prove it with their lives. . . . (Ogawa, 1980: 336-341)

There was an understanding within the majority of the Japanese diaspora, especially for those who had a family member serving in the military, that their exploits on the
battlefield were necessary in order to prove their loyalty, to pursue the equal rights of citizenship and to form the crux of the post-war power shift, civil rights movement and assimilationist thrust. As John Terry’s words show, the actions of the 100th/442nd proved the loyalty of the Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians and moved many in the white American community to support their future endeavours.

It would be the stories that the men had to tell when they returned from battle that would drastically alter their futures. The importance that Kelly and Kaplan placed on such stories of sacrifice was foreshadowed in Renan’s 1882 essay “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?”19 in which he emphasised the sacrifices an individual can make for the good of the community, to the establishment of a nation. Renan argued that it is the memory of the blood that has been shed that is far more important to nationalism than the blood of a ‘race’ – people understand one another if they have worked and suffered alongside one another, despite any differences in language, culture and traditions. Renan’s argument is clearly applicable to the motivation behind the Niseis’ sacrifices but also to the bond created between the Japanese Hawaiians, the Japanese Americans and their white commanding officers while they fought a common enemy together. In this manner, a strong nation based on sorrow and sacrifice was born and the blood shed by the Nisei legitimised their claim for power in the political arena. They had proven themselves to be loyal participants in the continued strengthening of the nation by making the ultimate sacrifice. The Nisei as individuals had abdicated themselves for the benefit of the community, in Renan’s terms, and in so doing constituted an important part of the nation and the value of their actions lay in their stories of martyrdom:

Man is not enslaved, nor is his race nor his language, nor his religion, nor the course of the rivers, nor the direction of the mountain ranges. A great aggregation of men, with a healthy spirit and warmth of heart, creates a moral conscience which is called a nation. When this moral conscience proves its strength by sacrifices that demand abdication of the individual for the benefit of the community, it is legitimate, and it has a right to exist. (Renan, 1994: 18)

The last statement anticipated Anderson’s claim that those who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice assume a moral grandeur and it is from this platform that the Japanese Americans, especially the Japanese Hawaiians, were able to consolidate their post-war political power by passing on their memories through the generations and recalling them for use as political tools. Their trauma was recalled within themselves as
individuals and also transferred to the group. Walter Benjamin stressed the importance of keeping such memories and, through those memories, the dead, safe from danger:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was” (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. . . . . Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious. (Benjamin, 1970: 257)

This passage echoes Freud’s theories of fright, repetition and the return of the repressed. The memories and the stories from the war-time acts of blood-sacrifice must be kept alive to ensure that the ruling classes would not remain victorious. One way to do that is through oral histories and testimonials which I will examine later. Another way to not only ensure the defeat of the ruling classes but also to establish their own position of power, to consolidate their role in the nation-state, was to use those stories in a political arena.

3.7 Acts of blood-sacrifice as political tools

U.S. (Hawaiian) Senator Spark M. Matsunaga’s speech entitled “Rededication” echoed Benjamin’s words. He said:

we must here resolve as individual citizens that the story of the heroic dead whom we honor shall not lay buried with the dead, but will be kept alive to inspire the poor, the downtrodden, and the disillusioned to rise above social injustices. We must resolve not only to make ourselves, but to help others, to become better Americans in a greater America for a safer world. (Japanese Eyes, 2000: 399-400)

Similarly, veteran Yoshiaki Fujitani argued in his essay “Kin No On – Gratitude to my Country” that the action of the Nisei was a way of expressing gratitude to their country and that the respect they gained was “earned at a very dear price, and we should be forever grateful for their sacrifice.” (Japanese Eyes, 2000: 102) Thus the retention and reiteration of the memories of wartime battles and trauma were crucial to prevent the dominant, grand narratives of white America from drowning out their voices of suffering and martyrdom. Thanks to the exploits of the brave Nisei soldiers and their
acts of blood-sacrifice, the rest of the community, through a transference from individual to group, were able to prove their loyalty and argue their worth as citizens of the United States.

For example, *Nisei* war veteran and current U.S. (Hawaiian) senator, Daniel K. Inouye, whom I mentioned earlier recalled the memory of the *Niseis’* wartime sacrifices by paralleling his own political campaign with the war. He delivered a speech in the mid-fifties in response to claims that his democratic party was a pawn of the communists:

> ‘I put the notes for my speech into my clenched teeth and tore them in two with my only hand...’ [his other hand was lost in battle during WWII. He said,] ‘Let me speak for those of us who didn’t come back – I know I speak for my colleagues on this platform, and for good Democratic candidates everywhere in these Islands – when I say we bitterly resent having our loyalty and patriotism questioned by cynical political hacks who lack the courage to debate the real issues in this campaign.’

(Ogawa, 1980: 393)

Inouye successfully used the memory of the shedding of the blood of the Japanese Hawaiians to once again defend their loyalty and patriotism; thus their shed-blood had been successfully turned into a political tool. Ogawa’s statement that “blood had been shed so that the Japanese could unquestionably assume a significant role in the Island economy and social system” (1980: 325) accedes to Kelly and Kaplan’s argument that “shed blood can be powerful tools for social movements out to make or unmake political limits.” (2001: 80) The memory of blood-shed needs to be remembered, recalled, deployed and passed on to future generations. The importance of blood-shed to a diasporic community cannot be understated nor underestimated. The following paragraph by Kelly and Kaplan recalls Freud’s argument in “Moses and Monotheism” and is also applicable to the Japanese diaspora.

> We need to be more attentive to the ways that blood arguments can be used both for and against diasporic populations – not merely the sons of the soil, blood of descent arguments, but also, and sometimes very potently, the ways that the rhetoric of blood shed, stories of blood sacrifices for nation can irrigate, ennoble, and even sanctify the projects of many interested claimants.

(2001: 81)

Although a certain sense of finality is implied in that statement, the opposite is in fact true. Even if the memories of the victims and martyrs *are* preserved in rhetoric, the trauma does not simply end there; nor should it, if it can be used to enrich, educate and
inspire future generations. As I said at the start of this chapter, the cycle of trauma after the war took two different courses for the Japanese Hawaiians and the Japanese Americans. While I certainly am not arguing that the trauma for the Japanese Hawaiians ended after the war, I do believe there was a diminution of the levels of traumas repeated thereafter. The huge number of Nisei (and even Issei) volunteers, their courageous actions both on the battlefield and as part of the war effort put their community almost beyond reproach. If a claim of disloyalty was ever made against them again, they were able to respond with their stories of blood-sacrifice to extinguish any such harmful mutterings. However, despite the fact that the Japanese Americans from the mainland also participated equally as bravely (some may argue that they were even more courageous, considering the situation in the camps) on the battlefield, their future after the war was not quite as smooth.

3.8 A retroactive redemption of the past

Even if the memories of the victims and martyrs are preserved in rhetoric, the trauma of the internment for the Japanese Americans did not end with the war. After the soldiers returned and the internees were free to leave the camps, there was a great deal of pressure from both within the Japanese community and outside of it to accept the government version and the justification of what had happened. Because the internment was a government-sanctioned order and there were no widely-publicised accounts of the resistance offered by the Japanese Americans, a great deal of the wider American nation believed that it successfully ensured their safety. The Japanese characteristic of enduring shameful events in silence, and of viewing the internment as an humiliating experience meant that the memories and the stories concerning the camp years were stored away, embalmed in the latency phase indefinitely. Even much of the heroic war-stories were kept silent. As Donnie’s father and uncle in the children’s book Heroes by Ken Mochizuki illustrate, they believed it best for the trauma not to be disclosed to the youth:

But I knew my dad had stories that could prove he was a hero. I sometimes overheard him talking with his army buddies at the gas station. I probably asked him a hundred times to tell me the old war stories, but each time he just shook his head. . . . Uncle Yosh was the same way. . . . “Real heroes don’t brag,” he said. “They just do what they are supposed to do.” When he came to our house, he didn’t like me watching war shows on TV, or even news about a new war in a country called Vietnam. (1995)\textsuperscript{22}
It wasn’t until the Sansei (third) generation, the majority of whom were born after the war, began to learn more about the internment were questions asked and issues debated. Although the discussions of traumatic events and memories enabled the healing process to begin, the trauma continued to transmit itself.

Throughout this thesis I will refer to certain significant events that impacted upon the post-war progression of the Japanese Americans from a vilified, ostracized community to a widely-dispersed, exemplary ‘model minority,’ a term that continues to aggravate many Japanese Americans. I will briefly outline the main post-war events here before I continue with the Sanseis’ role in their history. After the war, the draft resisters’ convictions were pardoned and 4,978 of the 5,589 citizenships that were renounced were restored. (Ngai, 2004: 196 and Collins, 1985: 3) The renunciants’ alleged disloyalty disrupted the JACL’s unmarked narrative of the undivided loyalty of the Japanese Americans, perhaps contributing to the stigma of the Tule Lake internees. In 1952 the Walter-McCarran Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in Congress which finally permitted the Issei to become naturalized. After a lengthy latency period, mostly enclosed in a world of silence, the National Redress Committee was created in 1978 to seek reparations. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) was established in 1980 to determine the legality of the internment where over 750 testimonials contributed towards the success of the redress movement which culminated in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which I will discuss later.

So the Sansei involved themselves in an attempted redemption of the past, to use Žižek’s terms, by heading the redress movement that surged in the seventies and eighties. I use Žižek’s work to see if a healing of the trauma was possible. He argued that everyone, in a sense, must die twice, the second death being a symbolic one. He identified an unsymbolizable centre at the heart of any traumatic loss, a “real kernel, a traumatic core” (1989: 132) that lies between the real, biological death and its symbolization. That site, which is filled with either sublime beauty or fearsome monsters, and which is where the traumatic kernel of loss exists, can only be opened through a process of symbolization/historicization which then enables the destruction of the traumatic core. Thus absolute death is only achieved through the destruction of the symbolic universe. Similarly, LaCapra discussed Freud’s notion of ‘working-through’ as an attempt to specify its haunting objects and symbolically giving them a “proper burial.” (LaCapra, 1994: 193) One would question if this would be the desired path for a
diasporic community that has just undergone such an intensely traumatic experience such as the internment and the death of so many of its young in war? If the destruction of the traumatic core was affected, how could the community use its stories to ensure its non-repetition?

Unlike Anderson’s implication that a sense of finality, or an absolute death, could be achieved through the construction of a narrative, the capturing of a traumatic event in print-language, thus rendering it unimaginable, Žižek favoured the path of achieving that sense of finality through the destruction of the traumatic kernel. While Žižek appreciated Anderson’s notion that traditional historiography is composed of stringing together the dominant narratives of the ‘victors’, he said we must not confine our conception of history to a closed, linear, homogenous continuum. Such a conception omits what ‘failed’ in history so that the continuity of great historical achievements can be maintained. So the oppressed class must appropriate the past in so far as the past already contains a dimension of its future, “the future of our own revolutionary act which, by means of repetition, redeems retroactively the past,” (Žižek, 1989: 138) a statement clearly influenced by Freud and Lacan. Every time the past is redeemed retroactively for use in the present or the future, it is an indication that the traumatic kernel has not yet been destroyed nor its symbolic universe shattered. The Japanese Hawaiians have not had to redeem nor repeat its past as often as the Japanese Americans have, which according to Žižek indicates the trauma is felt more keenly within the Japanese American community.

There were early attempts to redeem the past and to shatter the diaspora’s collective traumatic core on the mainland. As with the other ethnic groups that have also been persecuted throughout history, the Japanese Americans simply endured in silence, repeating to themselves the phrase shikata ga nai, it cannot be helped. When mass evacuation and internment began, although it seemed that all Japanese Americans complied without protest, there were those who attempted to defy the orders, who attempted to redeem the past failures (such as the Alien Land Laws, the denial of citizenship for the Issei and so on) retroactively. Their silence was in fact imbued with meanings and significations. They ranged from the silent, eloquent protestations from the World War I veterans who wore their uniforms proudly when herded into internment camps under suspicion of disloyalty and sabotage, to the violent riots in some of the camps themselves. It was also evident in those who refused to register for
the loyalty questionnaire and those who refused to comply with induction orders. These were the early attempts to revolt and protest against injustices in the face of trauma and emotional betrayal. Even after the war, after the internment and after the bravery of the 100th/442nd had been documented, their trauma was consistently being revised, as this returning soldier recounted:

> Coming home, I was boarding a bus on Olympic Boulevard [in Los Angeles]. A lady sitting in the front row of the bus saw me and said, “Damn Jap.” Here I was a proud American soldier, just coming back with my new uniform and new paratrooper boots, with all my campaign medals and awards, proudly displayed on my chest, and this? The bus driver, upon hearing this remark, stopped the bus and said, “Lady, apologize to this American soldier or get off my bus.” She got off the bus. (Crost, 1994: 301)

The *Sanseis* contemporary revolutionary act, the redress movement, was their attempt to appropriate and redeem their community’s past in the post-war years. The Japanese Americans’ quest for acknowledgement and compensation for the traumatic war years maintained a very slow pace for about thirty years and then began to surge in the seventies and eighties when the civil rights movements became ingrained in the youth of the country. Then suddenly, in 1982, a tragic and terribly violent act was committed against a Chinese American man, Vincent Chin which, in Žižek’s terms, crystallised historical movement, isolated the details from its historical totality and forced an immediate and retroactive connection to the past trauma and, specifically in the minds of the Japanese Americans, to the internment. They still had not received any form of acknowledgement and now this event had made pervasive the atmosphere of anti-Asian sentiment in North America.

Although the redress movement emerged victorious in 1988 having secured an apology and financial restitution, the feelings of hurt and shame continued to be felt very strongly within the community, even by those who did not experience the internment personally. While it was especially the letter of apology that most survivors said allowed them to start their own healing process, I do not think the conclusion of the redress movement is a ‘settling of accounts’ to use Žižek’s phrase, who said:

> Actual history occurs, so to speak, on credit; only subsequent development will decide retroactively if the current revolutionary violence will be forgiven, legitimated, or if it will continue to exert a pressure on the shoulders of the present generation as its guilt, as its unsettled debt. (1989: 142)
Although the redress movement and other court cases were ‘successful’ in terms of eliciting an apology from the government, other racially-motivated crimes forced an immediate connection to their past trauma. As trauma theoretician Kathryn Ball put it, Žižek advocated a “contemplative return to ‘the scene of the crime’ through an etiological reading of identity that is built around the concept of traumatic origins.” (2000: 17) It is clear, then, that the trauma of internment will not die an absolute death. Trauma, and the memory of it, evolves into a secular, symbolic synchronisation of the past with the present, the dead with the yet-unborn. There is clearly a means of transferring trauma from the depths of historical memory to a contemporary event (and possible future events) which are laden with significations.

These significations are evident in the artistic and literary world, where arguments about persecution, ignorance and shed blood are powerful tools. Nisei poet Michiko Mizumoto wrote:

They say your people are wanton
Sabateurs.
Haters of white men.
Spies.
Yet I have seen them go forth to die for their only country,
Help with the defense of their homeland,
America.
(Gesensway and Roseman, 1987: 108)

As is evident in that piece, much of the contemporary literature is driven by anger at the unjust treatment of their community and frustration at the silence of the older generations, as exemplified by this piece from a Hawaiian Sansei when he headed out on his first pilgrimage to Manzanar:

But where were our stories within the master narrative of American history? And how where they told, from whose perspective? I remember how the silences of the past were deafening to us. I remember how the strident and subtle distortions filled us with rage. . . . (Okihiro, 1996: 91-92)

The same sense of anger, sadness and resentment in the younger generations can also be read in the prose and poetry of Janice Mirikitani, David Mura, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Joy Kogawa, Yoshiko Uchida, Ken Mochizuki and so on, and I will discuss them further in the following chapters. There are two examples that specifically deal with the implications of blood-sacrifices I found particularly touching: the first is by a Sansei writer who wrote a short story entitled “Snapshot, 1944” in which he described a photograph of his Uncle George’s funeral in Gila River (George was killed in action).
Since the war, the camp was not mentioned yet the writer found great meaning in the silences of his family and in the snapshot.

Silent expressions locked in a snapshot. *Jiichan* and *Baachan*\(^{26}\) clutch the remains of their son . . . I do not and cannot know what they felt. I was born ten years later in a different time and different place. But a silence penetrates such gaps, linking me with my past: a silence felt by my family and carried through the years; a silence that teaches yet I do not fully understand; a silence captured for a moment in a snapshot, 1944. (Masumoto, 1970: 45)

Another example, by *Sansei* poet Amy Uyematsu titled ‘Lexicon,’ portrays her anger at the continued ignorance and ongoing brutalisation and trauma at the hands of white America:

- try not to be insulted when they call us oriental.
- let exotic be a compliment.
- even the most educated among them will ask how long we’ve been here,
- be genuinely surprised we speak English so well.
- learn how to differentiate.
- slanted eyes is o.k.
- but not you slanteyes, tighteyes, sliteyes, zipperheads.
- to most of them Jap, Chink, or Gook all mean the same. . .
- maybe our closest friends can call us crazy Japs,
- but be cautious when their talk turns to those sneaky Japs who attacked Pearl Harbour,
- who deserved to be put away in camps,
- bombed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

(Song and Kono, 1991: 131)

The volume of literature and art by the younger generations dealing with the internment is proof that the present and the future, as-yet unborn traumatic moments will inevitably crystallise historical development once again, will create an immediate paradigmatic short-circuit. It means that past traumas and memories have not been concluded, have not died an absolute death and that is crucial if they are to rewrite their own history, overriding the version of the victors. Their trauma is continually being transmitted into the future through literature, oral narratives and so on and that, I believe, is an extremely important aspect for the preservation of the history and identity of a diasporic community.
3.9 The impossibility of an absolute death

Although the case for the future of the Japanese Hawaiians and Japanese Americans were aided by such comments as this by General Joseph Stilwell:

They bought an awful hunk of America with their blood. . . . You’re damn right those Nisei boys have a place in the American heart, now and forever. We cannot allow a single injustice to be done to the Nisei without defeating the purposes for which we fought. (Crost, 1994: 153)

the Japanese diaspora continued to experience a repetition of their earlier traumatic experiences, especially the Japanese on the mainland. And although, as prominent Japanese American author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston wrote that “the most effective way Japanese Americans could combat the attitudes that put them in places like Manzanar was to shed their blood on the battlefield” (2000: 85) and therefore the significance of the Nisei’s contribution should not have been underestimated, the trauma persisted.

One would imagine that the actions of the Nisei soldiers would have been enough to cease all further traumatic experiences for the Japanese diaspora. Indeed, for the Japanese Hawaiians, the continuing incidences and intensity of traumatic events lessened in the post-war years, but that was also as a result of the non-(mass)internment, their integral role in the ‘aloha spirit’ and their more complete assimilation into the local community. Despite this, however, the trauma for them did not cease – remembering that although the numbers were slight compared to the mainlanders, there were still 1,700 Japanese Hawaiians incarcerated and they all still faced incidents of racism and hostility after the war. The Japanese Americans faced great hostility after the war and continued to endure discrimination from both the government and the public. The very fact that it took over forty years and a huge campaign instigated by the Sansei for the government to admit their mistake is a sign of how disinclined the government was to accept blame and responsibility.

When the government finally admitted their wrongdoing and demonstrated the trustworthiness of the Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians through President Reagan’s speech, delivered when he signed the first Redress Act on the 10th August 1988, it thereby allowed the process of healing for the survivors of the internment
camps to begin. Reagan’s speech recalled Kelly and Kaplan’s argument of the politics of blood-shed that dethrones the belief in the priority of primordiality:

Blood that has soaked into the sands of a beach is all of one color. America stands unique in the world, the only country not founded on race, but on a way – an idea. Not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way. (Hosokawa, 2002: 524-525)

Similarly, veteran Ted Tsukiyama wrote an essay entitled “An American – Not a Japanese Living in America” in which he said:

The blood our men shed in the ultimate dedication to country was red – just as red as the blood of any other fallen American hero. And I know that because of those eight hundred white crosses with Japanese names. . . . (Japanese Eyes, 2000: 339)

It was the decorations on the returning soldiers for Wakatsuki Houston, the blood-drenched beaches for Reagan and the white crosses for Tsukiyama that delivered visible proof of the loyalty of the Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians and justification for their right to advance without discrimination in American society. The comprehensive internment of the Japanese Americans on the mainland and the strategic incarceration of certain Japanese Hawaiian leaders did not prevent the Nisei from offering their lives as acts of blood-sacrifice for the good of their community and their country. The internment and the loyalty questionnaire that the mainlanders were forced to endure deterred some Nisei from initially volunteering, mostly due to their desire to uphold their traditional filial duties and their concern for their families behind barbed wire but, when the draft was reinstated, the majority were eager to prove their worth. On the other hand, without the impediment of mass internment, the Japanese Hawaiians were able to offer themselves to the military immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result, they were able to fight and justifiably rise above any future suspicions that may have been cast upon the loyalty of their community. Thus all of the Nisei soldiers had empowered the diaspora by providing stories of martyrdom and their improved position in the post-war years, especially in Hawaii, was afforded them as a result of the abdication of the individual for the good of the entire community.
Notes

1 See page 73 for the Hawaiian population statistics for the years 1870-1940.
2 From an interview with Dennis Ogawa, University of Hawaii, 9th January 2004.
3 An example of a luna speaking to his workers in Pidgin in 1918 was met with scorn by his workers. He wanted them to cut the cane close to the ground and lop the tops off and throw them between the rows where they would enrich the soil. He said “Luna [foreman], big boss speak, all men down-below cutch [cut]; suppose too much maaka [uphill, high] cutch, too mucha sugar poho [wasted] – keiki [shoots] no use. Savvy? All men opala [trash] cutch, one side t’row [throw] – bumbye [by-and-bye, later] mule men come – lepo [dirt] too much guru [good]. Savvy?” The workers spokesman replied “Savvy” then, with a look of disgust, remarked “Huy? Wasamalla dis haole – he no can talk haole! [What’s the matter with this white man? Can’t he talk English?]” (Chinen and Hiura, 1997: 23. Original quote from John Reinecke.1938. Pidgin English in Hawaii: A Local Study in the Sociology of Language.)
4 From the ‘Tule Lake Community Analysis Reports, December 1944 to February 1945.’
5 By the early nineteenth century the popularity of novels was on the rise, argued Kathleen Tillotson. The publication of novels in instalments in magazine serials and newspapers and the rising popularity of circulating libraries intensified their appeal. Serial publication induced a close relationship not only between the author and the reader but also between readers as they eagerly anticipated the next instalment together. These publications “increased the popularity of the novel. The suspense induced by ‘making ‘em wait’ was intensified by being prolonged – to see what happened next the reader had to wait a month at a time. . . Often the end was not even written, perhaps not predetermined: for this and other reasons, publication in parts induced . . . a kind of contact between author and reader unknown today.” (1971: 25-26) The popularity of certain characters or storylines could influence the author to make amendments accordingly to comply with public desires. This process is comparable to those used to make the soap operas or reality-television shows that enjoy phenomenal success today.
6 In fact, the newspapers were extremely important not only to the establishment of the new Japanese diaspora but also to the next generation, the Nisei, who established the JACL’s newspaper, The Pacific Citizen. During the internment, newspapers again played an important role in maintaining the community within each camp, the largest of which held nearly 19,000 internees.
9 “To Volunteer or Not?” (Ogawa, 1980: 332-335) was first printed in Paradise of the Pacific May 1945, 11-12.
10 Of the 2,686 men accepted, the 2,685th was Daniel Inouye who would later rise to political prominence.
11 Indeed, their motto was “Go For Broke!”
15 Especially well-known is the story of Sadao Munemori who, through his selfless act of throwing himself on a grenade to save two of his men during a crucial battle in the Apennines, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. See Crost, 1994: 253-256.
16 There are several poems about the conflicting emotions the Issei had about the military service, such as this poem by Issei Masa Nakahara:
My son George, his picture
was in the paper yesterday:
Nisei Interpreters Quiz Jap Prisoner. The picture was so fuzzy,
Hard to tell who was who.
They looked like kids to me –
like my sister’s boys
in Japan. (31)
And this poem about the great cultural divide between generations by another Issei man Yoshio Miyake:
Some evenings, my grandson
brings over his friends. Today the boys
are happy. They say the American hero Superman was looking for Jap saboteurs
in the camps but didn’t find any.
17 Tanka poem entitled “On the Ship to the Mainland.”
Article by John Terry “Summing Up the AJAs at Shelby” originally appeared in a brochure entitled “With Hawaii’s AJA Boys at Camp Shelby, Mississippi” in Honolulu Star Bulletin in 1943, exact date unknown.

Matsunaga was one of the first Japanese Hawaiian senators. His speech was delivered at a Memorial Day address at the Fairmount Cemetery in Denver, Colorado on the 30th May 1968.


There are no page numbers in Heroes.


Some Issei were open to discussions about camp, but only with the Sansei or younger generations.

There did not seem to be much interaction between the Issei and Nisei about camp. When Glen Kitayama, a Sansei, was younger, he would visit his Issei grandfather every Saturday and learn about the camps. “After my grandmother died in 1978, lunch was either the green burritos and fries at Manny’s El Loco on Atlantic Boulevard or burgers at Nancy’s hot dog stand on Second Street in J-town. No matter where we ate though, the conversations seemed to revolve around the two particular subjects: the ‘goddamn’ Dodgers and camp. . . . With camp, all that I could ever do was listen and learn. . . . Years from now, if I ever have children, I hope to take them to Manzanar one day and say, ‘That’s where your grandfather went to camp when he was a kid.’ And hopefully, they’ll understand.” (Niiya, 2002: 71-73)

Wakatsuki Houston wrote of how the trauma of the internment continued to haunt her: “My throat constricts and beginnings of tears sting my eyes. . . . I am irritated at myself. Hadn’t years of therapeutic work, the catharsis of writing Farewell to Manzanar with my husband, healed the trauma associated with World War II and the internment? I take a deep breath. Posttraumatic stress syndrome never goes away, they say.” (2002: 171-180)

Jiichan or Ojiichan means grandfather. Baachan or Obaachan means grandmother.


Chapter Four

Literature with the ‘Aloha spirit’

We in Hawaii, the Paradise of the Pacific, had read and heard of wars but had never even dreamed that it would descend upon us so suddenly and influence our lives so completely. Hawaii seemed so far away from all those miseries of such was but this event has turned from nightmare into acute reality. It was unthinkable that the country which had been my home for practically all my life would turn me into their enemy. Sometimes I cannot believe that this is real and feel as though I am in a horrible nightmare. But this is real! (Hoshida, 366)

4.1 Impact of non-(mass) internment in Hawaii

As discussed in the preceding chapters, there existed a great disparity in the way Japanese Americans and Japanese Hawaiians were treated during the war years. Consequently, the artistic contributions made by the Japanese Hawaiians are noticeably different to those made by the mainlanders. The reason for this is articulated in David Mura’s autobiographical novel Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei. Mura is a Sansei from the mainland and his novel focussed on the year he spent living in Japan with his Caucasian wife. One evening he asked a fellow Japanese American writer, Yuri, why she had returned to Japan:

She said that she had gotten tired of the petty squabbling among the Japanese-American writers. Too many had too narrow a definition of what Japanese-American writing should be. “Everybody’s written their barbed-wire relocation-camp poem,” she said. “But if you stray from that in any way, you’ve sold out. You can’t just write a love poem or a poem about a flower.” (1992: 152)

Due to the tremendous impact the internment had upon the mainland Japanese American community, many artists felt compelled to express their thoughts and reactions to that event. Yuri, however, felt that it had gone too far and that instead of internment issues being a characteristic of Japanese American writing, it had become its defining feature, an obligatory burden for all Japanese American artists, thus constricting and inhibiting any growth or movement beyond those parameters. Mura
recalled that Yuri “mentioned that after she wrote an article criticizing Japanese-American poetry, other Asian-American writers treated her like a traitor.” (1992: 152)

Clearly, the urge to write about the internment experience was, for some, more than just a compulsion; it was an obligation. The need to reflect upon the internment experience, whether borne of a compulsion to share and thus diffuse one’s trauma, or a desire to preserve one’s memories, or written with the intent to exert political power underscores the overwhelming effect the internment had on the Japanese diaspora in North America. So indelible was the internment on the communal memory that the clash between compulsion and obligation had transmigrated from the generations who suffered the abuse to the new generations who read about it in their history books. And the very reason that it is in their history books is due to the efforts of the Nisei and Sansei. But if the Nisei from Hawaii protested as loudly as the mainlanders, why did the trauma not transfer itself to the later generations there as profoundly as it did on the mainland?

The reason lies in the internment once again. The Hawaiian Nisei protested for acknowledgement of their efforts in battle and for advances in social and political power. Whilst the treatment of those who were interned was deplored, the fact that they were not interned en masse meant that their main agenda was for the progression and advancement of the Japanese Hawaiians rather than a push for an apology and reparations for those who suffered evacuation and internment. The fact that the Japanese Hawaiians escaped from the systematic incarceration experienced by the mainlanders meant the psyche and communal memory shared by the islanders would henceforth be different to the mainlanders. Less than 1% of the entire Japanese population in Hawaii was interned (approximately one out of every 320 inhabitants) and, of those, approximately half were ‘enemy alien’ Issei. Those who were left behind were subjected to the most stringent measures of the martial law that had been imposed on Hawaii; their places of residence and sources of livelihood were restricted, they had to comply with extended curfews and travel restrictions and their fishing fleet was impounded. Upon their return to Hawaii after their confinement during the war, many Issei adhered to traditional Japanese codes of silence and endurance and, like many Issei on the mainland, frequently applied the expression shikata ga nai when asked about their experiences and forced them deep into their memories so as not to burden their children with their sorrow. But the sorrow and the anger did manifest itself in their
literary contributions and this chapter will examine the ways the Hawaiian *Issei*
expressed their sorrow, the *Nisei* described their frustrations and the *Sansei* vented their anger.

4.2 Hawaiian *Issei* poets

Some *Issei*, most of whom had been brutally ripped apart from their families, turned to another Japanese tradition: the art of tanka poetry. The first anthologies of tanka poetry appeared in Japan in approximately 700 A.C.E. which presented these structurally rigid forms of poetry. Tanka was often used instead of haiku because, due to its greater length (haiku had 17 *onji* or syllables, usually in a 5-7-5 pattern, tanka had 31 *onji*, usually in a 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 pattern), it was considered to allow for deeper thought and greater expression of themes. The first line of a haiku or tanka poem sets up the premise of the poetic thought and the subsequent lines are used to add solidarity and descriptive strength so that the meaning can be well defined by the reader or listener. Thus tanka was a common form of poetry used by the *Issei* internees during the war.

Jiro and Kay Nakano published an anthology of tanka poetry written by Hawaiian *Issei* men during their confinement. Poets Keiho Soga, Taisanboku Mori, Sojin Takei and Muin Ozaki contributed to the anthology and a common theme of sadness and anguish at their separation from their families is expressed. In the examples of their work that I discuss in this chapter, I have provided the Japanese poem followed by the English translation. This is because the strict syllabic structure of tanka can only be observed in the Japanese version; they are unfortunately lost in translation:

\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{ko no negao ni} \\
  \text{wakarete samuku} \\
  \text{hikare yuku} \\
  \text{yami shojyo to} \\
  \text{ame furi idenu}
\end{align*}
\]

I bid farewell
To the faces of my sleeping children
As I am taken prisoner
Into the cold night rain.
-Muin Ozaki

\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{yume ni mishi} \\
  \text{tsuma no omokage} \\
  \text{yaya yatsure} \\
  \text{kanashiki koto o} \\
  \text{katari kerukamo}
\end{align*}
\]
In my dream
My wife’s face
Becomes drawn
As she speaks to me
Of her sorrow.
   -Taisanboku Mori

tsuma mo ko mo
toki sekai no
mono nariki
kono tessaku no
yoha no saishisa

My wife and children
Live in a far away land.
How lonely are the nights
Behind these barbed wire fences.
   -Sojin Takei

The distress expressed by Ozaki, Mori and Takei at their separation from their families
led the Hawaiian members of the Santa Fe Relocation Center to send a petition to the
director of Topaz to expedite the transfer of the families who chose to be interned with
their husbands/fathers:

   all of our families were promised definitely at the time of their
departure from Hawaii that as soon as they arrive in mainland
they would be reunited with the families, husbands and fathers
who are interned. In spite of this official promise our families
had to stay in the desert Relocation Center Camp for nearly a
year separated from their fathers and husbands. On account of
this unduly delay some of the families are facing exceptionally
difficult situation financially and physically especially mentally.
(National Archives, RG 210)

   In the rare cases where entire families from Hawaii were interned, it was
common for them to be confined separately. This explains the repetitive theme of
forced familial separation in the poetry of the Hawaiian Issei. Also, despite their years
of discriminatory experiences on the plantations, they did not anticipate the humiliation
of the camps:

   jyuken no
saki de inu no goto
sashizu sare
munen no shinpi
muramura to tatsu

   Like a dog
I am commanded
At a bayonet point.
My heart is inflamed
With burning anguish.
-Keiho Soga

\textit{komi ageru}
kidori ari
hyakujyuichi to
munehada ni bango
akaku kakareshi

A wrenching anguish rises
As the number “111”
Is painted
On my naked chest
In red.
-Muin Ozaki\textsuperscript{5}

The imagery of three long red lines painted on Ozaki’s chest is like three long, bleeding wounds. The repeated trauma inflicted upon Ozaki is similar to the repeated trauma inflicted upon Clorinda in \textit{Gerusalemme Liberata} which also led to an open, seeping wound. Unlike Clorinda, however, it was Ozaki who carried the trauma of his double wounding.

For the aging \textit{Issei} male population, deteriorating health and the threat of premature death was ever-present. A common observation of internment literature is the premature aging of the prisoners, especially the \textit{Issei}. Keiho Soga wrote several tanka poems about this phenomenon:

\textit{toraware no}
tomo no oku wa
me ni shiruku
oini keru kamo
natsu nakaba sugu

Many a friend
Who is incarcerated
Ages visibly.
Summer is passing by.

\textit{doku nomite}
shiseshi tomo ari
yuyami no
kampu no michi ni
kuroki chi nagaru
A fellow prisoner  
Takes his life with poison.  
In the evening darkness,  
Streaks of black blood  
Stain the camp road.

suna kuruu  
areno ni toha ni  
nemuritaru  
tomo no sabishisa  
omoi namidasu

The barren wasteland  
Raged by sand storm,  
I weep for my friend  
Who sleeps there alone,  
Eternally.

warera mina  
sarinishi ato no  
kono mushiro  
dare ka touran  
iwasa hate naba

When the war is over  
And after we are gone  
Who will visit  
This lonely grave in the wild  
Where my friend lies buried?

This fear and uncertainty was not limited to the Hawaiian Issei, of course. But the death of a Hawaiian Issei in a mainland camp, on a more practical note, meant that their gravesites would be located on the mainland, far from their homes in Hawaii. Their gravesites would never be tended to by family – a tremendously important aspect of Japanese faith. So the forced separation of families had far more devastating ramifications than it would initially appear, which is why that theme is so repetitive especially in the traditional tanka poetry of the Hawaiian Issei men.

4.3 Otokichi Ozaki, or Muin Ozaki

Otokichi Ozaki was born in November 1904 in Japan. He moved to Hawaii at the age of twelve and was interned for the duration of the war, spending four years in captivity in eight different camps in Hawaii and on the mainland. He was an accomplished tanka poet and a comprehensive collection of his works in English and Japanese is housed in the Resource Center of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii.
Dear Sir or Madam,
Please excuse my long silence.
I am fine as well.
Flocks of seagulls are flying in the sky
Over the Warureke Internment Center.

I have been detained in this camp for four years.
As I make my diary entries, this situation
Will be talked about for a long time.
This is nothing to boast about,
But I will let you know.
Hoshidan\(^7\) and also Hokokudan\(^8\)

Wassshoi, Hachimaki,\(^9\)

Bravery is shown by
Parolees and also internees though
The families have been separated.

In the next barracks Ebaki is
Energetic, full of vigor.
He doesn’t care that he’s been displaced,
He doesn’t care about his citizenship,
He is laughing loudly as he throws it away.\(^10\)

If my buddy is gonna do it, I’ll do it too.
Without thinking I followed
Now I am also renouncing.
I have been forced to register as an alien
Now I am on the repatriation list.

My father’s hometown is Hiroshima where
Such incomparable cruelty was inflicted by the atomic bomb.
Countless spirits were erased
Became ruined \[ \]\(^11\)
With no home to go back to.

Someday I will go back to Japan
For the sake of world peace.
My power is very little, but this I will contribute.
Until we meet again, someday,
Please wait for me, Mother.

There are a few key issues raised in this poem that must be recognised in order to appreciate the possibility of the continuation of trauma within the Japanese diaspora. It seems to be written from two points of view, from two generations. The text begins and ends from the perspective of an Issei man, sending a message back home to his mother and father in Japan to reassure them of his wellbeing. He ends by articulating his wistful desire to one day return to Japan to make a contribution to world peace. This is despite, or possibly due to, the fact that, judging from the reference to the bomb, he has knowledge of the annihilation of his ancestral home and people, possibly including his parents. In the second stanza, the lines “As I make my diary entries, this situation/Will be talked about for a long time” indicate the conflict felt by many Issei trapped between the public sphere and the private. The internment experience was so shameful and distressing that many wanted to leave it as a private trauma and, once over, carry on with their public lives and leave that part buried. Even with their families, in the comfort and safety of their own homes, the camps were rarely discussed and the Issei carefully tucked it away, hoping to never share or discuss it again. The Issei hoped to
bury their traumatic kernel, to repress it so thoroughly that it would never reappear. However, the nature of trauma made this impossible. Their personal latency period may have lasted decades or even generations but, as shown in Chapter One, the trauma would always be repeated and recalled at some stage in the future.

With the mix of generations in the camps, the scale of the internment and the significance it would have for years to come, it would be impossible for everyone to relegate it to their memories – he was aware that it would be discussed *ad infinitum* despite his wishes. In fact, as I will discuss regarding the Japanese Americans, the silence of the *Issei* was a characteristic that often escalated the tension and the conflict between the generations as the more Americanized youngsters could not understand the importance of silence, of the private nature of shame. The use of Japanese terms in the third stanza indicates the strong ties the author still felt to his homeland. He turned to reminders of noble Japanese voluntary groups and the phrases that they used to raise their spirits and ambition. The persona calls out, "*Wasshoi*" and urges the use of the "*Hachimaki*" as a motivational aid to encourage the internees to maintain their bravery and stoicism. These are characteristics he urges everyone to emulate in order to get through the difficult years in captivity, characteristics commonly embodied by the *Issei*.

The three middle stanzas were written from the perspective of a *Nisei* man, written with American language ("If my buddy is gonna do it") instead of Japanese phrases and reflected upon the concerns that haunted many *Nisei* men. Many men, such as the character Ebaki, felt forced to defiantly renounce their once-prized citizenship. Suddenly, they found themselves registered as aliens, truly without any rights whatsoever (although their internment was in direct violation of their rights as citizens) and faced repatriation to a country which, for many, was entirely unfamiliar. The persona knows that his own hardships are incomparable to the victims of the atomic bombs, whose spirits were simply "erased" off the earth. Ozaki did not use violent or graphic imagery; rather he used a haunting image of the erasure of a spirit – thousands of spirits that had vanished without a trace. It is assumed that one of these was the persona’s mother, to whom he implores to wait for him to join her someday, after he has made his contribution towards his dreams of world peace.

After the war Ozaki made a series of radio broadcasts for KHON Radio in which he discussed the treatment he received while being shipped from camp to camp:
we were supposed to go through medical check. The climate there was so severe that some of us got insane. . . . we were taken into a makeshift clinic in order to get naked. I was told to hold out my chest. I thought they would give me an injection and held out my chest toward him. He, then, wrote numbers directly on my chest with red ink. I got very angry when I saw big “111” on my chest. They put down numbers on skin just like they did on animals. I felt so sad when I thought this had been done by an American whose country was recognized as a civilized country. At night, I took shower and tried to erase the numbers but could not remove them so easily. (Ozaki Papers, Box 4, File 15)

This event was also recorded in his tanka poem that I discussed on page 114. The ineradicability of the numbers mirrors the ineradicability of the trauma and the humiliating manner in which the internees were treated clearly continued to haunt him for a very long time. Another number that Ozaki was unable to forget was his ID number that he was assigned during his four years in captivity:

According to an alphabetical order, our names were called one at a time. They placed a foot-long identity card around my neck and took several pictures from various angles. Here I was identified as number 1068. To be exact, my ID number was ISN-HJ-1068-CI. ISN stands for internees and HJ is for the Japanese in Hawaii. (Ozaki Papers, Box 4, File 15)

His easy recollection of his ID number, considering the length of time that had passed, is another common trait amongst camp survivors. Despite the attempts of most Issei to bury their memories, shame and emotions, they obviously remained deep within their consciousnesses, waiting for an opportunity to resurface.

In 1976, Ozaki was asked to write an article for The Hawaii Times. In it, he reflected upon the difficulties of tracing past memoirs, essays and so on to write about his experiences:

Some of the records became a nest for the termites. There was much that was beyond help but as I calmly opened the records, I was overcome with a deep emotion. The confinement period came back to me as though it was yesterday and I fell into deep thought. . . . I didn’t feel like writing about my confinement and so thirty years have passed. (Ozaki Papers, Box 12, File 13)

The words and the records that he re-read after so many years lying in a dusty box, lying dormant in his consciousness, were awakened and he immediately recalled the emotional and traumatic years of confinement. This moment was, to use Žižek’s term once again, a paradigmatic short cut to his past, a crystallization of history and an
opportunity to retroactively redeem past injustices. The opportunity to write an article thirty years after the war was also an opportunity to heal, to assuage any guilt or shame still felt, to “settle accounts.” His essay was actually a means of transferring the trauma from the depths of historical memory to a contemporary event and was thereby a subconscious attempt to destroy the corrosive kernel of trauma that lies deep within all trauma survivors.

4.4 The social and political battles waged by *Nisei* veterans

The trauma survivors of the *Nisei* generation in Hawaii had a very different experience that also required a healing process. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Hawaiian *Nisei* soldiers suffered tremendous losses in battle fighting for their country. Exhibiting signs of PTSD that predated those shown by the returning soldiers from Vietnam by some thirty years, these soldiers also did not necessarily receive the homecoming that their courage and bravery should have afforded them. The *Nisei* made up 60% of Hawaii’s fighting forces (Tamura, 1994: 235) yet they suffered a casualty rate of over three times the average of the U.S. Army and made up 80% of Hawaii’s casualty rate. (Tamura, 1994: n291) When the veterans returned to Hawaii, they were more determined than ever to push through the barriers that had once confined them to the plantation fields. Those who were not forced to work to support their families attended College on the G.I. Bill\(^\text{12}\) and fought for leadership positions in government and politics. Like the *Issei*, many *Nisei* were also unwilling to discuss their experiences. For example, Steve Rosen’s 1996 film *Beyond Barbed Wire* documented interviews with veterans of the ‘Pineapple Army’. Veteran Yukio Sumida broke down as he related a specific incident. His wife of fifty-two years sat next to him, crying also, and explained that in all their years together she had never heard any of his stories. The common thread between the children and spouses of the veterans was that their fathers/husbands never talked about their experiences.

Some veterans, in contrast, used their experiences to push for social acceptance and political change for their entire community. A well-known Hawaiian veteran whom I have already mentioned, Daniel Inouye, suffered horrific wounds and lost an arm in battle. He entered politics and, in 1954, ran as the Democratic candidate in a traditionally Republican stronghold for the Territorial House of Representatives. In an essay entitled “A Reckoning in Ballots” he explained his motivation:
our central theme was progress, for all the people. We had played a small but vital part in the great war and now that it was won we were not about to go back to the plantation. We wanted our place in the sun, the right to participate in decisions that affected us. (Ogawa, 1980: 392)

Engaged in a debate which had turned fierce, Inouye held up his empty sleeve, shook it and cried, “I gave this arm to fight fascists. If my country wants the other one to fight communists, it can have it!” (Ogawa, 1980: 394) His party achieved a resounding victory and as his career advanced, becoming a senator in 1963, so too did the fight for acceptance and progression waged by fellow Nisei veterans.

The Nisei realised that they were able to fight effectively and prove their loyalty by sharing their experiences on the battlefield. When Bishop Ryokan Ara moved to Hawaii from Japan in the 1970s, he began to work to preserve the memories of the Issei. Many of them spoke with great pride of the achievements of their sons and what that meant for the Japanese community. In 1995, Bishop Ara decided that not enough had been done to research and chronicle the way the Nisei veterans felt about their war experiences. These ‘quiet Americans’ were known to keep their stories private. As he struggled to gain insight into the minds of the Nisei, a shocking dissertation was published in a local English-language newspaper. Written by a Sansei working on her doctorate in political science, she questioned the authenticity of some well-known Nisei wartime stories, such as the liberation of Dachau and the plausibility of the idea of sacrificing everything for their children, a philosophy embodied in the phrase “kodomo no tame ni” (for the sake of the children). She argued that such stories mythicised the Nisei soldier, creating untenable images of heroism. The fear that their exploits could be doubted or even dissolved into fantastical legend must have been a motivating factor for the veterans who contributed to Bishop Ara’s project, who proposed to them, “Wouldn’t written records of things not said before be of value?” (Japanese Eyes, 2000: 412)

The answer, of course, is yes; their value is undeniable and inestimable. For at least two decades after the end of World War II, I believe the Japanese community faced a crisis of silence, a lobotomisation of the community’s collective memory. But thanks to the determination of several Sansei and the bravery of the Nisei generation to finally speak out about their experiences, whether through oral testimonies during the
redress movement, through literature and art, or simply by telling their children and grandchildren, the crisis was slowly averted.

### 4.5 Hawaiian Nisei author Milton Murayama

Possibly the most well-known Hawaiian Nisei author is Milton Murayama. He is the author of several plays and has published the first three instalments of a planned tetralogy chronicling the Oyama family in Hawaii. There is a strong autobiographical component to the novels, each narrated by different members of the Oyama family. The second novel, *Five Years on a Rock*, was written from the Issei mother’s perspective as she moved to Hawaii as a picture bride and endured decades of hard labour and poverty, bore several children and was only sustained by her Japanese beliefs and values that she and her husband clung to. The first novel, *All I Asking For is my Body*, narrated by the second son Kiyoshi and the third novel, *Plantation Boy*, narrated by the first son Toshio, are more significant for my thesis as they were written from the perspective of two Nisei men struggling to adapt to the turbulent war years in Hawaii.

Toshio was outspoken and angry at his parents for clinging to their old-fashioned Japanese values. They constantly reminded him that it was his duty as their first son to sacrifice everything to pay off the family debt, a debt they accumulated from the grandfather. He reluctantly agreed to sacrifice his first ten working years to contribute to their debt but berated their attitudes endlessly. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, they deferred to Toshio’s orders to discard all Japanese items:

> Tosh turned to his father, “You have a Japanese flag in the *tansu.* Burn it or bury it. Hide all your Japanese books in the chicken coop. Don’t talk in Japanese when there’s any non-Japanese around.” (1988, 78)

They behaved in a way that was typical of the Issei and Nisei at that time; the Issei were forced to accept advice and leadership from the more Americanized Nisei to avoid conflict.

The generational differences that were exacerbated by the war are portrayed authentically and the reader is drawn into a conflict that is confusing and frustrating. Toshio and Kiyoshi were torn between their Japanese upbringing and their Hawaiian environment and, when the request for Nisei volunteers for the Army was made, Murayama was able to articulate the difficult situation faced by the Japanese Hawaiians.
that I have touched upon. While I focussed on the difficulty of the decision for the Japanese Americans due to their internment, the Japanese Hawaiians had to battle a clash between Japanese customs and American duty. As Toshio was unwilling to continue to sacrifice his salary for his parents for more than ten years, the parents decided to rely on Kiyoshi and treat him as their ‘number one son.’ His mother said:

But you’re our only son now. We’re poor and poor families have to be more careful. The poorer you are the more you have to be united. Acting on your own when you’re so poor is selfishness. We’re not only poor, our number one son [Toshio] hasn’t been of much help. Families with good number one sons have been able to send the younger children to college. Being so poor, we have to be excused, we have to think of the family first. . . (1988, 97)

Despite his willingness to volunteer also, Toshio was ineligible due to a broken eardrum (which he claimed was caused by his father’s frequent beatings) but Kiyoshi was eligible and, despite his mother’s pleas, enlisted. He decided that it was more important to fight for his country and prioritised his American duty over his Japanese. He did not see any other option and said to his mother, “it can’t be helped” – the familiar *shikata ga nai*. Toshio stayed in Hawaii and through the letters he received and stories he heard, the reader gains a personalised perspective into the harshness of the battles the 100\(^{th}\)/442\(^{nd}\) endured. Their sacrifices motivated him to study at night school so that he could leave his life on the plantation. Kiyoshi went to college on the mainland on the G.I. Bill and became a teacher and eventually Toshio also qualified as an architect. Just before his graduation in the 1960s, however, he was asked to show some important clients a few houses. The client’s question, “why are there so many Japs [in Hawaii]?” triggered memories of discrimination and racism and he angrily retorted:

Shit! The plantations wen bring our parents to work the canefields! We both here! We fought the Japs and the Nazis! We only thirty-five percent of the population, but we took eighty percent of Hawaii’s casualties! We wen afford the right to be here! We wen work and died for it! (1998: 169-170)

His reaction typified the *Niseis’* beliefs in their claim to be recognised as true and loyal Hawaiians, beliefs that propelled their rise in social and political power as discussed in Chapter Three. Murayama’s novels captured the spirit of the *Nisei* and their battle for the right to be recognised and incorporated honestly into the Hawaiian landscape.
4.6 The diverse literary productions of the Sansei

Sansei Gary Okihiro who grew up in Hawaii, reflected upon his first pilgrimage in 1972 to Manzanar where his family had been interned.

My pilgrimage, on reflection, must have been impelled by the silences and whispers all around me. . . . The burial ground was overfull with life. The silences of the past, I discovered, were not empty of meaning. Our stories, if missing from the pages of history, advance other stories, other lived. Our pauses define the parameters of words and make sense of speech. Mute photographs convey universes of signification, and fold, lifeless objects emit forever the warmth of the hands that made, used, and inhabited them. Silences speak. (1996: 241-242)

Although the silences in his home, in historical documents and at the site of Manzanar conveyed “universes of signification” for Okihiro, they still needed to be transmitted somehow to all people interested in the truth that lay behind the dominant (victors) account of American history. The stories and the silences needed to be given a voice and, sometimes, those voices emerged through the members of later generations.

For example, Sansei writer Kenneth Tanemura articulated his anger at the silence of his father and his frustration at hearing internment stories from the newly-created, government-funded institutions. Although the stories came from authoritative sources, Tanemura wanted the personal, painful truth directly from his father and begged him to speak in this short piece entitled “Tell Me”:

Dad spent 2 years behind barbed wire at Tule Lake. He was 6. He never talks about it. Fuck you and your CCLPEP\textsuperscript{15} funded, book-length descriptions. I want to hear it from my father. \textit{Dad, tell me}. Take me off the mailing list for that next reading of camp anecdotes at the Japanese Consulate. Save your free press tickets for premiere screenings, government-paid. I want my father to tell me. I don’t want to be EDUCATED. I want to hear him tell it. I don’t want to be educationally programmed by all the money you got. \textit{Dad, tell me about being segregated at the “center” because your dad checked No-No on the loyalty oath. I don’t want to get it from spiral-bound guides, courtesy of the California State Library. Tell me about Abalone Mountain and Castlerock, the Tule Lake Sump and the State Line Road. If I hear one more word from Mike Honda, I’ll scream. Dad, you tell me. Of Newell and Capt. Jack’s Stronghold, the barrack tower and Block 73. I don’t want to pay $12.95 for an area site map. I don’t want to hear it from Jimmy Yamaichi standing before a fucking microphone – everybody’s a hero but not mine. Dad, I need to know from you.
Please, tell me what they sky looked like speckled with knots of steel. (2002: 273)

Although Tanemura was clearly desperate for a personal connection to his father’s trauma, one that was not state-sanctioned or funded, his very vocal solicitations regarding the internment are not common in the archive of Japanese Hawaiian literature. He was pleading for an explanation for his own anger, his own sense of violation that he inherited from his father, a sense of trauma that was exacerbated by his father’s silence. He did not want to be educated by strangers, he wanted to share the trauma with his father, he wanted to, as Renan would argue, create a bond, a solidarity with his father by sharing in his suffering.

Whilst researching their literature, it became clear that much of the works written by the Sansei generation focussed on the hardships endured on the plantation by the immigrant Issei, the hard-fought victories by the Nisei veterans and the common theme of all diasporas of the desire for acceptance. The internment only plays a minor role in younger generational literature and I will examine texts by two well-known Japanese Hawaiian Sansei women, one of whom was clearly influenced by the internment, the other was not.

Juliet S. Kono wrote several poems, many of which focussed on the difficulty of being an American of Japanese ancestry during the war years, the time in which she was born. She referred to herself as a “Black-out Baby” in her poem bearing the same title and prefaced her birth into the darkness of curfew imposed on the “Japs” who were only allowed one blackened light:

The block wardens come, 
drawn like termites to light. 
Violators are startled 
by the bang on the door 
and if you are a Jap, 
you have to be careful – 
they could send you 
to internment camp, 
somewhere in Colorado. (1988: 23)

The curfew of wartime also features heavily in her poem “Wartime” where the imposed darkness accompanies a stifling, oppressive silence. The silences in the long shadows, the darkened houses and in their unspoken words foreshadow the silence of the Issei
and Nisei in the post-war years. Kono, a Sansei, remembered the silences and willed them to speak through her poetry:

Mother has dinner
on the table by then,
and steam from the rice,
and the thin clinks of chopsticks
sever the dark silence.

We go to bed early.
We learn the dance of shadows
on the ceilings,
the urgency of a curfew.
Only Mother stays up.
She writes long, unanswered letters
to interned relatives.

It has been a long time
since she’s been outside
to gaze at the expanse of the heavens;
she aches for a look
at the stars and the moon. (1988: 24)

Her mother’s intense desire to gaze upon the moon is a characteristically Japanese sentiment. The moon has traditionally played a large role in Japanese literature and the manner in which the Japanese regarded nature and natural aesthetics is well-known.16

The female persona in “Internment” was unable to ignore the beauty of the harsh desert landscape despite the ordeal in which she found herself:

Corralled, they are herded inland
From Santa Rosa.
After the long train ride
on the Santa Fe,
the physical exam,
the delousing with DDT,
the branding of her indignation,
she falls asleep.

Days later, she awakens
in an unfamiliar barracks –
Crystal City, Texas –
on land once a pasture.
Not wanting to,
not meaning to see beauty
in this stark landscape,
she sees, nonetheless,
through her tears
on the double row
of barbed wire fencing
which holds them in
like stolid cattle,
dewdrops,
impaled
and golden. (1988: 25)

The “delousing” and the “branding” are reminiscent of Holocaust victims’ experiences and
the image of a barbed-wire fence encircling a woman tearfully gazing out at the beauty that surrounded her, yet was unable to experience, is also a heart-rending one. Like the dewdrops, she, too, was impaled on the barbed-wire fence, golden in the sun. She was silent. She did not scream or cry out her humiliation and indignation, but suffered in silence and stared with wonderment at the scenery surrounding her. She embodied the motto of *shikata ga nai*, it cannot be helped.

Yet deep within those words lay a tiny core of resistance. In “Grandmother and the War,” the Grandmother did everything that was required of her to prove her allegiance and, like other *Issei*, she “tended silence”. Yet there was a part of her that refused to allow herself to submit her identity completely. She wanted to ensure that the future generations would never lose sight of their ancestry, to prove that despite all the propaganda, being Japanese was still something to treasure and preserve.

She memorized the Pledge of Allegiance,
The Star-Spangled Banner.
And everything “Japanese” was buried –
Her Buddha, the Rising Sun, her family’s picture.
She made a garden on this mound and all
The days of war, she tended silence.
But late at night, she’d shake off
The dead leaves of her reticence and
Rising from the garden of her voices,
I’d hear her whisper,
“Grandchild, grandchild, we are Japanese,
Never forget that!” (Chock and Lum, 1986: 49)

And Juliet Kono felt that, despite the Americanization of the younger generations, their Japanese heritage has remained at the core of their identity. She described a *Yonsei* boy, most likely her son, who had not experienced the harshness that their ancestors did and was able to enjoy life in Hawaii thanks to their sacrifices. She referred to him as “A mixture of ideals / Basked in sun, / Wild surf and turbulent air.” (Chock and Lum, 1986: 51)
Despite the outward nonchalance of the boy, she knew that deep inside, the
generations-old traditions passed on with his Japanese heritage would always be
respected and she found great solace in that knowledge. It is as if all that the
Grandmother did to pacify the government during the hysteria of the war years, while
secretly cultivating and maintaining pride in their heritage, had survived in him.

You say nothing
About being held
To these traditions.
You pray, bow and
Burn incense. You travel
Backward in time
For a brief moment
And say dutiful words
Do the respectful gestures
And I know that
In my longest sleep
You would come
And I would not want. (Chock and Lum, 1986: 52)

The seemingly tenuous yet deep-rooted hold of Japanese traditions and customs
emerges both in Juliet Kono’s imagery (the moon, nature, incense) and through the
characters themselves. While the internment and the war certainly do feature in her
poetry, they also motivate her desire that all Japanese Hawaiians recognise and respect
their cultural heritage, especially because of their tempestuous history on the Islands.
Even though the Yonsei have never experienced the hardships endured by the earlier
generations, Kono felt that they should not forget the sacrifices made for them by their
ancestors so they could have freedom:

[He has] no recollection
Of old plantation towns,
Of rains that plummeted
Like the sheafs of cane,
The song of flumes,
The stink of rotting feet,
The indignities cast by hard labours.
Your blood runs free
From the redness of soil. (Chock and Lum, 1986: 52)

Kono felt an attachment to her grandfather and the despair that he felt as a man
torn between two countries. He tried to learn English when it became crucial to be as
American as possible but was betrayed by his “unmistakable accent, slant eyes, / onion-
yellow skin” (1998: 211). She felt his pain keenly and understood the debt she owed to
him and his sacrifices. Had Kono’s entire family and community been interned in the
same manner as the Japanese Americans, would the main message behind the poems I
have examined here be the same? This question will be answered when I conduct a comparative examination of the Sansei poetry of the Japanese Americans in Chapter Eight.

A Japanese Hawaiian author who does not address the issue of internment at all is Lois-Ann Yamanaka. Her debut novel, Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers, published in 1996, explores the world of Lovey Nariyoshi, a Japanese Hawaiian Sansei living in Hilo who wanted, above everything else, to be a rich haole (white) girl with long legs, blond hair and a great surname like Geiger or Beckenhauser. When she had dinner at her friend Vicky Beckenhauser’s house, she longed to fit in so much that she even ate rice the haole way:

The butter dish gets passed from one person to the next, each one rubbing lots of butter on their rice. And when the butter dish comes to me, I want to be a Beckenhauser so bad, I rub butter all over my rice and swallow each bit like a mouthful of Crisco. (1996: 23-24)

Lovey made lists of her dream names, dream husbands (haoles, of course) and a dream future. She thought that life in Hawaii would be better as a haole, not as a “Japanee,” even though she had lots of aloha spirit. She wanted to:


Lovey was an outsider, not just amongst the haoles but also amongst the other Japanese Hawaiian children, evident in the way they taunted each other with racial slurs:


The intra-Japanese relationship in Lovey’s community was possibly a result of their non-(mass) internment. Lovey’s family, like most other Japanese families in Hawaii, did not experience internment during the war and neither their identity as Hawaiians nor their loyalty as Americans were ever seriously. So instead of analysing
their racially-based identifications, Lovey’s main concerns in life were finding ways of looking and acting more haole. Neither her best friend Jerry, also a Japanese Hawaiian Sansei, nor her family, could understand her obsession with being a haole and it affected her treasured relationship with her father. He told her a story one day about her Grandfather and how, although he came to love Hawaii and fathered fifteen children on Kauai, he remained true to his Japanese roots. His devotion was evident in a parcel he always kept close throughout his life which they opened when he died:

When my madda open the package, was soil – from Japan. My old man, he wanna be buried in Japanese soil. He carry that package in his one bag in 1907 all the way from Japan and keep um under his bed all those years. That was his way of going home. (1996: 174)

The Grandfather’s youngest son, Lovey’s father, felt as connected to his youth in Kauai as her grandfather did to his youth in Japan. Lovey’s father said to her one day:

Maybe I grab me some soil off Haupu Mountain and put um in one package under my bed, ‘cause when you and me see this place, that’s the only time I wanna go there. And maybe you rememba, when I die, you know what for do with that package. Just pour um on me and I be home. (1996: 180)

When her father was involved in an horrific hunting accident, she ran away to Kauai to gather the soil she knew his spirit craved. She seemed to have found a peace and acceptance with her history, her heritage which, for her, was simply Hawaiian.

Yamanaka admitted that the stories of Lovey Nariyoshi were derived from the memories of her adolescence in Hawaii. She strove to dispel the stereotypes of Hawaii as portrayed in mainstream media. She did not want Hawaiians to be portrayed as exotic and marginalised natives living carefree lives in paradise.

It’s a big industry, the exotification of Hawaii and it’s people,” she says. “‘Hawaii 5-0’, ‘The Hawaiians’, James Michener’s ‘Hawaii’, making Hawaii into every white man’s dream, ‘Magnum P.I.’, ‘Byrds of Paradise’. It goes on and on. It’s nice now that we have ownership of our own stories.17

This is why Yamanaka’s stories were written in the local Hawaiian pidgin which she, much like Lovey, was discouraged from using. She was told that it was an ignorant language and was made to feel ashamed of it. Luckily, she was convinced as an adult that it was actually a dialect with a unique history of its own that possessed an
inimitable lyricism in its words. Through the use of pidgin, she was able to give her community a voice that is authentic and real, dignified and distinctive.

Although Yamanaka’s non-addressment of the internment typifies much of the Japanese Hawaiian literary archive, those whose families were affected do articulate the manner in which their own lives have been influenced. The veterans used their experiences to fight for the advancement of their community and Murayama’s novels articulated the difficulty of that path for both veteran and non-veteran *Nisei*. The literature of the *Sansei* reveals the diverse range of reactions the younger generations of Japanese Hawaiians. As mentioned, because most families were not directly affected by it and, as such, many of the younger generation did not even know that it had occurred, the internment does not feature greatly in their literature. However, for those authors who do discuss it, their emotions range from the anger and distress exhibited in Tanemura’s text to pride, sadness and a feeling of responsibility to maintain ethnic pride in Kono’s poems. It will be interesting to see if the same patterns emerge in the literary contributions by the Japanese Americans which I discuss in Chapters Six to Nine.

Notes

1 Office of the Chief of Military History, File 224.
3 See Suyetomo, 1983.
4 Soga, Keiho et al. 1983. Poets Behind Barbed Wire. Edited and Translated by Jiro and Kay Nakano. Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press. All of the tanka poems in this chapter are from this anthology, unless stated otherwise.
5 This specific episode experienced by Muin Ozaki is discussed in greater detail further in this chapter. A Japanese Canadian tanka poet, Takeo Ujo Nakano, wrote a poem of a similar yet more sinister experience he had when he entered Angler Internment Camp. They were given uniforms to wear and the shirts bore bright red circles on the backs. They thought they were symbolic of the Japanese flag; they did not realise that they were, in fact, targets:

Covering the entire back,
The rising sun on their shirts
The inmates are made to wear.
Ecstatic are the wearers –
But what a fine target. (Nakano, 1981: 56)
6 This text was translated with the help of my mother, Noriko Goudie, and my father, Peter Goudie and I have edited it further to assist the poetic style of the translation of this form of writing. I have included another text by Ozaki that was translated with the aid of my parents in Chapter Five.
7 *Hoshidan* is a voluntary community group, aiding the less fortunate in society.
8 *Hokokudan* is a voluntary national service similar to the American National Guard.
9 *Wasshoi* is a chanting phrase used to raise something both physically and mentally, similar to “one, two, three, UP!” A *Hachimaki* is a type of headscarf worn around the forehead to raise the spirits also. These are both recognisable as motivational elements.
10 Ebaki is quite a strange, spirited character. Does he really care about his citizenship? Is he just pretending to be strong to show his defiance, or has he truly lost all respect for America and is willing to throw his citizenship away to illustrate his anger?
11 Unfortunately this was an illegible character.
On the 22nd June 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, or the G.I. Bill of Rights. This provided veterans with benefits such as medical care, financial loans, unemployment services and, most significantly, financial assistance to pursue their educations.


A chest of drawers.

California Civil Liberties Public Education Program.

Traditional Japanese belief was that human beings were not considered to be opposed to or superior to nature, rather their lives were embedded in it. Every phenomenon was a manifestation of the kami (gods) including all aspects of nature, which included humans. In nature, all elements, all subjects and objects, are fused into one single reality. Until the Western influence began after the Meiji Era, there was no concept of a signified natural order.

Chapter Five

An Intergenerational Analysis of the 
Japanese American Diaspora

There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. (Benjamin, 1970: 254)

The psychological impact of the forced evacuation and detention was deep and devastating. For the honor-conscious Issei, it was the repudiation of many years of effort and hard work in this country. For the Nisei, it was a rejection by the nation we loved, the nation to which we had pledged our allegiance. Even for the very young Sansei, the impact of spending those early years in a concentration camp has been an undeniable aspect of their identities and has affected their self-concepts throughout life. (Iwasaki Mass: 1991, 160)

5.1 Why apply an intergenerational approach?

Clinical psychologist Donna K. Nagata extensively researched the impact of the trauma of internment on different generations of the Japanese American diaspora and conducted a ‘Sansei Research Project’ to determine the strength and types of trauma exhibited within the Sansei generation specifically. I use her statement that “it is only through an analysis of trauma over an extended period of time across generations that we can truly understand the internment’s full impact” (1993: 37) as a departure point and in the following chapters I will demonstrate that the internment still continues to affect all generations of Japanese Americans, even those who did not experience it themselves, and show how their inherited trauma is evident in their literary and artistic productions.

When examining the unique history of the Japanese Americans, especially as it differs so greatly to the Japanese Hawaiian history, it is clear that what gets transmitted through the generations after the traumatic event is as complex as the process by which it is transmitted. In Chapter One, I discussed the psychological process by which
transmission occurs, most notably in Freud’s writings on the link between individual and group psychology and my own theory on the survival and transference of memory-traces. In this chapter I will apply these theories to examine what, why and how the trauma is transmitted intergenerationally and how this has affected the younger generations’ sense of identity and belonging. The subsequent chapters of the thesis will focus on the expression of trauma through a variety of artistic medium.

On a superficial level, it would appear that the lack of communication about the internment, especially before the redress movement of the 1970s and 1980s, threatened to suppress the experience of the internment camps into oblivion. However, the general lack of oral communication within the typical Japanese American family about the camps does not preclude the existence of non-verbal communication, indirect messages and a deep-seated desire within many of the survivors to express their memories and emotions in a non-threatening environment. Suppressed silence, as the familiar characterisation of the Japanese American response, emphasises the importance of examining the patterns of communication that did exist within the family and, as Nagata proposed, it also raised “questions regarding the degree to which silence is a universal or a culture-specific response to an experienced trauma.” (1993: 49) It seems very clear that the significantly widespread and intense application of silence to the disturbing memories of internment is culture-specific and, as the Japanese cultural understanding wanes with the generations, so too does their acceptance and understanding of that silence. It has created a culturally-specific generation gap that has proven difficult and painful to bridge.

Most ethnic minorities have had to experience a life of “cumulative trauma” (Parson, 1985: 318); traumas that are often associated with diaspora such as racism, discrimination, neglect, persecution and systematic exclusion made them more vulnerable to the negative effects of traumatic stress. The Japanese American experience was no exception; theirs was “one segment of a broader history of deportation of racial-ethnic minorities throughout the world.” (Ng, 1989: 230) As a result of years, or even generations, of latent cumulative trauma, the perception of ethnic minority groups of their own vulnerability to victimization increases thus increasing the negative effects of trauma, such as PTSD which psychologist Chalsa Loo described as an “anxiety disorder that involves a constellation of symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience.”
In the case of the Japanese Americans they, too, faced “concurrent stressors of forced geographical relocation, destruction of their social and familial network, perceived robbery or confiscation of their property, and unemployment.” (Loo, 1993: 100) Because their systematic incarceration was largely ignored by the nation and their trauma remained unacknowledged until the 1980s, they were denied the support usually available to other trauma victims and were “denied the psychological benefits of public outrage over the wholesale abuse of their civil rights.” (Loo, 1993: 102) Their immediate post-war isolation was further enforced by government actions – for example the prohibition of Nisei congregating in groups of more than three on the street or five in a restaurant. It was not until historical accounts^1^ were published, the redress movement began to gain momentum and the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the convictions of Hirabayashi, Korematsu and Yasui^2^ could private self-blame could be shifted to public system-blame. External parties (in this case the U.S. government) were held accountable for the trauma inflicted upon the Japanese American community which meant the blame could finally be shifted externally.

Most camp survivors realised that with the shifting of blame that occurred, for the most part, as a consequence of the redress movement, came the opportunity for forgiveness, to release their feelings of guilt and shame and, most importantly, the ability to share the experience and unburden themselves of their trauma. What retains a diaspora community is their collective memory – both positive and negative memories – and it was quickly realised that the memories needed to be shared with the younger generations to prevent the annihilation of their history. The following statement is also reminiscent of my discussions on Renan and Anderson and the sense of community and fraternity that is created through a collective suffering:

> More than blood, it is memory that confers identity on an ethnic group and sustains its life. Without the remembrance of a common homeland and ancestry, without the recollections of shared suffering and joy, a group lacks the coherence needed to maintain its integrity as it journeys through time. (Bertman, 2000: 52)

Memories need to be maintained within the diasporic community in order for it to sustain its own unique identity. Is the Japanese diaspora losing its collective memory? Is it in danger of succumbing to cultural amnesia? Is it beneficial for the future of this diasporic community to erase powerful traumatic memories such as the internment experience? I believe the answer is no. Before the redress movement, the Japanese
diaspora was in danger of capitulating to cultural amnesia but the triggering and sharing of traumatic experiences re-dispersed the crucial memories throughout the Japanese American community, allowing the younger generations to claim the internment as part of their own identity. To remove certain memories and traditions from a community creates a “lobotomized culture” which lacks direction and will. (Bertman, 2000: 56) I believe the redress movement fostered in the younger generations a resurged interest and passion for their cultural heritage and a renewed desire to uphold their own unique historical journey in America.

But how were the experiences of the Issei and Nisei shared prior to the redress movement? As previously mentioned there were culturally-based non-verbal indicators such as the embodiment of traditional Japanese values of dedication and obedience that the older generations used to move forward in their lives and to communicate amongst themselves. Certainly the Sansei and Yonsei (fourth generation) were able to discern from these their pain and suffering but it wasn’t until the testimonials were given, the books and articles were published and the documentaries were made did the younger generations learn the complete and awful truth behind the silence. Slowly, the older generations began to speak out with more confidence. One place where they felt comfortable enough to share their memories was on the pilgrimages to the camps. Pilgrimages provided ample opportunity for the trigger mechanisms associated with traumatic neuroses to occur but what was so special about the pilgrimages was that the negative memories that were triggered were tempered by the support and respect displayed there. It eased their sense of loneliness and pain and allowed the younger generations to vicariously experience some of their trauma. It was a public display of transference from individual memory to group trauma. In order to understand why the transmission of the memories and trauma took such a unique path for the Japanese Americans, the general psychology of each generation group and how they related to one another must be understood.

5.2 The Issei

The Issei brought their Japanese morals and values with them to America. I have already discussed this briefly but it was their unique application of the code of honour that was most significant to their reactions to the attacks of Pearl Harbor. In Japan they were taught (and this was re-emphasised when they migrated to America) that any individual wrongdoing brought shame not just to the individual but also to their
families, to the Japanese community, to the nation of Japan and to all Japanese people. Each person believed that they represented the Japanese race and, as such, they must not behave in a shameful manner which is why many *Issei* (and *Nisei*) felt such conflicting emotions after the attacks; as American residents or citizens they felt angry and horrified at the atrocities committed, as Japanese they (the *Nisei* especially) felt complicit shame and guilt at the acts of the Japanese military.

Those arrested after Pearl Harbor were mostly *Issei* heads of not only various community groups such as the language schools, the Buddhist temples and other Japanese organisations but most importantly they were the heads of their households. The Japanese family structure was rigidly defined and the widespread loss of the household heads caused a great deal of confusion and anxiety. It represented the loss of power for the *Issei* men in their places of work, worship and, most importantly, in their homes. In most cases either their wives or their *Nisei* sons were forced to take control of their families, sometimes for several years, as many of those initially arrested were not reunited with their families until after the war. The Hawaiian *Issei* poet whose work I discussed in Chapter Four, Muin Ozaki, wrote motivational notes whilst imprisoned on the teachings of famed Japanese scholar, Fukuzawa Yukichi who founded Keio University. Between 1872 and 1876, Fukuzawa published seventeen volumes of *Gakumon no Susume* (An Encouragement of Learning) that were extremely influential in Japan. Ozaki wrote out some of Fukuzawa’s most important lessons presumably to help to keep him focussed and determined despite his dire situation. I have provided the original transcript below, along with my translation:

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**Fukuzawa Yukichi (A coming of age ceremony)**

The most pleasant and splendid matter in the world/society is that we have a duty/job to maintain.
The most miserable/pitiful matter in the world/society is that we have not had culture or education.
The most lonely/deserted matter in the world/society is that we do not have a duty/job.
The most precious/valuable matter is that we provide a service for people and never ask for a favour in return.
These notes show how Ozaki’s dedication to Fukuzawa’s teachings and the embodiment of those values were characteristic of the Issei and played an integral role in their reaction to Pearl Harbor and the internment. The source of their great distress was caused by the fact that they were stripped of their duties and jobs, denied access to education and were unable to maintain their own culture without fear of persecution.

Even those Issei men ‘lucky’ enough to accompany their families to the internment camps (instead of being incarcerated separately) were barred from holding elected office in camp, the WRA placing official power with the Nisei. Most Issei believed that a low profile and acquiescence would avoid further anti-Japanese sentiment and indicate their loyalty but the more vocal Nisei grasped their new-found power and tried to wield it to make a difference. The loss of the Isseis’ power within the community was accompanied by a loss of power within their family also. The Nisei were now deferred to for advice and explanations and the Issei men were left feeling helpless and emasculated.

Both the Issei men and women had suffered through decades of discrimination and hardship trying to forge a life for themselves and create opportunities for their children. Their incarceration had ended all of that and many felt as though all their efforts had been in vain. When they were issued the ‘loyalty questionnaire’, little did they know that Question 28 would later be in direct violation of the Geneva Convention. It was essentially an attempt to make the Issei assume a ‘stateless status’ by forcing them to relinquish their Japanese citizenship, even though they were ineligible for U.S. citizenship. They would become an entire generation of immigrants with neither an official homeland nor hostland. Thus their frustration and depression at never being granted citizenship (until 1952) was exacerbated severely by the internment and the questionnaire. They became introspective, often communicated only with each other and many who had embraced Christianity turned back to Buddhism seeking solace. In their fifties and sixties by the end of the internment, most were forced to rely on their children for the rest of their lives. Financially, but far more significantly psychologically, the Issei never recovered from their loss of livelihood, loss of power in the community and loss of position within the household.
5.3 The Nisei

The Nisei men were forced to take charge of their families as well as assume the positions of power within the camp’s self-governing system to communicate between the internees and the WRA. Yet the average age of the Nisei in camp was only eighteen – this was an extreme level of responsibility for such a young generation. They felt that the internment was a direct assault on their identities as Americans and it challenged their belief that their citizenship would protect them. As a result, they developed a “variety of cognitive-emotional strategies to reduce their dissonance.” (Nagata, 1993: 32) These strategies were based on the fact that they were forced to defer an expression of their feelings until they were in a safe environment, something that did not occur for several years.

Their natural feelings of rage, anger, hurt, betrayal and helplessness had to be internalised for fear of being branded disloyal; a threat that hung like a shroud on the shoulders of the Nisei. They were doubly-bound by loyalties to both America and Japan, even though the vast majority of them considered themselves American. They felt divided because they saw their devotion to their parents who, at that time, were of enemy alien status, as symbolic of their devotion to Japan. Many of them also had grandparents, other relatives and in some cases even siblings living in Japan and this made it difficult to deny their feelings for their ancestral homeland altogether, which is what the ‘loyalty questionnaire’ attempted to force. Radhakrishnan’s essay on the definition of ethnicity in an age of diaspora examined his son’s thoughts on being an American-born Indian and raised questions that were pertinent to the Nisei problem:

How could someone be both one and something other? How could the unity of identity have more than one face or name? If my son is both Indian and American, which one is he really? Which is the real self and which the other? How do these two selves coexist and how do they weld into one identity? How is ethnic identity related to national identity? (2003: 120)

The inability and reluctance of the American government to differentiate between the Japanese from Japan and the Japanese Americans encouraged the Nisei to aggressively embrace their ‘Americanness’ and distance themselves from their ‘Japaneseness’ even though it was painful to split their identity in such a manner.

Theirs was a doubly-bound loyalty which resulted in a “clashing of legacies.” (Miyoshi, 1994: 19) In their desire to emphasise their American identity, they had to
determine what would be the most constructive response to Executive Order 9066. Many Nisei believed, much like the Issei, that the best reaction to their internment was to not complain and to acquiesce completely (there were, however, as mentioned earlier, several cases of Nisei who protested loudly and vocally, often at great personal risk). The Issei did this in order to stop further mistreatment whereas the Nisei did this as they thought it would be the best way to prove their loyalty as Americans. That was, in fact, not a typically American reaction and would be the cause of much conflict in later years with their Sansei children.

The Nisei often recollect their childhood prior to the war as a comfortable one in the supportive Japanese American community. The internment was a shock and forced them to address their racial-ethnic differences in mainstream America. The Niseis lack of preparedness, crucial to my trauma theory, came as a result of their belief that their citizenship would protect them from any form of mass evacuation. So the years spent behind barbed wire led them to the conclusion that in order to prosper in the United States, they had to choose a path different to the one taken by their parents. Many felt that, in order to preserve personal integrity and to forge a future for their children free from the trauma that they experienced, they must assimilate as rapidly as possible and their children must become model American citizens. (Ng, 1989: 217) They became a ‘cultural bridge’ between East and West, Japan and America, the traditional past and the modern future and harboured their feelings of humiliation, shame, guilt and a fear of repetition not only to protect their children but to enable them to embrace their ‘Americanness’ undisturbed by their traumatic history. Some even remarked on a sense of identification with the aggressor and as a result deliberately avoided association with other Japanese Americans and ignored their own cultural heritage. After years of living in what Nisei/Sansei relations researcher Miyoshi called an “Apartheid milieu” (1994: 18) on the Pacific coast culminating in their internment, the Nisei were almost forced to respond by denying their cultural heritage and yearning for assimilation.

Despite the Niseis’ desire for rapid Americanization and acculturation they also exhibited many ethnically-derived characteristics inherited from the Issei generation. In general, the Nisei personified a deeply entrenched code of silence caused by a number of factors. I have already mentioned their feelings of guilt and shame and their testimonies during the redress movement revealed that one of the greatest sources of trauma for the Nisei was the feeling of abandonment by their own country. They were
often compared (and compared themselves) to rape victims who blamed themselves for their victimisation. Harry Kawahara explained:

A rape victim feels guilt and shame. A victim of rape feels violated and unclean. And so it is with us. We felt that somehow we were party to this act of defilement, that we had somehow helped to bring it on. . . . It has profoundly affected our sense of ethnic identity and thereby, our sense of self-worth. (Brimner, 1994: 82)

Of course, their silence was a way to repress the experience. If their traumatic core was buried deep enough in their psyche, they would not have to re-experience it through the re-telling. They were also afraid of exacerbating their feelings of shame if they broke down while talking about the camp – such a strong showing of emotion could be construed as a loss of face, a prevalent concern for the Japanese, especially when discussing an issue that they perceived to be a shameful one.

Although many Nisei refused or were reluctant to consciously generate flashbacks, memories and emotions, they were often triggered unwillingly. Nisei Frank Chuman left camp to attend university in 1944. His instantaneous reaction to an unpleasant encounter with an aggressive racist in the boarding house surprised him and demonstrated to him that he was finally back in control of his life again:

As [the racist man] approached the landing, he saw me talking to his wife. As he put his foot on the third landing, he said, “Don’t talk to my wife, you dirty Jap!” Like that. I was waiting for this opportunity, because I was just so goddamn sick of being called a Jap. . . . Those were triggering words for me. . . . So I looked at him and said, “You’re drunk, you son of a bitch! One more crack out of you, and I’ll kill you!” You know, really belligerent! All of my suppressed feeling was just rising tight up to my throat. . . . If he had just made one move, like that, I was going to kick and beat. I was going to beat the shit out of him, because he would have represented to me everything that had been done to me before. (Jensen, 1997: 313)

His reaction to the situation may have lessened his post-traumatic stress symptomatology and hastened his healing. But for the majority of Nisei, a real course of healing did not begin for several decades until the redress movement. The years of exclusion and injustice caused a self-devaluation in many Nisei, perpetuating the acceptance of injustice, the acceptance of blame (a common theme expressed was “I wasn’t American enough”) and resulting in their silence. But one very important reason for their silence was that they wanted to protect their children and give them the
opportunity to integrate into mainstream society with less prejudicial impact than they had. Externally, the Nisei were optimistic about the future of their children but internally, they never fully dealt with their trauma. This lack of healing affected their relationships with both their parents and their children, which I will discuss further on.

5.4 The Sansei

The Sansei are an interesting generation to examine as only a small percentage of them experienced the internment themselves. But even those who were extremely young during the internment did not escape the devastating psychological effects of the traumatic experience. In fact, psychologist Gwenn Jensen argued that it was the youngest internees who were most susceptible to traumatic stress because their coping mechanisms had not yet fully developed in their psyche. Her argument corresponds with my discussion of Freud where I examined the importance of ‘preparedness’ as a provider of crucial levels of protection from external excitations. Adequate preparedness allows the individual to erect a protective shield which can help defend the psyche against serious stressors. However, traumatic experiences can break through that shield and begin to seriously debilitate the individual’s other psychical systems before a binding of the violent energies can begin. The youngest internees would not have completely developed such systems thus were more vulnerable to traumatic stressors and possibly explains their more vehement expressions of anger and betrayal than the Nisei. These were not immediately identified because the traumatic experiences were repressed and ignored until they were triggered back into consciousness. Jensen argued that the Sansei who experienced the internment personally usually suffered from unexpected flashbacks; unexpected because they did not have conscious memories of the internment due to their age. Regardless, memories were still stored away and, when they were triggered (sometimes as long as several decades later), they were unexpected and shocking.⁸

Even those who did not experience the internment personally were not immune to the traumatic consequences due to the (usually unconscious and undesired) transference from their parents and grandparents. As a generation, the Sansei are much more educated and professionalized than their Nisei parents⁹ and seem to have integrated into mainstream American society far more, as indicated by their high (as high as 60%) intermarriage rates. (Nagata, 1990: 138)¹⁰ The majority of Sansei felt that their ethnicity had not been a hindrance to them and they struggled to understand their
parents’ reactions to the camps. Holocaust researcher David Heller identified a similarity between the survivor-children of the Holocaust and of the internment. He argued that both groups sought to preserve their culture and ancestry and embodied a greater awareness of their ethnicity than their parents’ generation.\textsuperscript{11} I agree with his findings but the path taken by the \textit{Sansei} compared to the Holocaust survivor-children was markedly different. Their ethnicity (indeed, their very lives) were not in danger of complete extermination so it was not so much about preserving a waning Japanese community as embracing it, rejecting the shame that was associated and transferred with it and educating others about it. The civil rights era and the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s brought about shifts in racial-ethnic minority consciousnesses and while the \textit{Sansei} of the 1960s were vocal and demanding, angry at their parents silent acceptance of their treatment, the \textit{Sansei} of the 1970s played the role of observer and listener, said Don Hayashi of the JACL in 1977. (Miyoshi, 1994: 16) The \textit{Sansei} were often angry and confused by the lack of communication between themselves and their parents and were relatively uninformed because the camps had been omitted from national memory. Therefore 80\% of the \textit{Sansei} favoured the redress movement (Nagata, 1990:140) especially if it hastened a healing process for their parents’ and grandparents’ trauma and, by extension, their own.

Although the \textit{Sansei} were generally eager for knowledge of the internment experience, Nagata also saw a kind of complicit silence of some of the \textit{Sansei}. She, like Heller, identified in the \textit{Sansei} a characteristic similar to the children of Holocaust survivors in that they forged deep emotional attachments to their parents with a subconscious desire to stop their parents from expressing further pain. The failure to broach the topic of the Holocaust (or the internment) kept the relationship on a safe yet superficial level (Nagata, 1994: 44). So many of the \textit{Nisei} were silent because they did not want to transfer their pain on to their children, and many \textit{Sansei} were silent because they did not want their parents to have to re-live their trauma. Judith Hashimoto, a \textit{Sansei} from the east coast, watched the televisual adaptation of \textit{Farewell to Manzanar}\textsuperscript{12} and sobbed. She couldn’t watch it a second time. She recalled:

\begin{quote}

it will be the same pain over again and then there is nothing I can do with it or it’s a reexperiencing the same thing and that thing happened to be pain or sadness. . . Maybe that’s how the Nisei feel. They don’t want to run through that again the second time. . . (Miyoshi, 1994: 41-42)
\end{quote}
Hashimoto finally recognised that the long-standing silence and tension between the Nisei and Sansei was a result of “intergenerational miscommunication and misunderstanding.” (Takezawa, 1995: 157) It was clear that opening the lines of communication between the generations would be a very difficult process indeed. One Sansei interviewed for Nagata’s ‘Sansei Research Project’ said, “I guess it’s partly due to their reticence, but also because I have some deep personal anger myself that surfaces when the subject arises. I’ve always found that, for one who was not even interned myself, fears, frustration, and pain exist.” (1993: 84) Nagata’s research revealed that the internment was still a strong force in the Sanseis lives:

Although the Sansei appear on the surface to have overcome the boundaries of exclusion that existed for their Nisei parents, the after effects of the internment highlight the tenuousness of the Sansei’s sense of inclusion. (1990: 139)

So although the Sansei were given external opportunities to succeed, because they were shielded and protected, they “internalized some negative self-images of being Japanese American.” (Ng, 1989: 225)

These negative self-images were embodied in Sansei Ruth Akio, whose “insights about being Japanese, the denial of race and ethnicity are compelling because they point to the invisible ways which racism works towards undermining positive self-identity.” (Ng, 1989: 227) Akio went on to say:

It’s sort of like the whole psychology of secrets and how secrets sort of maim your psyche because as long as you spend so much energy keeping something, beating something back, consciously not knowing what to do with it, your self identity is shaped in that behaviour. It’s a sort of self negation of your own history. (Ng, 1989: 227)

It is clear that the Sansei, and possibly later generations also, were facing an identity crisis. They needed help to seek ethnic values in their own identity. They were constantly being ‘reminded’ of their otherness through racially-motivated crimes such as the murder of Vincent Chin, the apparent willingness of the U.S. government to recompense other non-Japanese groups for various injustices and the treatment of Arabs and Muslims in the post-9/11 period that triggered the injustices from their own ethnic history. Hence the fear of a reoccurrence, either for themselves or for other ethnic minorities, was a very palpable one that was discussed often. This fear was being transferred down to their children, thus perpetuating the cycle of anxiety and negative self-imagery.
5.5 The Yonsei

Interestingly, a 2002 PhD thesis by Mitsuaki Ohata found that the Yonsei are even more ethnically identified than the Sansei. One possible example is that the youth of the Yonsei questioned (the mean Yonsei sample age was 26, the mean Sansei sample age was 45) meant that they were still being influenced by their immediate environment of home and older family members. Perhaps they were also distanced enough from the trauma of internment that they could comfortably seek information about their own history as a migrant community in America. A more compelling factor indicating their higher ethnic identification is the recent revival of interest in the Japanese culture in America. In a 2004 article in the International Herald Tribune entitled “Japanese Roots, American Pursuits: Young people honor ethnic heritage despite assimilation” the need for the younger generations to preserve their cultural heritage was examined.

[There are a] number of Japanese-Americans awakening to an unsettling realization: that it may be up to them to fight to preserve their culture, even if most of them may not speak Japanese, may not have visited Japan or may not look Japanese. . . . Shrinking population, high intermarriage rates and the legacy of the rush to assimilate after the experience of internment during World War II have combined to leave the nisei . . . sansei . . . yonsei . . . and gosei (fifth generation) struggling to keep an identity they can call their own . . . . another reason for the fervor among some young Japanese-Americans to assert their identity may be that it has become cool to be Japanese. . . . Central to Japanese-American pride are progenitors who survived and thrived in the United States after their experiences during World War II. (Navarro, 2004)

Ohata’s proposition that humans possess an innate inclination not to acculturate completely, as it could potentially lead to the destruction of their subculture within the dominant culture, lies in agreement with this article. Indeed the Yonsei in Ohata’s study identified the biggest problems facing the Japanese Americans today as “loss of traditions, language, culture, identity, and interest in Japanese background as well as the need to retain and continue the Japanese heritage.” (2002: 82) Hopefully the rekindled interest in their cultural heritage and their determination to preserve the memories of the trauma of internment is enough to ensure that the Japanese diaspora does not become a ‘lobotomized culture’.
5.6 Intergenerational relationships

Mental health, while often viewed as an individual psychological phenomenon, is a complex process interrelated with social group phenomena. (Ng, 1989: 223)

The mental health of the Japanese diaspora as a whole is dependent upon its intergenerational relationships. During and after the internment period, unique conflicts arose between the generations that were usually culturally-derived. The Issei and Nisei shared many Japanese characteristics, the most commonly cited being enryo, or deference; on, or duty and obligation; gaman, or endurance and giri, or moral indebtedness. The Nisei also mimicked their parents’ code of silence which reflected a “respect for a kind of individuality based on privacy and an ability to contain rather than to share or to give way to emotionality.” (Miyoshi, 1994: 22) However, there existed between them a culturally-based tension. Most Issei could not speak English very well, had a basic education and were Buddhist. The Nisei were mostly only fluent in English, well-educated and Christian. The Japanese cultural norms such as on, giri and enryo were difficult for the Nisei to conform to because they were so different to the American value system they were surrounded by. Indeed, as historian Frank Zelko pointed out, many of the Japanese traits were ridiculed or viewed with suspicion – patience and silence were seen as contempt, minding their own business was seen as aloofness and their emphasis on cleanliness and courtesy was ridiculed. Nisei Charles Kikuchi recalled the difference in responses from the Issei and the Nisei to offers of help from their local church which epitomized their vastly different system of values:

The Church people around here seem so nice and full of consideration saying, ‘Can we store your things?’ ‘Do you need clothes?’ ‘Sank you,’ the Issei smile even now though they are leaving with hearts full of sorrow. But the Nisei around here seem pretty bold and their manners are brazen. They are demanding service. (1973: 52-53)

But most notably, the Nisei could not manifest the same kind of ethnic pride the Issei had because in the racist climate of the ‘Apartheid milieu’ of the Pacific coast, it was safer to emphasise their Americanism than call attention to their ‘Japaneseness’.

The Nisei therefore emphasised an accelerated Americanization upon their children. This was accompanied by the “forgetting and distorting of a transnational past” (Azuma, 2005: 211) whose legacy persisted until the Sansei generation. The Sansei grew up during the civil rights movement and were more vocal than the Issei or
*Nisei* about attaining acknowledgement and reparations for the internment even though the majority of *Sansei* had not experienced it first-hand. Indeed, many *Sansei* did not even know about it until they were much older as it was not written into the history texts nor was it discussed within their homes and community. When the *Sansei* finally did begin to learn the truth, they intervened as observers for the *Nisei* during the redress movement even though many felt that there existed an identification barrier between the two generations symbolised by the *Nisei* apparently passive attitudes with regards to their unjust treatment. The *Sansei* could not understand why the *Nisei* felt such strong *haji* (shame) for their betrayal and punishment when they had not done anything to deserve it. Surely the shame belonged to the perpetrators, claimed the *Sansei*. In their more Americanized world, “criticisms are directed toward those who lack ‘assertiveness’ or whose behaviour is ‘withdrawn’. In Japanese society verbal restraint is viewed as a strength and a virtue.” (Miyoshi, 1994: 22)

Therefore it was difficult for the *Sansei* to accept and understand the wall of silence between themselves and their parents on the issue of the camps. Once they finally began to communicate, the *Sansei* also found it hard to relate to any positive outcomes that their parents and grandparents claimed to have resulted from their experiences. *Sansei* Marion Oda described how she felt when she heard about the fun times that were experienced at camp, “I suppose it was hard for me to hear that... I didn’t want to. I wanted to hear what an abuse it was to human dignity.” (Miyoshi, 1994: 16) True, the internment did lead to the more widespread dispersal of their community across the nation and it hastened their assimilation, but at what cost? Many *Sansei* acknowledged that they remained connected to the Japanese American community often out of a sense of obligation to their parents and grandparents. They “have less need to connect with other Japanese Americans because they did not experience the traumatic dislocation that their parents experienced.” (Ng, 1989: 219) As a result they, and the younger generations, perceived an accelerated loss of Japanese language and culture that equated to a loss of personal ethnic-identity. What many did inherit from their parents was a negative identity model based on their experiences of discrimination and exclusion which needs to be healed by improving the lines of intergenerational communication in order to repair and protect their unique ethnic identity.
The most significant event that opened the lines of communication was the testimonies given during the redress movement to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) which I have previously discussed. Many *Nisei* debated whether or not to testify but for those who did, the immediate effects were almost universally felt. As *Nisei* Ichiro Masuda described:

> Then I was uplifted, I felt euphoria, exhilaration; I felt newborn. . . . I felt so empty inside after all this nearly forty years of mental burden that I’ve been carrying – prejudice, discrimination, internment. All the stigma, all this anguish, just went out my body. . . . And so into the vacuum, I think, came my past memories about my life, my family, my heritage. (Takezawa, 1995: 165)

For the *Nisei*, the commission hearings provided a therapeutic catharsis. For the *Sansei*, it fostered a greater respect and admiration for the *Nisei* and their courage in speaking out. It provided a great impetus for the demolition of the miscommunication and misunderstanding that blocked the lines of communication between the generations.

A symposium held at the Smithsonian Institute in February 1992, fifty years after the evacuation, was another way of further widening the lines of communication within the Japanese American community. Increased communication led to a strengthening of intergenerational ties and increased the support network available for trauma sufferers. Clinical social worker Amy Iwasaki Mass was one of the speakers at the Symposium and her research included an in-depth examination of the transferral of trauma intergenerationally. She identified a number of cultural aspects that needed to be addressed when examining the history of the Japanese Americans, such as the importance of honour, face, shame and ethnic pride. For example, the repression and denial of emotions had long been coping strategies among the immigrant Japanese and seeking help for personal issues was not commonplace. The testimonials given by the *Issei* and *Nisei* were unusual in that they were private and painful experiences expressed in a public format. They were given in recognition that it would help others in their community (and help themselves) begin to heal. The Symposium continued the work of the redress movement providing a safe and supportive environment in which the survivors could share their stories and unburden their traumas.

At the Symposium Iwasaki Mass said that, despite the fact that the redress movement had contributed greatly to the “assertion of a new cultural identity for Japanese
Americans,” she did not think that the feeling of shame had ceased. (Symposium, 1992)
The new cultural identity, brought about by a reawakening of the Japanese American social consciousness, would give the younger generations “an arena in which they can focus pride and a sense of identity” (Symposium, 1992) and hopefully diminish the intergenerational transference of shame. Iwasaki Mass recognised the difficulty in regaining a sense of pride and identity when traumatic experiences are naturally repressed. She understood the mechanisms of repression from both a technical perspective as a social worker and from personal experience, having survived the internment as a young child and recognised the importance of communication:

I think the whole internment – incarceration – experience has had a profound effect on the third, and many even later, generations. One of the effects of having a rule in the household that says, ‘We don’t talk about this,’ means that there’s a hidden problem; there are skeletons in the closet. (Symposium, 1992)

Skeletons in the closet indicate shameful, guilty secrets that many feel are often best left inside the closet. However, in this scenario, the survivors realised that their experience was not a guilty sin; it needed to be exposed and discussed for a healing to take place. A medical analogy was made during the third session of the Symposium that I feel is very applicable:

If a deep wound is not properly cleaned, it will close at the surface first and give the appearance of being healed. But deeper within the scar tissue, the infection continues until it festers and once again breaks open. At this point a deep, perhaps painful, probe is required to thoroughly cleanse the area once and for all. The internment is such a wound. And our attempt to seek truth from history is such a probe. (Symposium, 1992)

The ‘probing’ of the wound, of the memories of the survivors, caused the trigger effect to occur in their subconscious; hence a reopening of their wound or, indeed, a ‘double wounding.’ The recollections, the repetition of events and emotions and the retelling of their trauma are all crucial for the trauma to be healed and for the experience to be passed on to others. California-based Nisei physician Virginia Tamashiro lost her twenty six year-old sister to asthma, her father to throat cancer in his sixties and her brother to stomach cancer when he was just thirty one all within the space of seven months in camp. They were all in good health when they entered camp, developed their illnesses in camp and, due to the lack of medical expertise and equipment, all died painful deaths. Her three best friends in camp died of cancer after the war, all in their thirties or early forties. Tamashiro was convinced that the trauma of camp manifested
itself physically in the bodies of the internees and encouraged a study to be conducted at UCLA to research the link between the camps and the unusually high number of premature deaths of Nisei in California especially. She did not wish to recall her own family tragedies but was convinced to tell her story at the committee hearings:

So it took me three nights to write about my testimony, and I cried for three nights. Three nights. That I had to bring back all those memories. I never could cry when my sister died, my brother died, my father died. Couldn’t shed a tear. We had to hold together. You had to keep, to reserve your emotions. You know, for all the struggle you had to go through. So I cried for three nights, and then I went to the hearings. Originally I was just going to go to testify, just to give my testimony. But then gosh, I started to listen. I couldn’t believe what I heard. I knew what I had gone through, what my family had gone through, but you multiply that by 100,000 people. The gross suffering that everybody did. The losses. So I just sat there for three days, and I cried for three days. (Jensen, 1997: 320-321)

Tamashiro had been unable to process the deaths of her family members properly at the time of their deaths because of her culturally-inbued notion of *gaman*, or endurance. Thus her trauma, from a Caruthian perspective, was unknowable at the time. Her emotions attached to her trauma were repressed and resurfaced forty years later when she was able to tell her story and witness the story of other survivors.

The vocalisation (even through non-verbal cues) is essential for the trauma-carrier to begin to heal and essential for the trauma-receptor to gain an understanding of their own specific ethnic history and identity. Symposium audience member Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi reminds us of the importance of the relationship with the younger generations:

I just have to remind ourselves that in every situation of collective trauma, the delayed manifestation of those symptoms is something that we have to be truly alert to. I think no-one can deny that the survivors of the Holocaust had an extreme experience, but frequently the relationships with the children in talking about it have been as constrained or perhaps more so. (Symposium, 1992)

For the continuation of the Japanese American community as a unique, identifiable and proud ethnic group, it was crucial that the lines of communication between the generations be kept open and honest. The *Issei* and *Nisei* had to consciously retrieve hidden traumas and share them with the younger generations in order to reconstruct an authentic collective identity. The younger generations were then able to overcome the
subtle yet debilitating effects of their inherited trauma and shame in order to embrace their ethnicity and reinvigorate the Japanese American community.

Nagata’s ‘Sansei Research Project’ began with the widely-accepted premise that the internment had significant consequences for those who experienced it themselves: “The challenges to identity, as well as the disruption of parental, gender, and generational roles, affected entire families, indeed whole communities.” (1998: 129)

But were these effects evident in the later generations? I believe this was most definitely the case. This chapter has demonstrated the process by which the trauma was transferred to the younger generations and what effects they had on their psyches. The final chapters of this thesis examine the literary productions of the Issei, Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei to identify how the experienced and transferred trauma is carried in the very language of the literature of the Japanese American diaspora.

Notes
2 Gordon Hirabayashi challenged the legality of the evacuation by refusing to report and walking all night in Seattle. He waited for someone to stop him but no-one did. Finally he burst into a police station and demanded to be arrested. At his one-day trial in 1942 he was convicted of violating both the curfew and the evacuation. He was ordered to be interned but, as it was long after all others had already been transported, and the authorities decided not to provide him with any transportation, he was forced to hitchhike into camp! He appealed his conviction but it was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 1943. Fred Korematsu wanted to remain with his Caucasian fiancée so he altered his draft card and had plastic surgery when the evacuation order was issued. On a tip, he was arrested, charged and convicted. His appeal to the Supreme Court in 1944 was also denied. Minoru Yasui also violated the evacuation orders in protest. He was arrested and placed in solitary confinement for nine months. At his trial, the Judge ruled that Yasui had revoked his citizenship by working for the Japanese Consulate before the war and convicted him of violating the curfew. When he appealed to the Supreme Court in 1943, his citizenship was restored but his conviction was upheld. It was not until 1988, after a five year battle in the law courts and nearly fifty years of humiliation and shame for these men and their families were the convictions overturned by the Supreme Court and these three men were finally vindicated. (Brimmer, 1994: 85-90)

3 Even some younger members of the Nisei generation were oblivious to their own history, as historian Roger Daniels recalled: “I had two students – who did not know each other and who were both Nisei – each of whom told me they were born in Los Angeles, one in 1943 and one in 1944. There were no Japanese American babies born in Los Angeles in 1943 and 1944. I brought this up gently to the students and they both assured me that they were. . . Of course they were both born in relocation centers, one at Manzanar and one at Topaz. But in one case the student was so appalled he left home. . . . He wasn’t even aware that there had been a relocation of the Japanese Americans. . . . There was eventually a reconciliation, but this is how deeply this repression took place in some families. It was not only something that the children knew that their parents didn’t want them to talk about, but it had been so completely repressed. And in that age it wasn’t discussed in schools. It wasn’t in most history textbooks. They just had no notion of it. And here were two young college students discovering that they’d been born in concentration camps that they didn’t even know existed. So there were continuing time bombs like this in a number of families.” (Symposium, 1992)

4 The original is housed in the Resource Center of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. The translation was completed with the assistance of my mother, Noriko Goudie.
6 Or, as Radhakrishnan phrased it, “diasporan citizens doing double duty.” (2003: 128)
The ‘cultural bridge’ or ‘cultural interpreter’ phrase was used by Jere Takahashi as one of three perspectives available to the Nisei before the Second World War. The others were the ‘American ideal’ and the ‘progressive’. See Takahashi, 1982.

Jensen interviewed several Sansei and they learned that memories that were triggered when they were in their thirties and forties were in fact memories that were stored when they were only a few years old in the camps. For example, Sansei Irene Okazaki had an horrific nightmare in her early forties which directly related to an experience she had in camp when she was just one. Her family had never discussed the camp at all during her entire life so the nightmare was clearly her own repressed memory. See Jensen, 1998: 217-228 and Jensen, 1997: 299-306.

A study conducted 25 years after the end of the war showed that a staggering 88% of Sansei had/were earning college degrees with 92% focussed on professional appointments. (Zich, 1986: 536)

In 1978 Native Americans were awarded US$800 million for broken treaties. An astounding comparison to make with the Japanese American case is the treatment of anti-Vietnam War protesters who, in 1980, were each awarded US$10,000 for wrongful imprisonment for one weekend that they spent in jail! (Brimner, 1994: 92-93)

Yasutake’s 1977 PhD thesis, based on the findings of his interviews and surveys, showed that the Sansei felt more assimilated and more secure with Caucasians, compared to the Nisei who felt the need to ‘outdo’ or ‘outperform’ their Caucasian counterparts in order to feel secure. (1977: 270)

Yasutake’s thesis revealed that 56% of the Nisei surveyed thought the evacuation, as a whole, had beneficial aspects. The dispersal hastened their integration into the social mainstream and they had many more job opportunities than before the war. Of course the Sansei indirectly benefited from this also. (1977: 234) Most Nisei, however, felt that although there may have been some beneficial consequences, nothing was worth the trauma of their evacuation, internment and resettlement. One must bear in mind, however, the date of Yasutake’s thesis as it was written before the redress movement had concluded.

Although the Japanese communities were fragmented and dispersed across the country, most tried to return home to the west coast. However, the restrictive covenants, which prior to the war had forced them to create and live in ethnic ghettos, resurfaced and forced them out to marginal communities once again. In one case (and there were countless more like it) Sakuyo Saito had saved enough money after three years as a cook in an Idaho labour camp during the war to put a deposit down on a house in Los Angeles. It was accepted but on the day that she tried to move in, she was handed an injunction. It was a restrictive covenant which forced her to choose between a one-year jail sentence / one thousand dollar fine if she moved in and selling the house. She was forced to sell and lost most of her deposit. (Zich, 1986: 533)

Spoken by Marshall Wong, Director of the Smithsonian Office of Wider Audience Development.
Chapter Six

The Suppression and Release of Shame

6.1 The *Issei* perspective

As the years of internment occurred during the latter years of the *Issei* generation, they had already experienced decades of discrimination and hardship from which to draw inspiration for their writings. As mentioned in Chapter Three, an entirely new and unique form of literature emerged through the Japanese Hawaiian creation of the *Hole-hole Bushi*, an adaptation of traditional labouring songs from Japan. On the mainland, the majority of *Issei* were also manual labourers such as farmers, fishermen, railway workers and domestic workers. There did not seem to exist a mainland-equivalent of the Hawaiian *Hole-hole Bushi*, although they certainly worked extremely hard also, attempting to forge a future for themselves and their children in America. Life was very tough for these immigrant workers and much of their literature focused on the early days of struggle and hardship rather than their internment.

6.2 “Mistaken Identity”

*Issei* Henry Yoshitake Kiyama created a humorous series of cartoons depicting the ignorance and brutality of white America towards the Japanese immigrants, such as...
in the following strip in which a woman consistently mistakes various Asian men as ‘Jap school boys’ to work for her:

"Mistaken Identity" by Henry Yoshitake Kiyama

This obviously represented an attempt to lighten the pervasive ignorance of all things ‘Oriental’. The woman clearly thinks that all Asians look alike, a perception not helped by the Chinese cook who laughs at her mistake and says, “Look see all same.” She finally insults a diplomat of the fictitious “O O Empire” (who was singled out by the Chinese man as a “Kind am Jap man”) by haughtily informing him that he looks just like her laundry boy. As has already been discussed in earlier chapters, the Issei had to tolerate extreme levels of ignorance, stereotyping and discrimination.

Nonetheless, as a generational group, they mostly endured in silence and continued to fight quietly for the future of their families, earning them the reputation as the stoic and strong generation. The Issei were often likened to bamboo, signifying “strength through flexibility and resilience.” (von Hassell, 1993: 551) By the time of the internment, the Issei were approaching their golden years and some were already grandparents. Many Issei men found themselves separated from their families and the Issei women often handed control over to the more spirited, energetic Nisei men. During the internment, some Issei wrote poetry, some kept diaries but many were in fact illiterate having received only limited education. Others viewed their time in camp as
their first opportunity in decades to relax and so elected to do very little during their first ‘government-funded vacation’ from their manual jobs. Others were simply stunned into silence and inactivity.

6.3 **Poetry concerning the segregation of the Issei men**

For those who did write poetry, I have already discussed the importance and role of tanka and haiku poetry for the immigrant generation in Hawaii in Chapter Four. Of course, the *Issei* on the mainland also wrote haiku and tanka but another form of poetry that was utilised was senryu poetry. Where a haiku poem is a rendering of an experience in nature, senryu poetry, although similar in structure, usually address human situations and are often satiric or pathetic and employ a gentle humour. Jack Yasutake, father of Mitsuye Yamada and grandfather of Jeni Yamada, both of whom I shall discuss later, was an *Issei* senryu poet who wrote under the pseudonym ‘Jakki’. He was arrested and imprisoned by the FBI between 1941 and 1944, targeted because of his work as an interpreter for the Immigration Service. Separated from his family for over three years he wrote several poems, all in Japanese, and his daughter, also a poet, translated and published some of them in an anthology alongside her own poems.

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I sit
inside these fences
and forget
all my miseries
were left outside. (Yamada, 1992:24)
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He was implying that the former miseries that used to trouble him prior to his arrest had been left outside the perimeter of the fences because the new miseries he was forced to endure, as an innocent prisoner, were so much more upsetting and disheartening. His former worries were his finances (banks accounts and trusts in Japanese names were frozen, assets were sold, destroyed or stored), his crop/land/job (farms and businesses were either sold for paltry sums, entrusted to others, leased for little or no payments\(^2\)), the future of his family (over which he no longer had any control or influence) and discrimination (the daily encounters of racism no longer occurred because he had been removed from society). His new worries now concerned state-sanctioned racism on a monumental scale and the fear that rumours of mass extermination or deportation would prove accurate. He had no control over what had happened or would happen to his home, land or businesses and compared to his former concerns, his new fears concerning his own future and that of his family seemed far more substantial.
His second poem too enlightens us to his sombre situation:

My daily routine
of going to the mess hall
has nothing to do with
my appetite. (Yamada, 1992: 24)

His loss of appetite indicates his mood weighed down by sorrow and misery. So, then, why did he continue to go to the mess hall every day? The answer is reflective of the spirit of many Issei. They felt that there was nothing they could do about their situation, as one remembers the common repetition of the phrase shikata ga nai, so they should just accept it, endure it (gaman) and try to move on and continue their lives to the best of their abilities. This would include sticking to a mealtime regime regardless of appetite. They also felt that it was very important to lead by example. They would have conveyed a brave front of stoicism, continuing with life in as normal and dignified a manner as possible in such trying circumstances.

Another Issei poet who used a pseudonym, Yukari3, wrote tanka poetry whilst separated from her husband and interned with her daughters in Topaz. Her poetry was a mixture of expressions of nature and reflections upon the human spirit:

Someone named it
Topaz. . .

This land
Where neither grass
Nor trees
Nor wild flowers grow.

Banished to this
Desert land,
I cherish the
Blessing of the sky.

The fury of the
Dust storm spent,
I gaze through tears
At the sunset glow.

Grown old so soon
In a foreign land,
What do they think,
These people
Eating in lonely silence? (Uchida, 1984: 122)

The naming of the site “Topaz” was an ironic choice: Topaz, a glittering, golden gem, after which a desert location was named where nothing, not even wild flowers, grew.
Yet with each desolate image she painted of desert life, “Banished to this / Desert land.

. . . The fury of the / Dust storm spent” she followed it with a kind of determination to find some kind of beauty in her surroundings, even if she only saw it through her sadness: “I cherish the / Blessing of the sky. . . . I gaze through tears / At the sunset glow.” The final stanza addresses a common concern that the internees had, especially for the Issei, of their declining heath and rapid aging.\(^4\) Yukari observed in her fellow internees a premature aging and a loneliness in their silence which, in this instance, was created by the disintegration of the family, reflected in the collapse of the family meal.

The Issei clearly favoured traditional Japanese forms of poetry such as tanka, haiku and senryu. Apart from these poetic forms providing a familiar, comforting means of expressing their emotions, there was also a more practical reason for their popularity in camps: A scarcity of writing paper! Despite this obstacle, some Issei also kept journals during the difficult years in camps, some of which have subsequently been published. I have already cited from Hatsuye Egami’s diary which she kept in Tulare and Gila River on page 96. There is another entry worth noting, in which she recalled the first time she went to the latrine and was shocked at the facilities; a shock which is a recurring theme through much of the literature of the Issei and Nisei women who treasured and guarded their privacy fiercely.

As soon as we enter, my daughters shriek. I could not help become wobbly and stare before me. I indeed felt sorry for my daughters. In the latrine the cloak of modesty must be shed and we must return to the state of nakedness in which we were born. . . . But I turned to my daughters and told them sincerely, ‘When people return to a state of nakedness, their true worth becomes evident. I think that life here is going to be largely primitive and naked. But don’t you think that’s interesting, too?’ (Gorfinkel, 1996: 27-28)

Her brave words to her distraught daughters exemplifies the oft-mentioned stoicism of the Issei generation, especially the women, who were forced to find hidden reserves of strength to support their families in the absence their husbands. Indeed, the remarkable strength of the Issei women has often been overlooked in scholarly research because of their silent, apparently passive, stance. But their silence should not be misinterpreted as a sign of meek submission but as an indication of inner strength. True, their silence was enforced by their relative powerlessness in the dominant society which denied them their voice. But their silence also indicated a control and discipline over that which they could control – their reactions to difficult situations.\(^5\) Egami was
also very observant of the effect the years of incarceration had on the different
generations. She compared the hardworking Issei men with the younger people:

I cannot help thinking about the old men standing with plates in
their hands. Residents in America for forty or fifty years, they
pursued gigantic dreams and crossed an expansive ocean to
America to live. The soil they tilled was a mother to them, and
their life was regulated by the sun. They were people who had
worked with all they had, until on their foreheads, wave-like
furrows were harrowed. Every time I see these oldsters with
resigned, peaceful expressions, meekly eating what is offered
them, I feel my eyes become warm. However, then I see the
young people always complaining at every meal, my spirits are
low. (Gorfinkel, 1996: 30-31)

The differences she noticed were a result of the Americanization of the younger
generations, especially the younger Nisei. They were not brought up in a wider social
environment that taught them to endure hardship quietly and to accept a situation
without protest (even though their home environment may have been different).
However, she recognised that it was precisely their Americanization that made the
internment so difficult for the younger ones:

To my opinion, it must be very hard for the younger generation,
very few of whom have seen Japan, but who are typically
American in action and in thought, to be looked upon by hateful
and suspicious eyes. (Gorfinkel, 1996: 71-72)

Another Issei who was forced to deal with the ever-widening generation gap was
Shinji Sato whose diary was still being translated when I was able to view an extract.
He was forced to try to comprehend his son’s unexpected enlistment into the U.S. Army
and, embodying the very private nature of Issei men, recorded his feelings only in his
diary, sometimes through poetry:

I set out in the morning in thick frost at seven thirty, a little late.
Clouds were gathering over the morning sun. All day long I
thought about Seiji [his son] and thought about his mother, and I
wept continuously.
   At a child’s departure one tear follows the next.
   The scent of the plum knows not the night’s storm.
(CCLPEP, 2002)

He would most probably not have shared these feelings with anyone, not even his wife.
His role as the head of the house demanded of him a strong, patient character, yet his
poetry reveals an emotional, distressed side which, like many other Issei at that time,
found solace in the beauty and essence of nature.
6.4 The *Nisei* perspective

Many *Nisei* shared with their parents an inherited affinity for nature that seemed especially prevalent in the Japanese immigrant group in America. However, the *Niseis’* citizenship status and Americanization, their age at internment, their continual struggles against racism which contradicted their understanding of American ideals of democracy and their widespread contribution to the war effort had such a great impact upon their lives that their literature differs greatly to the literature produced by their parents generation. Obviously, due to their English language abilities, education and increased career opportunities after the war, there is a great deal more literature produced by the *Nisei*, in a wider variety of genres including non-traditional poetry, fiction, autobiographies, film and art. But the internment, the feelings of betrayal and shame and the continuing struggle against discrimination remain recurring themes throughout the literature of the *Nisei*.

6.5 “That Damned Fence”

Examining the poetry of the *Nisei*, the dominant feeling is not one of total acquiescence, compliance or a quiet longing, as with the *Issei*. Although the *Nisei* have been characterised as the ‘Quiet Americans’, I feel this can be quite misleading. While the vast majority of the *Nisei* did comply with the evacuation proceedings, there were certainly moments of defiance such as those previously discussed in Chapter Two. But their anger and frustrations were contained and one way of releasing them was through their writing. Therefore the emotions commonly expressed through their literature were those of suppressed anger, shame and hurt of a very personal nature. For example, a well-known poem, most likely to have been penned by a *Nisei* given the style and manner, circulated around Poston, part of which reads as below:

```
We’re trapped like rats in a wired cage
To fret and fume with impotent rage;
Yonder whispers the lure of night
But that DAMNED FENCE assails our sight.

We seek the softness of the midnight air,
But that DAMNED FENCE in the floodlight glare
Awakens unrest in our nocturnal quest,
And mockingly laughs with vicious jest.

With nowhere to go and nothing to do,
We feel terrible, lonesome, and blue;
That DAMNED FENCE is driving us crazy,
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Destroying our youth and making us lazy.

Imprisoned in here for a long, long time,
We know we’re punished though we’ve committed no crime
Our thoughts are gloomy and enthusiasm damp,
To be locked up in a concentration camp.

“That Damned Fence” symbolised the oppression of the American government and epitomised the feelings of anger and frustration. While it clearly expresses a more visible and public anger than most *Issei* poetry, the affinity for nature and the desire of earthly pleasures such as breathing in the “softness of the midnight air” is also apparent, revealing the ancestral inheritance of Japanese aesthetics.

6.6 The evolution of *Nisei* poet Mitsuye Yamada

The daughter of *Issei* poet ‘Jakki’, Mitsuye Yamada, also became a poet and wrote several poems while she was interned from the age of eighteen. Although she was born in Japan (while her parents were there on holiday from America; her younger siblings were all born in America), thus shared her parents disadvantage of non-citizenship, she was raised and subjected to the same environmental influences as her *Nisei* counterparts. She was interned with her father-less family in Minidoka where she wrote several poems describing various aspects of camp life. *Camp Notes and Other Writings* is a chronological documentary, detailing her life beginning with the evacuation, through two camps and concluding with her experiences in Cincinnati after she relocated. The publication of her collection of poems was postponed until 1976 because of the unmarketability of Japanese American writing. Therefore she maintained her silence in her poetry and in her life for a very long time, until:

On our television screen in the living room flashed a short clip of Japanese American families being herded into trains with armed guards watching, another short clip of rows of barracks in the desert. . . . My oldest, Jeni, who was about eleven years old then, looked at me with tears welling up in her eyes and said, ‘Mom, how come you never told us?’ . . . I was thinking: It isn’t as if I were keeping it a secret. It just didn’t seem important enough. The subject never came up. Nobody ever asked me. . . . After leaving Minidoka in 1943, I wanted to turn my back completely on the war and my internment experience. . . . Nevertheless, Jeni’s direct questions opened to door for me. I resurrected a box of notes that I had kept in camp but had hardly looked at through all those years. I rummaged through my notes as well as through my memory. . . . (Harth, 2001: 35-40)
She had so many excuses for her silence but her daughter’s reaction triggered a desire within herself to resurrect her memories.

Of course, the unfortunate consequence of intensely negative racialization, an extended period of traumatization and a strong collective desire for assimilation was accompanied by a decline in ethnic culture and identification. The Niseis’ suppression of their ethnic heritage was a casualty of the suppression of their trauma and a desire to protect their children from the racism that they had suffered. Despite the long absence from her poetry and perhaps as testament to the pervasive nature of trauma, her poems retained an emotionally-charged rawness to them, a stripped-back, personal expression of betrayal due to, I believe, the way she viewed the act of writing poetry:

Poetry to me means making connections. Poetry simply tells what is happening. I can express in poetry what is happening to me better than any other genre, because what is happening right now is invariably closely linked with what has happened in the past.

For Yamada, writing poetry was a way of consciously generating a flashback, of willing a return of what had been repressed. She kept her poetry simple and heartfelt in order to establish and maintain those connections. For example, punctuation in poetry can be used to add emphasis, control the rhythm, and add emotion and pathos. But Yamada’s poems in Camp Notes and Other Writings are bereft of much punctuation, thus embodying the endless days (“547 sulking days”) spent in a desolate desert camp; days lacking in punctuation and excitement.

The poem “In the Outhouse”, for example, paints a very bleak, depressing image of the private side of camp life that was not discussed:

Our collective wastebin
where the air sticks
in my craw
burns my eyes
I have this place to hide
the excreta and
the blood which
do not flush down
nor seep away.

They pile up
fill the earth.

I am drowning. (17)
The physical, literal overflow of the collective waste of the internees is an analogy for the metaphorical drowning she experienced. She was surrounded by people, by their waste, by their voices and opinions and bodies and thoughts and smells – one can feel the oppressive, claustrophobic atmosphere in the camp, drowning her in a lack of privacy. It feels overwhelming and sickening, especially with the imagery of piling-high mounds of excreta and blood. However, the separation of the final line of the poem has the effect of slowing the pace down, of distancing itself from the oppression. It does not give an impression of hope but of fatalistic resignation. It is a factual statement: “I am drowning.” Short and sharp, after the unpunctuated, flowing, ‘unflushable’ first stanza which hurriedly added more excreta to the woman’s life before she suddenly stopped and acknowledged her defeat, an acceptance of her fate.

The feeling of overwhelming publicly-shared humiliation is a recurring theme, especially with the female internees, as already illustrated with Egami’s diary entry. Throughout the following chapters, I will continue to cite more examples, such as this sorry scene captured by Yamada in “Block 4 Barrack 4 ‘Apt C’”, named after her family’s ‘address.’ Despite each family having their own ‘apartment’, the reality was that each apartment was only separated by walls riddled with holes with significant gaps between the tops of the walls and the ceilings. For the young Nisei, this lack of privacy was especially difficult to bear considering their average youthful age. Many were experiencing the troubling new symptoms of puberty and adolescence, the stirrings of new sexuality and there were many young married couples trying to retain a healthy private life in a public forum. The lack of privacy between apartments meant that everyone in the block heard, experienced and shared each others’ joy, pain, happiness and sorrow:

    Lives spilled over us
    through plastic walls
    came mixed voices.
    Bared too
    a pregnant wife
    while her man played go
    all day
    she sobbed alone
    and a barracksful
    of ears shed tears. (19)

Without complete partitions between each apartment, the internees not only shared the trauma of internment but also shared each others personal and private
traumas that occurred within the framework of the internment. Private traumas became public traumas, experienced and carried by several other people and it is this shared suffering that is significant, using Renan’s argument, for the establishment of the diasporic community in post-traumatic times. When the Nisei eventually began to share their stories with each other and with their children, they found recognition, companionship and understanding from the fellow Nisei who shared their suffering and sympathy and gratitude from the Sansei for including them in their experiences as well.

Yamada wrote a poem which chronicled the mindgames she was forced to employ as a coping and defensive mechanism. In “The Trick Was”, she used a similar rhythmic technique to “In the Outhouse”. The first stanza, of fourteen lines, has no punctuation apart from a colon in the second last line. The lines are short, staccato, breathless and hurried to emphasise the many things she did to keep her mind active:

The trick was
keep the body busy
be a teacher
be a nurse
be a typist
read some write some poems
write Papa in prison
write to schools
(one hundred thirty-three colleges
in the whole United States in the back
of my Webster’s dictionary
answered: no admittance
THEY were afraid of ME)

But the mind was not fooled. (26)

The final line was separated to show the sudden demise of her mindgames once the recognition of what she was doing and how little control she had over her future was realised. It creates a jolting shock – the sudden realisation and acknowledgement that life would have to continue along in this mundane, hurtful existence.

Until, that is, she was able to leave the camps bound for a college in the eastern states. She headed for Cincinnati where, she thought, “no one knew me.” (32) She longed for a big, bustling, anonymous city where no one knew who she was or the terrible things she had been accused of on the basis of her racial identity. But she was wrong. Big city or not, her Japanese face, undeniable proof of her ‘treachery’, indelible
sign of her Otherness, gave her away. Sure, no one knew her – they didn’t know her name, her family, her character – but they knew her:

No one except one
hissing voice that said
dirty jap
warm spittle on my right cheek. (32)

She was a ‘Jap’; that was all they needed to know. Significantly, the face that marked her as a ‘Jap’ was now marked by the hatred of spittle which ran down her cheek as she started to cry:

My tears would not
wash it. They stopped
and parted.
My hankie brushed
the forked
tears and spittle
together. (33)

She had to learn toughness and resilience, she had to use her parents’ code of gaman and she had to wipe away the tears of shame from her face as much as she had to wipe away the saliva of hatred as well. She threw away the hankie that her mother had lovingly cleaned and ironed for her. This indicated her new strength: she wouldn’t allow herself to need her hankie again. She had to endure because, as she said in the final line which was once again separated from the rest of the poem for added emphasis, whether the world’s estimation of her as a ‘Jap’ was correct or incorrect, morally right or wrong, she had to come to the understanding that in their opinion, “Everyone knew me.” (33) This line is reminiscent of DeWitt’s infamous statement, “A Jap’s a Jap.” As a person of Japanese ancestry, she felt that everyone knew her only as a ‘Jap’: A traitor, a spy, a disloyal, inscrutable, slant-eyed, buck-toothed ‘Jap’, deserving of their fear and hatred. Again, like many of her other camp poems, this is a sad, resigned poem with an undercurrent of anger and bitterness. I believe it is reflective of the way many Nisei felt and their frustrations were compounded by the lack of opportunity to release these emotions.

In a poem that Yamada wrote forty years after her release from camp, there is still an intimation of betrayal and frustration in her words. “Desert Run” is a longer poem than those collated in her previous anthology. It is divided into five sections and the sparseness of punctuation throughout allows the poem to flow quickly. She commented on the fact that the desert in Idaho in which she was imprisoned was also a
desert where criminals were released to wander to their deaths. She analogised the desert fauna with the Japanese Americans during their years in captivity:

... scorpions
spiders
snakes
lizards
and rats
live in outcast harmony (1)

The Japanese Americans, also outcasts of society forced into desert-exile, lived in relative harmony with each other and they too shared their suffering in silence until they were permitted to return to their lives. She also compared herself directly to a female bull snake, a comparison that was foreshadowed by the repetitious alliteration of ‘s’ and ‘ss’, serpent-like noises, in the third stanza:

Everything is done in silence here:
the wind fingers fluted stripes
over mounds and mounds of sand
the swinging grasses sweep
patterns on the slope
the sidewinder passes out of sight.
I was too young to hear silence before. (1)

Not only was she too young to hear the silence of the desert when she was interned but, with so many thousands of people forced to make that desolate space their home, it would have been a very different, oppressive kind of silence.

In the second part of the poem, she expressed how she had finally been able to move on, to bury her past in the desert sand. She could still remember those 547 days spent in the desert and she could still remember the moment when she experienced her own spiritual death:

I watched the most beautiful
sunsets in the world and saw nothing
forty years ago
I wrote my will here
my fingers moved slowly in the
hot sand the texture of whole wheat flour
three words: I died here
the winds filed them away. (2)

Seeing the most beautiful sunsets in the world and knowing it to be so, yet being so completely devoid of feeling, reveals a depressed, dying soul, a soul suffering perhaps from melancholia, unable to appreciate the sublime moments nature had to offer. For
the nature-worshipping, aesthetically-oriented Japanese mind, this truly signified a
death! She wrote her ‘will’ in the sand – it could be either her will and testament to be
read on occasion of her corporeal death which she wrote in recognition of her own
mortality, or her will, her desire, for her own death. She wrote her words in the sand
and the wind took them away from her, the way it took her soul and her spirit away
from her many years ago.

The first stanza of the third part draws a direct comparison between the bull
snakes and the Japanese American internees:

Like the bull snakes brought
into this desert by the soldiers
we were transported here
to drive away rattlers
in your nightmares
we were part of some one’s plan
to spirit away spies
in your peripheral vision. (3)

Bull snakes were introduced to the camps to scare away the deadly rattlesnakes and the
Japanese Americans were likewise introduced to their isolated new homes in the desert
to scare away the poisonous ‘rattling’ truths of their traitorous selves. Their spying,
disloyal bodies were on the fringes of society, only evident in peripheral vision, yet the
government deemed it necessary for the disappearance of the corporeal reality, however
limited, of their existence. Their incarceration eased the minds of white America and
Yamada embraced the analogy of herself as a bull snake:

I am that odd creature
the female bull snake
I flick my tongue in your face
an image trapped in your mirror.
You will use me or
you will honor me in a shrine
to keep me pure. (3)

Yet she was an “image trapped in your mirror” – so who was truly the snake? Who had
enacted a sneaky, underhanded manoeuvre, herding away scores of frightened
rattlers/people? These are the kinds of questions that this image begs. She had arrived
at the recognition that she would either be used as a means to justify the actions of the
U.S. government, or as a means to extol the virtues of the war-dead (signified by the
imagery of honour in a shrine – the Japanese kept shrines in their homes in which dead
relatives were respected and honoured) and later praised as members of the model-minority.

The final part chronicles her second departure from ‘home’, her second trauma of *verlassen*, this time from the desert campsite:

I cannot stay in the desert  
where you will have me nor  
will I be brought back in a cage  
to grace your need for exotica.  
I write these words at night  
for I am still a night creature  
but I will not keep a discreet distance  
If you must fit me to your needs  
I will die  
and so will you. (5)

She refused to remain imprisoned where the bigots would have her stay, nor would she be further manipulated in any other way to serve the needs of those who committed a great injustice. Her refusal to “grace your need for exotica” could be a reminder of her self-comparison to an exotic animal caged in a zoo, like a bull snake or the ‘exotic’ Japanese caged behind barbed wire. It could also refer to the surge in fantasm and exoticism of the Asian female under the gaze of the white American male. She refused to fit that image – if she was ostracised, excluded, fetishised or exoticised ever again, she would die a second death, but this time the soul of America would surely perish as well. Clearly, her more recent poetry incorporated some feminist values as well as the obvious racial issues surrounding internment. In a 1999 volume of feminist theory, she was quoted as stating that third world women “are expected to move, charm or entertain, but not to educate in ways that are threatening to our audiences.” (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 1999: 318) As an American-educated feminist who fit the physical ‘identikit’ of third world Asian women, she did not conform to their ideological stereotype and fantasy model and used her poetry to angrily disassemble such portrayals.

I feel that the poetry of Mitsuye Yamada underwent a transformation as events unfolded in her political and societal environment and her own awareness shifted of what it meant to be a Japanese American Nisei survivor of the internment camps. In an essay entitled “Legacy of Silence (I)” she remembered playing down her camp experience to the few who questioned her about it on the east coast because she knew it
would draw comparisons to Hitler’s extermination camps. The difference in the level of
suffering silenced her from making a complaint as she felt her experience was
inconsequential compared to the victims of the Holocaust. Decades later, she
participated in a film which chronicled the lives of Asian American women and she
found herself crying while relating how she tried to shelter her children from the ugly
face of racism. In 1992, at a fiftieth-year commemoration of Executive Order 9066, she
heard a story about the racism encountered by a young Yonsei girl scout and was
immediately transported to the spitting encounter in Cincinnati discussed earlier. The
story of the Yonsei triggered her own powerful memory and her own linear existence
was suddenly halted and she was transported back in time to a traumatic moment that
had not yet been healed. She was forced to rush to the bathroom in great distress.
Later, she said:

What I found most painful about her story was the realization
that in a flash we can return to the ‘square one’ about which Jeni
writes in her essay. I was weeping over the incident because I
knew that it was not an isolated one but a form of non-violent
hate crime to which our children are subjected all too frequently.
I knew that such actions could not be legally prosecuted. Still,
they do damage not only to the recipients of such attacks but to
our society as a whole. (Harth, 2001: 43)

The Nisei experienced a realisation, often prompted by the insistent questions of
the Sansei, that more important than sheltering their children from acts of racism, which
was virtually impossible, was educating them about their experiences. This only
seemed to happen en masse after the redress movement was underway and even more so
after the apology and reparations were granted. The apology offered the Nisei survivors
closure to the trauma; an admittance of guilt by the government meant that the shame
embodied by the Nisei could now be transferred and the healing process could begin,
facilitated by the telling of their stories.

6.7 The suppression and release of shame

Hisaye Yamamoto wrote several short stories about the internment of which I
found the post-war “Wiltshire Bus” to be particularly engaging. Protagonist Esther
Kuroiwa was on a bus sitting alongside a Chinese couple when a Caucasian man seated
behind them began a loud, drunken monologue. The Chinese lady turned to look at him
and he responded by saying to her:

Why don’t you go back to China, where you can be coolies
working in your bare feet out in the rice fields? You can let
your pigtails grow and grow in China. Alla, samee, mama, no tickee no shirtee. Ha, pretty good, no tickee no shirtee!
(Yamamoto, 1990: 219)

Everyone on the bus ignored him, including Esther who:

felt quite detached. She found herself wondering whether the man meant her in his exclusion order\(^{18}\) or whether she was identifiably Japanese. Of course, he was not sober enough to be interested in such fine distinctions, but it did not matter, she decided, because she was Japanese, not Chinese, and therefore in the present case immune. Then she was startled to realize that what she was actually doing was gloating over the fact that the drunken man had specified the Chinese as the unwanted.
(Yamamoto, 1990: 219)

She remembered the pain she felt when she first saw an ‘I AM KOREAN’ button worn by a Korean man after her release from camp and how betrayed she felt not only by the American government but also by her fellow-Asian residents of America. “Heat suddenly rising to her throat, she had felt angry, then desolate and betrayed.”
(Yamamoto, 1990: 220) She felt ashamed of her thoughts of immunity through specific ethnicity and

was filled once again in her life with the infuriatingly helpless, insidiously sickening sensation of there being in the world nothing solid she could put her finger on, nothing solid she could come to grips with, nothing solid she could sink her teeth into, nothing solid. (Yamamoto, 1990: 221)

She too, like Yamada upon hearing the story of the Yonsei, was immediately transported back to the feelings she had in the aftermath of the internment; the feelings of betrayal and hurt, of shame and guilt and, significantly for the importance of the redress movement, the inability to assign blame or anger to any solid person or organisation. The man’s drunken diatribe was a trigger for Esther to recall, unwillingly, her own past trauma.

The redress movement enabled the survivors of the internment camps to place the guilt, blame and shame squarely on the shoulders of those who deserved to carry it, thus removing it themselves and each other. John Tateishi, a Sansei who was three when he was interned, played a prominent role in the redress movement of the seventies and eighties and collated the oral testimonies of thirty survivors of the internment camps, most of them Nisei and many of them war veterans, in a book titled And Justice For All. The memories of the Nisei, for the most part, had “remained inside this
collective body, as if mummified, with all their vivid details preserved and awaiting exposure.” (Murray, 2000: 103) The suppression of shame was a common concern amongst the Nisei, as articulated by Jack Tono:

So many people don’t know about the evacuation that the Japanese Americans went through. I’m not ashamed of it. Some Nihonjin [Japanese] are ashamed to talk about it. They’re ashamed to tell their kids. My God, what’s wrong? There’s something wrong with that. I told them, ‘You talk as if you’ve committed a crime,’ I said. ‘We didn’t commit anything. The only thing—the crime—was our face, the way we look, and goddamn it, that’ll never change. You ought to be proud of being Japanese in this country and having those values that were instilled in us by our parents.’ (Tateishi, 1984: 175)

Another common theme that emerged through these testimonials was the desire the Nisei had for such an unjust act to never happen again and for their descendants to finally become aware of their own history after so many decades of mostly self-imposed silence.

Even decades after the redress movement and the testimonials allowed a cathartic release of trauma and shame, there still exists a great deal of trauma within the Nisei. In 2004 I distributed copies of my survey (see Appendix Six) to various institutes in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia. Most of the respondents were Nisei and Sansei and were very revealing in their current thoughts on the topic. One Nisei participant revealed that he still felt ashamed of his Japanese heritage every year on the 7th December while another, who decided to speak openly about her experiences with her children from an early age, saw the debilitating effects of her fellow Niseis silence and claimed that it resulted in a lack of trust with the younger generations. Finally, a Nisei who wished there had been more communication within his family but didn’t want to burden his parents or his children, clearly remembered one incident that happened 62 years earlier:

our former neighbors. . . came to visit us in the outdoor compound surrounded by barbed wire. . . . They handed our parents a box of fried chicken. Back in our barracks, we children were given the chicken. As food we were served in the camp mess hall was hardly edible, we devoured the chicken voraciously. As my mother watched, she broke down in tears, turned her back toward us and sobbed uncontrollably. Having never seen our mother cry saddened me greatly. It was an experience I will never forget.19
The pain he felt about this experience that he would clearly “never forget” was a motivating factor for the Nisei to communicate more openly about the internment with their children.

6.8 For the protection of their children

Nisei author Yoshiko Uchida wanted to educate the younger generations of America through her novels and picture books. A Jar of Dreams, The Best Bad Thing and The Happiest Ending are set in California during the Depression, narrated by eleven year-old Rinko Tsujimura as her family struggled to deal with the racism and prejudice they encountered and the cultural conflicts within their family caused by the children’s Americanization. Journey to Topaz and Journey Home are based on Uchida’s own internment experiences, told through the eyes of eleven year-old Yuki Sakane who was interned with her brother Ken and their mother; their father had been arrested and was in jail elsewhere. Uchida used these books to educate children not only on the details of internment but also on the effects of racism and ignorance, compassion and forgiveness. The Bracelet, a picture book aimed at younger children, delivers the same message through the simple story of a young Japanese American girl’s best friend, a Caucasian girl, who gave her a bracelet as a reminder of their friendship.

Uchida purposefully did not focus on the negative aspects of internment and wanted readers to understand the ethnic specificity behind the retelling of these stories. Each generation dealt with the internment in different ways, influenced by their ethnic and environmental backgrounds, and she compared them in an interview:

I don’t recall that the Issei were bitter about what happened to them and they certainly had every right to be. They helped face that whole traumatic incident with grace and dignity. Some of the younger, more militant Asians are critical of our acquiescence and for having gone so docilely, but I think we would have destroyed ourselves if we had emerged feeling so bitter. . . . (“Hope and No Monsters”, 1975: 20)

She felt a sense of responsibility to educate her younger readers especially as she had such a clear understanding of the generational differences and stated the importance of education through positive affirmation rather than a negative portrayal and sense of anger through her literature:

When we write for Asian children, it is important not to fill them too much with a sense of frustration. I feel they should be aware of past oppression because certainly there was a lot of injustice
in the early days, but we need to give children more than just anger and resentment about those injustices. (“Hope and No Monsters”, 1975: 21)

Bearing in mind her desire to educate, she subsequently wrote her own memoirs. Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family tells her story in a very simple and touching manner, a personal account of life as a twenty one year-old innocent prisoner. Both Uchida and her sister were involved in the schools that were established in Tanforan and Topaz where they were able to observe the effects the internment was having on the younger children. For example, their perception of home-life was rapidly being distorted:

Whenever the children played house, they always stood in line to eat at make-believe mess halls rather than cooking and setting tables as they would have done at home. It was sad to see how quickly the concept of home had changed for them. (88)

She also recalled the children’s oblivion of the irony of pledging allegiance to the American flag whilst under military guard. She was touched by their eagerness to learn despite the harsh conditions, but found herself wondering if “the bewildering trauma of the forced removal from their homes inflicted permanent damage to their young psyches.” (119) An astute observation as their evacuation, internment and relocation, together with the years of suppressed silence and non-ownership of guilt by the government, certainly did scar the psyche of the young internees and, most frighteningly, these scars formed memory traces that were passed down to their children and grandchildren also.

The trauma experienced by the Japanese Americans which arguably began with their difficult original departure from their homelands to a hostile hostland, was repeated throughout their history. The trauma of evacuation (some had moved prior to this to locations east of the designated ‘military zones’ in an attempt to escape internment but many of them were evacuated anyway) was repeated when they were forced to move from the Assembly Centers, their homes for a few months, into the Relocation Centers (internment camps). After some time in the camps, many Nisei moved east for work or college and many Nisei men joined the Army. When the war was over and the prohibition from the western states was lifted, most Japanese American families reunited on the west coast but some Issei joined their children on the east coast. There were several such moves within the space of a few years and, for many, the moves continued long after the war ended as they had lost their homes and
land and were forced to move between friends’ houses, government-built temporary accommodation, charity-funded accommodation and, eventually, their own homes again. Uchida recalled their move from Tanforan and the fear they felt then foreshadowed the years of upheaval and repetitive trauma to come:

> It had only been a crude community of stables and barracks, but it had been home for five months and we had grown accustomed to our life there. Now it was another wrench, another uprooting, and this time we were bound for an unknown and forbidding destination. Those who remained seemed to watch us go with the same apprehension we felt. Neither side quite wanted to let go. We waved to each other as long as we could, and those of us on the train pressed up to the windows, holding close the final sight of all that was familiar. (1984: 103)

The cycle of removal, relocation, expulsion and rejection certainly had a tremendous impact. Mary Tsukamoto, in her testimonial given at the CWRIC hearings, understood the widespread and ever-continuous impact of such actions on the survivors of the internment as well as on their descendants. She urged her community to rouse themselves, to make a difference for the sake of all generations to come:

> I realized that I needed to be angry not just for myself personally, but for what happened to our people. And also for our country because I really believe it wasn’t just Japanese Americans that were betrayed, but America itself. I’m saying that for the kids. . . and for their children and their friends and all the generations that are coming. For their sakes, we need to be angry enough to do something about it so that it will never happen again. (Tateishi, 1984: 15)

6.9 War veterans versus the no-no boys

The Nisei who did strive to make a difference, in the manner in which they thought best, found themselves in conflict with other Nisei. The loyalty questionnaire drove a wedge into the Japanese American community. It turned man against neighbour, father against son, brother against brother. Of course, that was not always the case; most families accepted the decision that was made in their own particular situation. But when members of the same family, or friends, disagreed with what they thought was the right decision, relations had the potential to turn very hostile.

On the one hand, there were the men who fought for their country, believing firstly that it was their duty as citizens of America to sacrifice themselves and secondly that it was an excellent opportunity to prove their unquestionable loyalty to America.
But the Japanese Americans who left camp to fight for their country faced such an unusual predicament in that, despite their great sacrifice, they still had to deal with acts of racism and hostility. Although they fought to gain acceptance and equality, they were consistently beaten down with acts of discrimination. John Kanda remembered how they were treated worse than the Italian POWs on their way to Europe:

We shipped out for Europe on the *Queen Mary* in October 1944. I remember there were many Italian prisoners of war being returned to Europe, and they had the luxury cabins upstairs, and all of us 442\textsuperscript{nd} guys were in the open troop berths below the water level. I still kind of smart at the idea of that. (Tateishi, 1984: 122-123)

Wilson Makabe also shared with the redress committee his own tragic story. He volunteered for the 442\textsuperscript{nd} and was badly injured in battle in Italy. He was unconscious for ten days and woke up in a full body cast. Gangrene had set in, his leg was amputated, his back was rotting away and the doctors doubted he would survive. It took several months to get him back to America and when he finally arrived at the military hospital, he rang his brother:

That’s when I learned that someone had set fire to our house in Loomis. . . oh, you can’t describe the feeling. I remember the pain and the hurt, the suffering in the hospitals in Italy – that was nothing compared to this. I cried for the first time. All that time in the hospital I don’t remember shedding a tear, but I cried that night. . . [years later he ran into an old resident of Loomis who ran a service station. He asked to talk with Makabe] He said, ‘Y’know I was one bastard. I had signs on my service station saying ‘No Jap trade wanted’. . . Now, when I see you come back like that, I feel so small.’ (Tateishi, 1984: 255, 259)

His lack of emotion at his physical ordeal could be, if I apply a Caruthian reading to it, due to his inability to fully understand, to completely comprehend his situation. The trauma of his injury was unknowable because it was such a shock. But his house burning down was his double wounding, a repetition of his earlier physical trauma (which was a repetition of the trauma of internment) and allowed him to finally access it. His great despondency, his overwhelming grief is located in the words, “I cried for the first time.” The response of the man who approached Makabe and admitted to contributing to the anti-Japanese campaign during and after the war offered a positive note to this sad tale – but at what cost? Why did it take the sacrifice of so many men to prove something that the white members of the same society were afforded the privilege of regarding as their right, only because of their external appearance?
This kind of thinking was what drove some men to become ‘no-no boys’. Of course, there were other factors which I will discuss in the next chapter, but the emotions at that time were so highly charged it drove many men into acts of defiance. Frank Chuman initially answered no-no, but later changed his mind:

I was so goddamned mad at that questionnaire. It was insulting, impugning without any evidence. . . . They don’t have to push it down my throat – are you willing to bear arms to defend the United States? That’s so goddamned obvious that I would do that that it just really made me angry. . . . So I said ‘No-no, just shove it up your ass.’ It was completely impulsive. I was pretty hotheaded back in those days. (Tateishi, 1984: 231)

Regardless of the reasons for answering no-no, it marked these men negatively for the rest of their lives. As one veteran, Shig Doi, expressed, he felt that while he was fighting for the collective rights of the Japanese Americans, “those guys were back here enjoying life. That’s what hurts me, you know, because some of us went into the service together.” (Tateishi, 1984: 161) The deep division between the two groups of men contributed to, especially for the no-no boys, the seemingly inexhaustible sense of shame, anxiety and sadness cloaked in a thick silence.

6.10 Using film to break the silence

The Nisei generation made several films and documentaries about the internment experience. Robert A. Nakamura was just six years-old when he went to camp and subsequently made several films, many of which were quite experimental, concerning the internment years. His 1976 film Manzanar featured traditional Japanese music playing over images of the internment as a hand-held camera frantically raced through the ruins of present-day Manzanar. Nakamura also directed, among others, Wataridori in 1976 which focussed on an Issei man’s return to Manzanar and Something Strong Within in 1994, an award-winning documentary that used rarely seen home movies of the evacuation and incarceration. These two images shown here are screen shots from Something Strong Within.
Possibly the most famous documentary about the Japanese American wartime experience is *Rabbit in the Moon* made by Nisei sisters Emiko and Chizu Omori in 1999. One point made very clear early on is that part of the reason for the collective silence was the unease with the terminology used immediately after the war. The camps were, technically, concentration camps but, as details of Hitler’s misnomered concentration (extermination) camps filtered into America, the term had far worse connotations than what the Japanese Americans had experienced. So they (like Yamada) were reluctant to talk about their time in “concentration camps” not because it was so bad but, in terms of this terminology dilemma, because it was not bad enough!

A great deal of the film is devoted to the treatment and consequences of being an internee at Tule Lake, the camp where the ‘disloyals’ such as the no-no boys and their families, were sent. The stigma of being at Tule Lake persisted for decades due to the silence surrounding their specific experience as ‘disloyals’ and therefore a deep, emotional division within the Japanese American community remained. Emiko and Chizu Omori recognised a need for communication, education and a serious self-examination of issues of identity, community and family within the Japanese American diaspora. They wanted to help break the silence about internment to allow the rifts within their own community begin to heal. In an essay describing her role in the making of the film, Chizu Omori admitted that she did what most other Nisei did in the post-war years; she abandoned and rejected all things Japanese and strived to become as American as possible, as quickly as possible. She concluded that the internment, a time she described as a “Kafkaesque existence” (2001: 222) was such a deeply disturbing and painful episode in her life that, as a survival mechanism, she suppressed her memories of it in order to get on with her life. Yet the suppression festered inside of her like an infected wound, to use an analogy from Chapter Five, with hidden symptoms flaring up unexpectedly:

> For me the feelings came in odd and unexpected ways, the sting of tears, the lump in the throat, and the knot in the stomach when certain questions came up. These small, stabbing pains could not be perpetually denied. (2001: 224)

As the sisters progressed with their film, interviewed people and attended conferences addressing the internment, they realised that the suppressed pain they could feel churning inside of them was a collective symptom of their entire community. The opportunity for dialogue had been closed for so long, their trauma lying in a state of
latency that on issues as sensitive as the no-no boys, it seemed almost impossible to overcome; yet they made that one of their goals.

Another film that tackled the issue of the no-no boys was the 1999 documentary, *Children of the Camps*, directed by Stephen Holsapple. It documented the work of Satsuka Ina, a family psychologist, who led a three-day intensive workshop to help six former child internees to deal with the manifestation of trauma in their adult lives. Ina felt that they had a responsibility to unlock their own memories, to tell their stories, to ensure that it would not happen again. As her group slowly began to trust each other and shared their stories, a heated discussion erupted between two men on the issue of the no-no boys. It revealed how deeply the trauma had embedded itself in the victims that an angry exchange occurred over sixty years later.

*Nisei* Iwato Itow also revealed how ingrained the trauma was when he reflected on all the opportunities he had missed out on: “There’s a constant reminder of what I missed or lost out on because of the war, and then how they treated us. I am still bitter about that, and I don’t think I’ll ever forget. . .” (Tateishi, 1984: 145) Yet there are others who were able to move beyond the bitterness. Violet De Cristoforo lost her entire family except her children as a young mother in camp and was persuaded to renounce her citizenship. She was deported to Japan but was able to send her young children back to America alone (she was not permitted to return at that time) to escape the harsh life in post-war Japan. Her children grew up in America and refused to acknowledge their mother who believed she was only acting in their best interests. Yet she was not bitter:

My life will never be the same. I will take this with me till I die, and I’m sure my children would bear some of the burden too. Three generations of my family has disintegrated as a result of this. I don’t know why I’m not bitter. But what good does it do. It would only make me sick. . . . In the days when this was all happening to me I had to take it day by day. But in the last six months [during the redress committee hearings] since I started reliving this thing it was very hard. I have more peace of mind now. (Tateishi, 1984: 133, 140)

Why was it that she was able to transcend her anger and bitterness, when others were unable? Was it because she did not spend the immediate post-war years in America, thus was not subjected to the same environmental influences that the other *Nisei* were?
Was she able to discuss her experiences without fear of recrimination or hostility, as was the fear in America?

6.11 Artistic Contributions of the Nisei

Another Nisei who was very conflicted between his Japanese and American identities was sculptor Isamu Noguchi, born Sam Gilmour to Japanese father Noguchi Yonejiro and Caucasian mother Leonie Gilmour. As an older Nisei artist established in New York, thus exempt from Executive Order 9066, he voluntarily entered Poston internment camp in 1942 with the intention to expand the artistic contributions of his fellow Nisei. However, he quickly realised that would be far more difficult than he thought and, having no family or friends with him and being of a different age group (he was 37, the average Nisei was 18), he found the experience very isolating. He was eventually allowed to return to the east coast where he continued to create sculptures heavily influenced by his heritage and upbringing (he was, in fact, a Kibei).25

Henry Sugimoto, shown on the right painting in camp, was another Nisei artist who was keen to continue his work whilst interned. He wanted to record daily life in camp and he began with an oil painting of a young girl struggling with a large suitcase. He called this painting (shown left) “Bewilderment”26 which could accompany a story he recalled of his young daughter’s confusion on their first day of evacuation after they finished their rice balls for lunch made in preparation for a long journey:

And after we ate those rice balls, my daughter, still young – you know, five years old – don’t know anything. She doesn’t know what’s happening, maybe it’s a picnic. So we ate for lunch the rice balls. She said, “Let’s go home. Already we ate all the rice balls.” It’s a picnic, you see! Can’t even explain; they don’t know. They can’t understand it. (Gesensway and Roseman, 1987: 34)

Some of his paintings were shown in an exhibit in 1942 at the Hendrix College Museum in Arkansas. Pulitzer Prize winner John Gould Fletcher saw the exhibition and was so
moved by “Longing”, right, that he wrote a poem to accompany it:

Though the snake – hiss
Casts its menace, and the train roars off through cloud
Lightening fanged beyond these towns, there is no higher bliss
Than what rests above the present terror of this flood;
Mother love, sad with presage, yet accepting all.
Lacking this, we would be nothing, and our fall
into the pit would be endless – with this, we may crawl
Out of hopeless Longing, make new heaven out of hell
Here where we hold to this purpose, here where we dwell
We may walk the earth yet – broken, yes – but watchful still and proud.
(Gesensway and Roseman, 1987: 40)

The little girl featured in both paintings was most probably his daughter whose confusion, ‘bewilderment’ and ‘longing’ to return home must have been extremely painful for her parents to observe. Surrounded by deserts and guard towers, rattlesnakes and the endless sand storms, the little girl pleads with her mother to take her home, pointing in the direction of the Golden Gate Bridge. The Nisei did not want to remind the young Sansei of their painful experiences in camp once they were able to leave.

Another artist who had success with her internment art was Mine Okubo. She worked as an art editor for the camp newspaper in Topaz and endlessly sketched her surroundings. Her friends on the outside sent her parcels to cheer her up so she decided to create a series of drawings for them to illustrate her life in camp. These drawings later formed Citizen 13660, one of the first books published which documented the lives of Japanese Americans inside the camps. As Okubo said, “at that time anything Japanese was still rat poison” (Gesensway and Roseman, 1987: 74) but fortunately her book was published in 1946 and interest in her drawings grew. I found one charcoal drawing, shown here, to be particularly powerful. Titled “Isseis Lost
Everything it demonstrated the admiration the Nisei had for the strength of the Issei and the overwhelming feeling of sadness to have witnessed the destruction of everything their parents had worked for. The Issei were regarded as the most harshly-affected generation and their pain was felt very sharply by their children who, in turn, were so desperate to shield their own children from such pain that they embraced a code of silence.

It became evident during the committee hearings that there needed to be a resolution within the Japanese American community itself, to heal divisions that had been widened through political jostling, to renew family relationships that had degenerated over time and to strengthen interest and passion for their own cultural and ethnic heritage. The generations needed to work together to heal their community and to ensure such a tragedy never happened again, a concept that formed Uchida’s response to questions posed by the younger generations asking why they didn’t stand up for themselves:

They were right to ask these questions, for they made us search for obscure truths and come to a better understanding of ourselves and of those times. They are the generation for whom civil rights meant more than just words. . . . It is my generation, however, who lived through the evacuation of 1942. We are their link to the past and we must provide them with the cultural memory they lack. We must tell them all we can remember, so they can better understand the history of their own people. As they listen to our voices from the past, however, I ask that they remember they are listening in a totally different time; in a totally changed world. (Uchida, 1984: 147)

It is clear that through inherited, ethnically-specific traits such as gaman, giri and the use of the powerful significations of silence, both Issei and Nisei suppressed not only their memories of the internment but their emotions associated with it. They experienced an inescapably traumatic moment that would always be associated with negative racialization and would be repeatedly triggered back into their consciousness despite their efforts to distance themselves and their children from it. The Niseis experience of rejection reasserted itself as a feeling of shame and guilt.

The cathartic moment of the transferral of shame and guilt to the responsible party (the government) came with the CWRIC committee hearings and the redress movement. As the Nisei came forward and told their stories, they commonly broke down in tears, as did much of the audience (witnesses). Once the stories and emotions
were finally released after decades repressed in a latency period characterised by silence, the Nisei expressed a feeling of relief and an ability to move forward with their lives.

Such memories, it seems, possess an energy of flow that leads to their movement from whatever locked places, whatever traumatized neural pathways they inhabit, into the interstices of the everyday. . . . Once the flow has begun they become difficult to stop, as if the self wished to reconstitute itself according to a biological scheme akin to the healing of wounds, or as if it had to rid itself of toxic energy. . . . (Culbertson, 1995: 175)

As I believe the testimonials and the redress movement were such influential factors in the healing process of the Nisei, it would be interesting to analyse a few seminal pieces of Nisei literature across a broad timeframe. In the next chapter, I closely examine novels published over a fifty year period in order to determine how time and testimony affected their responses to the trauma of internment and how that may have influenced their writing.

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Notes

1 The most well-known wartime haiku poets from the mainland include Neiji Ozawa, Violet Kazue Matsuda de Cristoforo, Sadako Abiko (pseudo.), Sho Nakashima, Kyotaro Komura (pseudo.), Yotenchi Agari, Shiho Okamoto and Senbinshi Takaoka. See de Cristoforo, 1993.
2 Or in Canada, property was seized by the government and sold to pay for the evacuation costs and owners were never compensated.
3 Her real name was Iku Uchida. One of her daughters is Yoshiko Uchida who I discuss later.
4 In fact several studies have been completed on the health consequences of the internment which reveal the negative impact on the health of all former internees, not just the Issei. See Chapter Five.
5 I discuss the strength of a fictitious Issei character in Sansei Julie Otsuka’s novel in Chapter Eight.
8 I discuss the publishing record of Japanese American literature in the post-war years in Chapter Seven.
9 http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/mitsuyeyamada.html Date accessed: 23rd August 2005.
11 A poem written by Nisei James Masao Mitsui also captured a moment very similar to that which Egami described. The third stanza, and third situation, in a series of common events in camp in the poem “Block 18, Tule Lake Relocation Camp” reads:

Blocks away from their new home
a woman finds a latrine
not backed up. Stands
in line, waiting her turn
in the wind. Down
the center of the open room:
12 toilet stools, six pair,
back to back. Sits down
and asks for privacy,
holding a towel in front of her
with trembling hands. (Mitsui, 1997: 24-25)
12 Go is a traditional Japanese boardgame of strategy using black and white coloured markers or stones.
14 Her daughter, Jeni Yamada, wrote “Legacy of Silence (II)” also published in Harth, 2001.
Congressman Robert Matsui had heard of this terrible tale, put a political spin on it and recounted it to an assembly of mostly Japanese Americans in 1992, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War. A young Yonsei girl, in her girl scouts uniform, was selling cookies outside a supermarket with other members of her troop. One shopper refused her, saying, “No, thanks, I only buy American.” (Harth, 2001: 42)

I will discuss Jeni’s essay in Chapter Eight.

Of course, many Issei had already passed away by the time the committee hearings and redress movement began. The Issei mostly maintained their silence throughout the rest of their lives but some experienced a sense of redemption when they were finally granted the right to become naturalised Americans. Ida Otani discussed how her Issei father felt after 82 years in America: “I don’t think he ever recovered from the degradation, humiliation, and indignation of losing his job because he was Japanese but he still loved his country. Everyone in my family will attest to this. His abyss was betrayal by the railroad company in the face of his long and loyal service. He reached his zenith when he was granted citizenship and could exercise his voting rights. I believe this served as a catharsis he needed to mollify his hurt and humiliation.” (Standing Guard, 2002: 81)

Interesting choice of phrase here – obviously meant as a reminder of the Exclusion Order 9066.

All survey participants will remain anonymous.

The shamisen, a three-stringed guitar and the shakuhachi, a bamboo flute.

There is a Japanese folk story that says that in each full moon you can see a rabbit making omochi (rice cakes).

Part of fulfilling the desire to rapidly assimilate was to work extremely hard and achieve great material and career successes. Thus many Nisei became workaholics (much like their parents before them but with different goals) and pushed their children very hard also. Thus was formed the foundation of the Japanese Americans as the ‘model minority’. This is a definition that is not well-liked within the Japanese American community today for a number of reasons. It makes it difficult to be seen as an individual, it ignores the problems that do exist and require addressing in their community, it has created friction with other minority groups as they have been singled out as the exemplary group that the others should emulate and, ironically, the myth of their ‘complete’ success diminished their argument of the disastrous consequences of the internment. Tom Watanabe saw his own workaholism as directly related to the internment experience, an experience that was so traumatic that it robbed him of his sleep: “I used to have nightmares, you know. I couldn’t sleep. I had to be really exhausted to sleep. Maybe that’s why I became a workaholic. I don’t know. Like I say, you know, it’s still all there. . . . If just hits you all of a sudden. You never get rid of that. I never can. Maybe that’s why I’m always on the go.” (Tateishi, 1984: 99)

Shig Doi, the veteran mentioned earlier, also discussed his inability to remove all traces of his trauma: “After everything we went through – the evacuation, the war – sure you’re bitter. Somewhere in this corner I have a scar that will never be gone. If you hurt a person, you say something and you apologize, but that isn’t going to bring anything back. You’ve been hurt and the scar is there and it’ll stay till the dying day.” (Tateishi, 1984: 166-167)

This information was correct at the time of her testimony in 1984.


Gesensway and Roseman, 1987: 68.

In an eerie statement foreshadowing the tragic events of 9/11 and the resulting treatment of Arab Americans, Chizu Omori wrote that the wartime internment of Japanese Americans was a “cautionary tale of immense proportions about the capacity of the American government to abuse its own power, particularly during wartime. It was not the first and probably will not be the last such story. For all the seeming assimilation of Asian Americans, the stereotypes of Asians as somehow ‘other’ have not disappeared, and they spring forth whenever relations with Asian countries become strained or threatening. The brutal truth, however, is that no group, no one, can feel totally safe as long as the ‘loaded weapon’ of wartime incarceration threatens our rights and freedom.” (2001: 228) I discuss the link between the Japanese American experience and the Arab American experience further in Chapter Ten.
Chapter Seven

Problematic Identity Reconciliations

7.1 The importance of minority literature

As discussed in Chapter Six, there were a number of issues that particularly affected the Nisei generation such as the deeply divisive loyalty questionnaire, the feelings of torn loyalties, the desire for Americanization which conflicted with their parents, the sudden role of leadership in the wake of the emasculation of the Issei men and the inveterate desire to protect their children from the harsh reality of racism. In this chapter I will examine four authors in detail and discuss why their texts are so reflective and indicative of the sufferings and traumas of the Nisei generation and how their literature signifies the manner in which their trauma was passed on to the subsequent generations. These texts span fifty years beginning in the post-war era when Japanese American texts were not marketable. However, the persistence of the Japanese American literary community was rewarded as more and more of their stories became published. The availability of minority texts is imperative if one is to rewrite history from a perspective outside of the dominant discourse.

In a statement that recalls Žižek’s work, Chakrabarty explained the importance of minority literature when he said that “successfully incorporated ‘minority histories’ may then be likened to yesterday’s revolutionaries who become today’s gentlemen.” (2000: 43)
Of the four texts discussed, two are autobiographies, one is heavily autobiographical and all (eventually, in the case of Okada) received critical acclaim for their contribution to internment discourse. Since “literary creation is that adventure of body and signs that bears witness to the affect” (Kristeva, 1987: 108) and produces testimony to a traumatic event, the texts I discuss chart the progress of the problematic identity reconciliations experienced by most of the *Nisei* generation for several decades after the end of the war.¹

7.2 **A contextually revealing yet problematic identity-resolution**

Monica Sone’s well-known autobiographical novel, *Nisei Daughter*, was originally published in 1953, making it one of the earliest *Nisei* texts. As mentioned earlier, not a lot of Japanese American writers were published in the years immediately following World War II; indeed many chose not to publish works concerning the internment. Sone’s novel is so integral to an understanding of the *Nisei* because it was an authentic expression of the mindset of many *Nisei* less than a decade after the end of the war. The years of internment were still relatively fresh in her memory as were the years of relocation in the eastern states. She provided an insight into what those years were like without the psychological benefit of the civil rights movement, the redress movement or the support and companionship of fellow *Nisei* or *Sansei* writers publishing their memoirs at the same time. She embodied the commonly-held *Nisei* desire to deny her Japanese heritage, embrace her Americanism and, like many other *Nisei*, struggled to find a medium between the two.

Narrator Kazuko Itoi regarded the Japanese side of her own identity as represented by her mother who, significantly, was the one who informed her of her Japanese blood:

> One day when I was a happy six-year-old, I made the shocking discovery that I had Japanese blood. I was a Japanese. Mother announced this fact of life to us in a quiet, deliberate manner one Sunday afternoon. . . . I didn’t see how I could be a Yankee and Japanese at the same time. It was like being born with two heads. It sounded freakish and a lot of trouble. (3, 19)

Prior to this sudden and unwanted news, Kazuko was leading a peaceful, Edenic life in her family’s hotel until her mother corrupted her paradise with the shocking identification of Kazuko as ‘Other’. She couldn’t understand how it was possible to look one way (‘Oriental’) and feel another way (‘Yankee’). Although she was familiar
with traditional Japanese literature and music, she felt quite detached from it. When she listened to *naniya bushi*² songs for example, she “felt myself twisting and writhing to end this torture.” (77) She never participated, preferring American music and games instead and had an obsession with Mickey Mouse.

Significantly, it was her mother, the symbol of Japan, who was a tanka poet and would often recite impromptu poems to her children:

> In reciting the poem, it was sung melodiously in a voice laden with sentiment and trembling emotion to give it proper meaning and effect. . . . there was something in *tanka*, the way Mother used it. With it, she gathered together all the beauty she saw and heard and felt through that window and pulled it into our little apartment for us to enjoy. (117-118)

When she recited one particular poem, “The fog bound night/ Ever deepening in somber silence/ Tinged with chilling sadness” (118) Kazuko felt enveloped in a melancholic feeling of oldness and sad resignation. Through her maternal poetics, which was translated by the daughter/narrator, the mother inscribed in her daughter a manner of ethnic yearning that was paradoxically familiar and alien which Kazuko instinctively knew to ‘unlearn’ in order to be a ‘complete’ American.

As the wartime propaganda escalated, she found herself wanting to distance herself from the Japanese even further but knew, like Mitsuye Yamada, that in the eyes of white America, that was an impossibility. She remembered the hideous caricatures in the newspapers of Japanese with “enormous moon-shaped spectacles and beady, myopic eyes. A small mustache was perched arrogantly over massive, square buck teeth, and his bow-legged posture suggested a simian character.” (119) Even other Japanese Americans in her life thought she and other *Nisei* like her should return to Japan. It seemed everyone was rejecting them from their birthland; white Americans did not want them there and the *Issei* recognised the discriminatory treatment of the *Nisei* despite their education as Mr Sakaguchi, a fellow hotel owner, complained:

> How many sons of ours with beautiful bachelor’s degree are accepted into American life? Name me one young man who is now working in an American firm on equal terms with his white colleagues. Our Nisei engineers push lawn mowers. Men with degrees in chemistry and physics do research in the fruit stands of the public market. And they all rot away inside. (121)
Despite the pressure from the *Issei* and the wholesale rejection from America, she still felt wholly Americanized inside and, as such, she knew she would not be accepted in Japan either: “The Japanese hate us Nisei. They despise our crude American manners.”

(123) Thus the identity of the *Nisei* in the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor was a very conflicted one. The morning of the attacks forced her and all other Japanese Americans to confront this problem:

> I felt as if a fist had smashed my pleasant little existence, breaking it into jigsaw puzzle pieces. An old wound opened up again, and I found myself shrinking inwardly from my Japanese blood, the blood of an enemy. I knew instinctively that the fact that I was an American by birthright was not going to help me escape the consequences of this unhappy war. (145-146)

The “old wound” she referred to was the wound of discrimination and rejection. It was a wound that could not heal because events repeatedly ripped it open again. Her analogy is a perfect example of the devastating and long-lasting effects of the repetition inherent in Freud’s ‘double wound.’

She remembered several sad incidents from the physical act of evacuation but a particularly tragic image is conjured when she read in the newspaper the government’s reassurance to the non-Japanese residents of Seattle that their beloved fairground would be cleared of all traces of their Japanese captives well before the time when “those fine breeds of Holstein cattle and Yorkshire hogs would be proudly wearing their blue satin ribbons.” (161) The paper neglected to mention where the former residents would be by that stage. Her sad recollection of this article proves that it was clearly a lot easier to remove the traces of the Japanese from the fairgrounds than it was to remove the traces of the fairgrounds from the Japanese such was the abiding nature of their trauma.

The government action of evacuation and internment drove a wedge deep between *Nisei* children who identified with America and their *Issei* parents who symbolised Japan; tragically this was a typical consequence in Japanese American families at that time. Any political discussions sent tempers skyrocketing and, as Kazuko described, during such arguments, “we had eyed each other like strangers, parents against children. They left us with a hollow feeling at the pit of the stomach.” (148) However, the undifferentiated treatment of citizens and aliens alike left Kazuko puzzled. On her first night in Tanforan she reflected on the barbed wire, the search lights and the guns aimed at them and felt a surge of anger:
What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn’t I been given a fair trial? Maybe I wasn’t considered an American anymore. My citizenship wasn’t real, after all. Then what was I? I was certainly not a citizen of Japan as my parents were. On second thought, even Father and Mother were more alien residents of the United States than Japanese nationals for they had little tie with their mother country. (177)

Now that she realised that her citizenship was worth very little in the current climate and that her parents were more residents of America than of Japan, she began to wonder how much she had in common with them after all. They had been treated the same by the government and perhaps that is why she clung to her American values so fiercely. Instead of hating her Japanese self and feeling angry towards her parents for their ultra-Japanese beliefs, her tone has a more sympathetic nuance to it. She arrived at the conclusion that she must accept her Japanese heritage but, in order to be accepted, she must distance herself from it. This realisation was actuated when she physically left the camp and moved east.

Thus Sone/Kazuko’s disintegration of self-identity sharply increased when she left camp. She left her parents, significantly her mother, behind and like so many other thousands of Japanese faces sought anonymity in the eastern states.

Before I left Camp Minidoka, I had been warned over and over again that once I was outside, I must behave as inconspicuously as possible so as not to offend the sensitive public eye. I made up my mind to make myself scarce and invisible, but I discovered that an Oriental face, being somewhat of a rarity in the Midwest, made people stop in their tracks, stare, follow and question me. (219-220)

Unlike Mitsuye Yamada, however, she did not discuss the negative situations she undoubtedly faced. In fact, she even glossed over some of the more disturbing facts of camp life. She did not portray the physical degradations, instead being thankful that they had not been physically mistreated (a contentious point according to former internees at Tule Lake, especially), she touched on the loyalty questionnaire and the draft only briefly considering its devastating consequences, and instead devoted several pages to an humorous anecdote which illustrated the ever-widening cultural division between the Issei and Nisei women at an American-style tea party. As Shirley Geok-lin Lim phrased it, “The killings and internments are erased in the social chit chat of the wedding tea party.” (1990: 297) Sone treated the post-camp months in much the same manner. One could infer that she did not experience any racism when she moved to
Indiana but that seems highly unlikely given the context and other intertextual readings concerning the same time and place. A few pages later, it is evident that she did not discuss any of the negative aspects because she, perhaps as an unconscious, direct result of her trauma, accepted and rationalised all acts of discrimination that she encountered. Remember that, as discussed in Chapter Five, repression and rationalisation were typical defence mechanisms employed by many *Nisei* in the post-war period. For example, she was denied entry into a sorority because of a national ruling that refused those of Japanese ancestry. She knew of the ruling and claimed not to feel personally insulted by it and appreciated instead the “moral honesty” (228) of those who enacted the ruling.

This is an extremely important point in the novel. It illustrates the extent to which many *Nisei* were willing to deny their own heritage, sacrifice their unique identity and accept unacceptable levels of overt and state-sanctioned acts of racism. Her reaction to the excuses offered by the sorority girls was a demonstration of the utter defeat of her Japanese self – a complete and total suppression of her heritage, her anger and her pride and it provided the foundation for the cultivation of her shame and guilt which would ultimately be passed on in unconscious ways to her children and others around her through her language, her silence, her deference and her mannerisms. The conclusion of the novel suggests a kind of racial reconciliation, a merging of her two halves to form a whole, a complete identity made up of Japanese and American. She returned to Minidoka to visit her parents and her mother, in a devastating portrayal of defeat, apologised to her daughter for her ethnicity by saying, “we feel terribly bad about being your Japanese parents.” (236) Kazuko’s response may seem as though she had finally found peace and self-acceptance but, as Lim pointed out, it actually illustrated the extent to which the “psychological, economic, and cultural price the family has had to pay for being Japanese is distorted here to ‘a bargain’.” (1990: 299)

I don’t resent my Japanese blood anymore. I’m proud of it, in fact, because of you and the Issei who’ve struggled so much for us. It’s really nice to be born into two cultures, like getting a real bargain in life, two for the price of one. The hardest part, I guess, is the growing up, but after that, it can be interesting and stimulating. I used to feel like a two-headed monstrosity, but now I find that two heads are better than one. (236)

Her narrative reflects the difficulty of being a “two-headed monstrosity” in a racially homogenising society. She wanted to believe that she was happy with her
‘bargain’ in life, yet her conclusion made it clear that she was still thinking and acting in a manner beneficial for and controlled by the repressive system in which she claimed to have found peace and acceptance. She still rationalised and excused the actions of the men in Washington and only felt at home in America because she had unwittingly adopted the very discourse that had suppressed her and her community. “When [democracy] failed me, I felt bitter and sullen. Now I know I’m just as responsible as the men in Washington for its actions. Somehow it all makes me feel much more at home in America.” (237) Her belief that she had found a way to accept both ‘heads’ was, in fact, an unacknowledged repression, not acceptance, of her Japanese identity, a repression that is reflected in her narrative/narration and through it, has the power to influence future generations. The novel is important because it discloses past attitudes whose echoes are still felt in the present.

7.3 The corrosive effects of silence

The repression of a present, vocal mother and the desire for an absent, silent mother seem to be two very different premises, but this is where the connection lies between Sone’s *Nisei Daughter* and Kogawa’s 1981 novel *Obasan*, a strongly autobiographical novel that unintentionally impacted upon the Japanese Canadian redress movement.4 Kogawa, in an interview in 1988, described her motivation for writing the book as propelled by a desire to free something from within, not for any political gain, as “political reality was the background rather than the foreground of my book. I struggled to free something that wanted to be free.” (Delbaere, 1994:461) The maternal figures in *Nisei Daughter* and *Obasan* were both silenced for different reasons but the trope of silence is far more central to Kogawa’s text.

There has been a great deal of critical interest in the dichotomies of silence and speech in *Obasan*. Protagonist Naomi Nakane’s silence is a marker of her cultural difference and her character operates as a “montage” of different historical discourses (Kamboureli, 2000: 176) where the different elements remain unresolved. Therefore her silence is not representative of a unified discourse; rather it portrays her history of abjection and rejection and, “in its elusiveness it is just as articulate as language, if not more so.” (Kamboureli, 2000: 201) The treatment of her personal trauma within the larger framework of cultural displacement and diasporic communities allowed Kogawa to reveal the process of understanding and potential for healing through the cessation of silence and the embracing of testimony; as Kogawa said, “like Naomi, I became a
person who would not speak, would not ask a question, did not expect to be heard. . . . My first language was silence; my second was speech.” (Careless, 2001) The silences in her text are reflective of the consequences of trauma and the dangers of permitting silence to permeate for so long – Naomi’s latency period spanned thirty-one years; a length of time that was not uncommon within the Nisei generation.

Naomi returned to Granton, Southern Alberta, to support Obasan (aunt) after her uncle’s death in 1972. It had been over thirty years since they were relocated there from their home in Vancouver and over thirty years since she last heard from her mother who had become trapped in Japan in 1941 whilst visiting relatives with their grandmother. Naomi and her brother Stephen were cared for by their aunt and uncle as their father was too sick and eventually died from tuberculosis. Her other aunt, Emily, had moved to Toronto without them and had worked tirelessly for the redress movement for decades, bombarding the resigned Naomi with newspaper clippings and official documents. (Significantly, Aunt Emily, the campaigning aunt, is known by her English name whereas Obasan, the silent aunt, is always referred to by the Japanese word for ‘aunt’.) Emily’s documents offered Naomi the official version of what she experienced on a personal level yet had never spoken about. The differences between Naomi and Emily, like the difference between Obasan and Emily, illustrate that the Japanese American community, although cohesive, was not homogenous.

Obasan is filled with silences and stories of exiles, returns and repeated forced dispersals. The removal and dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community was not merely a fragmentation of Naomi’s family, it destroyed her family. It killed her grandparents and her father, crippled her brother and, by denying her mother the right to re-enter Canada after Pearl Harbor, the apocalyptic nightmare of the bombing of Nagasaki claimed her mother’s life also. Naomi’s silence was inherited from her mother’s silence after her departure, a silence made unbearable because of their closeness before the war. Her family had been “intimate to the point of stickiness, like mochi” (Kogawa, 1981: 20) and Naomi and her mother were especially close. Although Naomi’s fundamental loss was the loss of her mother, the feeling of separation from her predated her physical departure from Canada. Their silence, once safe and communicative, became secretive after she was sexually molested by their neighbour Gower (in which, as a small child of five, she played a passive role). She allowed it to become repetitious and was overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, shame and
complicity. However, her silence at his advances was the only way she knew how to resist him and thus her silence with her mother became a secretive and shameful one which changed their relationship irrevocably. Naomi’s personal trauma was a double wounding; firstly in the form of a physical wound to her young body as a result of Gower’s sexual violation (and repeated later by Percy in Slocan) and secondly as a psychical wound to her mind through her internalisation of her self-induced guilt in her complicit silence. Her guilt at her mother’s disappearance and silence was reinforced by her rejection and expulsion from her home at the hands of the Canadian government and forced her deeper into a world of silence, now a corrosive and demoralising space.

A. Lynne Magnusson’s essay argued that the idealistic memory of Naomi’s mother as a flourishing tree “resembles the Freudian myth of a pre-Oedipal world of plenitude, before the child is conscious of the differences that are to define its subjectivity and individuality.” (1988: 61) In her new world of dark silence and shame, Naomi no longer saw herself as an extension of her mother’s limbs but as a parasite. When her mother left Canada, “there is the dismemberment of the female body, the dissociation from the body and the dispossession of what they body stands for – the link between mother and child.” (Turner, 1992: 91) The early trauma of Gower’s sexual abuse and the early loss of her mother did not allow Naomi to completely develop her ego in a healthy manner. This was exacerbated by Gower’s repeated sexual molestations that foreshadowed the repeated horror of displacement and racism that the Japanese Canadian community endured. The longer her mother was silent, especially after the atomic bombs were dropped, the more that silence was filled with dread and foreboding. Naomi began to identify her feelings of abandonment and guilt at her mother’s departure with feelings of self-hatred and denial of her own Japanese identity as a form of punishment which fits Freud’s definition of a melancholic. Her mother’s eventual reappearance as a disfigured body corresponded to Naomi’s parasitic self-identification which was “undeniably also an image of the ugliness and destructiveness of history.” (Kamboureli, 2000: 208) Thus it is clear that the trope of silence is crucial because it signified Naomi’s (and, by extension, the Nisei generation) loss of identity and it allowed for a repetition of traumatic events which then resulted in the perpetuation of traumatic symptoms.

Repetitious dreams, for example, played a large role in Naomi’s memories of her past, of her trauma. She compared the memories of her trauma to continual
nightmares, saying, “I cannot, I cannot bear the memory. There are some nightmares from which there is no waking, only deeper and deeper sleep.” (232) There was one recurring dream in particular that haunted Naomi; that of the seductive, oriental woman. Erica Gottlieb said that the woman in her dreams:

acts out the mutually corrupting relationship between victim and victimizer. The victim would like to win over the aggressor, to seduce him. The process is humiliating and self-destructive. . . . In the very process the victims experience the nausea of shame and self-loathing – the denial of their own humanity. This self-loathing is becoming a sense of paralysis, the inability to move. (1986: 45)

This paralysis was something experienced by all members of Naomi’s family. Naomi was paralysed by her inability to tell her mother about Gower and her subsequent shame, Stephen was temporarily immobilised by his tuberculosis, her father remained in hospital for most of the novel, eventually succumbing to tuberculosis, her mother was trapped in Japan (and was in fact dead) and Obasan remained in her world of stoic silence.

Her final dream of the Grand Inquisitor allowed Naomi to realise that only when she stopped obsessively searching for answers about her mother would she be able to hear her mother. The ‘voice of the other’ is that which represents the trauma of another. The story of one’s own trauma is always wrapped up with the experience and the ‘voice of the other’ demands the individual to listen and to respond. The ‘voice of the other’ in this case was the (absent) voice of Naomi’s mother. Only when Naomi stopped searching was she able to hear the voice in her mother’s silence. Naomi, her mother and her grandmother had supported and provided for each other wordlessly in Naomi’s childhood and the world of silence, which was once comforting and loving, had been transformed into a debilitating and traumatic world. The voice comes through the words that Grandma Kato had intended for her husband written on, appropriately, “slippery blue-lined papers” (242) in a language that Naomi could not understand and needed to be translated by Nakayama-sensei nearly thirty years later. He urged her, “your mother is speaking. Listen carefully to her voice.”(256) When Naomi finally learned of her mother’s fate, she was able to hear her voice for the first time in over thirty years and she was finally able to begin the process of healing. Significantly, the letter from her grandmother, although it heralded the beginning of a time of peace and understanding for Naomi, was expressed as a burden through her words:
‘If these matters are sent away in this letter, perhaps they will depart a little from our souls,’ she writes. ‘For the burden of these words, forgive me.’

Mother, for her part, continued her vigil of silence. She spoke with no one about her torment. She specifically requested that Stephen and I be spared the truth. (282-283)

However, this is not a story of a completed reconciliation or spiritual healing. Like Kazuko’s mistaken healing in Nisei Daughter, Naomi had really only just begun her healing process, one which could not be completed without an exterior resolution of the still-evident oppression and discrimination in Canada. Apollo O. Amoko argued in his essay that the belatedness of the novel and of the redress movement disturbed the progressivist, linear narratives of Canadian historicism and that Obasan challenged the preconstituted narratives and showed that no matter how much internal healing is successful within a traumatised psyche, the healing cannot be complete until the external damage has been healed also.

Prior to learning of her mother’s fate, Naomi just wanted to live in the world of silence with Obasan:

Some memories, too, might better be forgotten. Didn’t Obasan once say, “It is better to forget”? What purpose is served by hauling forth the jar of inedible food? If it is not seen, it does not horrify. What is past recall is past pain. (54)

The final words are indicative of the trauma carried by both Obasan and Naomi. It was too painful to deal with the silence of her mother as it signified to Naomi her abandonment for which she felt terribly guilty. Once she understood why her mother remained silent for so many years and that Naomi was not at fault, in the same way that she was not at fault for the treatment she and her family experienced at the hands of the Canadian government, she was able to begin her healing process. She could progress from existing in a state of melancholia to that of mourning. She could begin to speak once she heard her mother’s voice again. Naomi called out to her:

Silent Mother, you do not speak or write. You do not reach through the night to enter morning, but remain in the voicelessness. From the extremity of much dying, the only sound that reaches me now is the sigh of your remembered breath, a wordless sound. How shall I attend that speech, Mother, how shall I trace that wave? (289)

Naomi had finally learnt to resituate her mother’s silence and, in so doing, allowed her history to speak to her. But what had been resolved was tempered by what was still
repressed within Naomi. The corrosive nature of their complicit silence was just
beginning to disintegrate and this is where the importance of Kogawa’s novel lies. It
serves as a warning to other Nisei who endured the trauma of evacuation and relocation,
not just in Canada but in America also, of the dangers of silence. Their silence
facilitated the self-blame and guilt and enabled the government to deny responsibility
for their actions. The shame and humiliation, the trauma and the nightmares would
never end unless the diaspora emerged from their world of silence and spoke out about
their experiences. As a result, this novel had a noticeable impact upon the Japanese
Canadian community and their quest for redress and acknowledgement.

7.4 A disunited diaspora and a fractured soul

Another novel that certainly bore considerable influence long after its
publication is John Okada’s novel No-No Boy which documented the difficulties
endured by twenty five year-old Nisei Ichiro Yamada as he re-entered his old
neighbourhood in Seattle after two years interned in camp and two years incarcerated in
prison for refusing the draft. Ichiro’s character functions as an unreliable character
because his emotions and his cognitive functions had been distorted by his recent
experiences. Ichiro attempted to re-establish himself as a loyal American despite great
hostility from fellow Nisei men and an irreparably damaged family, headed by a
deranged, delusional mother who believed that Japan won the war and that her son’s
actions allowed her to laud his ‘Japaneseness’. Much has been made of the context of
the production of this novel and of its ‘rediscovery’ in the 1970s to explain its
fluctuating popularity since its original publication in 1957.

Jinqi Ling examined the shifting reception of the novel from its original
publication during an era when “Cold War ideological drives toward U.S. nationalism
and legitimation of material abundance promoted tendencies to embrace a common
national character” (1995: 360) which contextualised Ichiro as willing to do and feel
anything in a bid for acceptance and assimilation at least within the Japanese American
community, much less the wider American society. Its more contemporary reading was
that a resolution was only reached when Ichiro established a binary opposition within
himself which valued white American over Japanese. The difficulty of categorisation
and the multiplicity of interpretations positions this novel, much like its protagonist, in a
state of liminality, or ‘betweenness.’ (Yeh, 1993: 121) While it is very interesting to
examine the cultural politics which surrounded the shifting reception of No-No Boy, for
the purposes of my research, I will focus primarily on the content of the book, in the context of its original publication in 1957. At that time, Sone’s 1953 novel had been the only post-war Japanese American novel to achieve literary success. Okada’s novel, on the other hand, was a commercial failure and was not welcomed by the Japanese American community who were still struggling to deal with / bury the very sensitive issue of the no-no boys.

Okada, himself a World War II veteran discharged in 1946, was not necessarily an assimilationist; he merely wanted to address the problematic position that all Nisei men, but especially the no-no boys, found themselves in during the immediate post-war years. They struggled to reconcile their self-identity, their ethnicity, their position in the American hierarchy and their acceptance of each other, and other minority groups, within their own community. Okada knew through personal experience that fighting for one’s country did not necessarily automatically endow one with proof of loyalty and acceptance that one craved; the bigotry was bigger than that. Okada / Ichiro’s story discloses the complexity of Kelly and Kaplan’s theory concerning acts of blood-sacrifice. The Japanese American men and their community still had a tremendous fight against discrimination ahead of them and I think Okada’s novel was a well-advanced advocate for the civil rights movement, promoting equality and acceptance which, once achieved within oneself, would eventually be awarded externally also. Unfortunately, the position in which Ichiro and other no-no boys found themselves made it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile themselves internally especially given the hostile and negative environment of their own community at a time when they all needed each others support the most.

Okada, aware of the sensitivity and complexity of the situation, did not delve into the “sundry” reasons why Ichiro signed ‘no, no’ – “My reason was all the reasons put together” (34) – which earned him the sobriquet of no-no boy. Instead, his narrative focused on the attempts and failures of minority integration into the dominant national body politic and of intra-diasporic healing after the physical reality of a trauma had ended. The reception the novel received was testament to the fact that the healing process within the Japanese American community concerning the issues of the no-no boys was still in its infancy and that the psychological scars of traumatic events remained for an indeterminate period. With the government’s refusal to either acknowledge the damage done or accept blame, in order to facilitate the widespread
eagerness to move forward, to forget the past and assimilate quickly, scapegoats were needed to assign the blame, especially when new moments of racism erupted triggering unwanted memories and recalling buried traumas. The scapegoats for *Nisei* men, especially the veterans, were the no-no boys, who were viewed as those who tarnished the otherwise exemplary record of *Nisei* men in battle, viewed as those who gave the bigots justification for evacuation and internment.

It was into this confused, anxious and tense society that Ichiro returned in 1946 (significantly the same year that Okada returned from duty) and was immediately confronted by the anger that he knew was waiting for him, in the form of former friend Eto who, upon realising where Ichiro had been, cursed him and spat on him. Ichiro could not even look him in the eyes, feeling overwhelmed with shame and self-hatred:

The legs of his accuser were in front of him. God in a pair of green fatigues, U.S. Army style. They were the legs of the jury that had passed sentence upon him. Beseech me, they seemed to say, throw your arms about me and bury your head between my knees and seek pardon for your great sin. (4)

As he hurried away, he was taunted further by the calls of a group of young black men, hanging around in a former Japanese American dominated neighbourhood. There was no mutual empathy apparent between these members of two different minority groups, both battling against the dominant discourse of the American nation who, by expressing animosity towards each other instead, were in fact complicit in the oppression of each other and of themselves. “Go back to Tokyo, boy,” called one boy to Ichiro, “[p]ersecution in the drawl of the persecuted.” (5)

The secondary characters in the novel all serve either to aid Ichiro’s problematic recovery or hinder it but they all dramatise his liminality. At the core of his problems, Ichiro decided, was his mother. When he returned home, his mother’s patriotic zeal had been transformed into an illogical, disillusioned and mean-spirited belief that Japan had been victorious and that the pressure she exerted upon her son to answer ‘no, no’ was proof of his honourable and righteous ‘Japaneseness.’ Like Kazuko in *Nisei Daughter*, Ichiro identified his mother as the embodiment of everything that was wrong with being Japanese. But unlike Kazuko’s mother, Ichiro’s mother did not succumb to the ‘ideal’ of denying her Japanese past and embracing all things American. She totally dominated Ichiro’s domesticated, emasculated and alcoholic father who seemed to better occupy the space left empty of the passive Japanese mother.
Bryn Gribben’s psychoanalytic analysis of *No-No Boy* also identified ‘Ma’ as the site of conflict for Ichiro. In order for Ichiro to reinscribe himself as an ‘American’, an identity stripped from him after those two fateful questions in 1943, he must disassociate himself from his mother, the embodiment and representation of all things Japanese.

He looked at his mother and swallowed with difficulty the bitterness that threatened to destroy the last fragment of understanding for the woman who was his mother and still a stranger because, in truth, he could not know what it was to be a Japanese who breathed the air of America and yet had never lifted a foot from the land that was Japan. (Okada, 2001: 11)

Their relationship was based on misunderstanding and miscommunication and he blamed her for a great deal of his unhappiness in possibly the most important, certainly the most revealing, paragraph of the novel:

There was a time when I was your son. . . . Then there came a time when I was only half Japanese because one is not born in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming American and loving it. But I did not love enough, for you were still half my mother and I was thereby still half Japanese and when the war came and they told me to fight for America, I was not strong enough to fight the bitterness which made the half of me which was you bigger than the half of me which was America and really the whole of me that I could not see or feel. . . . I wish with all my heart that I were Japanese or that I were American. I am neither and I blame you and I blame myself and I blame the world which is made up of many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy but not enough, so that they must kill and hate and destroy again and again and again. (15-16)

He viewed his own identity as being made up of two mutually-exclusive binary opposites – Japanese OR American. Because Ma represented his Japanese half, he felt he had to castrate himself from her, from his ethnicity, in order to prove his national loyalty. His rage against his situation, his frustration at his treatment by America and his anger towards his mother allowed him to displace his own lack onto her, rather than onto America, the true castrator, to follow Gribben’s argument.6 He fervently wished to be able to disassociate himself from her, from her ‘Japaneseness’ and, by blaming her for his decision to say ‘no, no,’7 from his guilt and shame at a decision he came to view as a terrible mistake: “The prison which he had carved out of his own stupidity granted
no paroles or pardons. It was a prison of forever.” (Okada, 2001: 40) His self-hatred and his (mis)placement of blame is proof of his unreliability as a narrator of this story.

But it was not just Ma who persecuted Ichiro. Like the characters in *Nisei Daughter*, many of the characters in *No-No Boy*, Ichiro included, had internalised and adopted the discourses of the homogenising pedagogy that had oppressed and divided them. They even utilised the racially-charged epithet ‘Jap’ when referring to themselves: “Lotsa Japs in Seattle. You’ll see ’em around. Japs are funny that way.”

(2) The persecution of Ichiro by Eto in the beginning, by Bull in a scene in the Club Oriental and especially by Taro, Ichiro’s younger brother who lured Ichiro outside the bar to be beaten by his friends and who vowed to join the army to rectify his brother’s ‘disloyalty’, illustrates the extent to which the pervasive dominant discourses in American society had dissected the Japanese American community. This novel is not based upon a dual-identity model of Japanese American psychology but a more complex, multifarious identity crisis within the Japanese American diaspora. Ichiro had to ‘try on’ different identities to find the one that would offer him a resolution but he never finds the perfect ‘fit.’

Fortunately for Ichiro, he also formed relationships with characters who had not been as heavily indoctrinated as Taro and Bull. Although they still embodied the dominant assimilationist ideology to an extent it had been tempered by realism. Kenji Kanno, a veteran amputee, was ironically representative to Ichiro as being ‘wholly’ American and his acceptance of Ichiro’s decision made him crave Kenji’s position even more, despite his missing limb that was slowly claiming his life:

So they sat silently through the next drink, one already dead but still alive and contemplating fifty or sixty years more of dead aliveness, and the other, living and dying slowly. They were two extremes, the Japanese who was more American than most Americans because he had crept to the brink of death for America, and the other who was neither Japanese nor American because he had failed to recognize the gift of his birthright when recognition meant everything. (73)

Kenji’s gangrenous leg signifies the lethal consequences of the *Niseis* attempts to prove loyalty to a nation intent on exclusionary practices. He recognised the “irresolvability of the nation and transnation” (Chuh, 2003: 74) which had manifested itself in Kenji’s corporeal disintegration. Kenji introduced Ichiro to Emi, the wife of a veteran who had apparently deserted her. She attempted, like Kenji, discourage Ichiro’s constant self-
castigation and to facilitate his integration into American society with an emotive speech which urged Ichiro to forgive their government:

In any other country they would have shot you for what you did. But this country is different. They made a mistake when they doubted you. They made a mistake when they made you do what you did and they admit it by letting you run around loose. Try, if you can, to be equally big and forgive them. . . . I can remember how full I used to get with pride and patriotism when we sang ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ and pledged allegiance to the flag at school assemblies, and that’s the feeling you’ve got to have. . . . you’ll understand why it is that your mistake was no bigger than the mistake your country made. (96)

This statement incorporated aspects of the pedagogical address of the American nation which, as Apollo O. Amoko argued in his article, both Kenji and Emi emulate in their acceptance, forgiveness, patriotism and assimilationist recitations: “Emi appears quite literally to be calling forth the spiritual idea of America, mythologized and normalized in the citational practices of nationalist song and speech.” (2000:45) Despite their embodiment of American progressivist narratives they knew the reality of their precarious position in American society.

If there was an internal reconciliation, as Stan Yogi argued in his essay, I think it was an uneasy, tenuous one. Amoko concurred, “the choices available to racially marked minorities in the margins of the nation-space were incommensurable with and rendered unintelligible by the competing claims of two racially over-determined nation-states at war” (2000: 46) and Ichiro was unable to choose one (America) over another (Japan). Yogi argued that Ichiro ignored the split between the two nation-states; rather he accepted it and, in so doing, accepted responsibility for his own actions, sympathised with his parents, even his mother, and this enabled him to accept himself as a no-no boy. This argument is a valid one when examining one of the final scenes in the novel when Ichiro and Emi dance together at a roadside café after his mother’s funeral. Yogi argued that their dance “symbolizes a more benign version of Kenji’s assimilation theory, because it does not necessarily result in the disappearance of racial and ethnic differences.” (1996: 72) However, the internal reconciliation that Ichiro seemed to have a fledgling grip on was tempered by the accidental and tragic death of Freddie. Although it allowed Ichiro and Bull, the no-no boy and the outspoken veteran, to begin to form a fragile alliance, it indicated the traumatic future for the Japanese American community.
The novel ends on a note that is best portrayed by a passage late in the narrative when Kenji left the Club Oriental in disgust after witnessing the prejudicial treatment of black patrons:

Was there no answer to the bigotry and meanness and smallness and ugliness of people? One hears the voice of the Negro or Japanese or Chinese or Jew, a clear and bell-like intonation of the common struggle for recognition as a complete human being and there is a sense of unity and purpose which inspires one to hope and optimism. One encounters obstacles, but the wedge of the persecuted is not without patience and intelligence and humility, and the opposition weakens and wavers and disperses. And the one who is the Negro or Japanese or Chinese or Jew is further fortified and gladdened with the knowledge that the democracy is a democracy in fact for all of them. One has hope, for he has reason to hope, and the quest for completeness seems to be a thing near at hand, and then. . . . (134)

And then. . . and then another occurrence, a repetition, a continuation of the cycle of trauma. The subject is forced to retroactively repeat the past trauma and despite any attempts or achievements of healing and internal reconciliation, the insidious nature of trauma means there is always going to be moments in the future that force a remembrance of the past. So although Ichiro, like Kazuko and Naomi, may appear to have achieved reconciliation, without the proper course of healing and testimonials, such reconciliations can only ever be superficial.

7.5 A superficial reconciliation of identity

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston remembered the moment when her suppressed trauma of the internment camps finally erupted. It was 1971, thirty years after the attacks on Pearl Harbor. She felt as though she had already dealt with her experiences sufficiently enough to be able to discuss the camps with family members but had not realised the superficiality of those discussions. It was not until one of her nephews asked her about Manzanar that, when she told him lightheartedly about the strange foods, recreational activities and communal showers, was she enlightened to the discomfort she had discussing the grittier reality of the internment. He asked her how she truly felt about being locked up and she was stupefied:

For a moment I was stunned. He asked me a question no one had ever asked before, a question I had never dared to ask myself. Feel? How did I feel? For the first time I dropped the
protective cover of humor and nonchalance. I allowed myself to “feel.” I began to cry. I couldn’t stop crying. (1995: 148)

Suddenly she understood his parents’ reluctance to answer his questions. She knew she owed it to her other nieces and nephews, and her own children, to write her history because it was their history too and they deserved to know the truth about it. But every time she tried to put pen to paper, she found herself crying uncontrollably. Her husband said, “I have known you for almost twenty years. . . and I never had any idea you carried all this around. This is not something to write just for your family. It’s a story everyone in America should read.” (1995: 148-149) She realised that, not unlike the characters of Kazuko and Ichiro, her identity had only been reconciled on a superficial level; the trauma, hurt and anguish had been pushed deep into her psyche, waiting for an opportunity to resurface. She knew she had to do something to truly reconcile her identity and help others like her to do the same. Thus began her healing process through her writing. In collaboration with her husband, she wrote her first novel, an autobiography significantly titled Farewell to Manzanar as it referred both to her physical departure from the camp in 1945 and her psychological departure from the barbed wire enclosure in 1973, the year her book was published. As she began her research and made connections with her true feelings and emotions about her past, she realised that writing about her experiences was a “way of coming to terms with the impact these [internment and post-war] years have had on my entire life.” (1973: x) Finally publishing her book represented a closure, a final departure (as indicated by the title) from the trauma that lay buried within her for so many years and provided an opportunity for others to reflect upon their own trauma in the same manner.

Farewell to Manzanar chronicled her father’s arrest, the years her family spent enduring the evacuation, the enlistment problem, relocation and the decades of emotional scarring and trauma afterwards. Like most Nisei, she clearly had a great deal of concern about how the internment affected her parents, yet her words also reflected a profound admiration for the manner in which they conducted themselves. For example, as she watched her father being taken away by the FBI, she realised that this was yet another obstacle that he was forced to deal with after decades of struggle and discrimination in America, “but he still had dignity, and he would not let those deputies push him out the door. He led them.” (8) When he finally rejoined his family in Manzanar nine months later, she was shocked at how much he had aged. As mentioned, the rapid ageing of the Issei generation in particular was a repetitive theme throughout
the literature of the internment camp survivors. “He looked over sixty, gaunt, wilted as his shirt, underweight, leaning on that cane and favoring his right leg.” (46) But more worrying was the emasculation of the Issei men, achieved by charging them with subversion and disloyalty:

Papa never said more than three or four sentences about his nine months at Fort Lincoln. Few men who spent time there will talk about it more than that. Not because of the physical hardships. . . . It was the charge of disloyalty. For a man raised in Japan, there was no greater disgrace. And it was the humiliation. It brought him face to face with his own vulnerability, his own powerlessness. He had no rights, no home, no control over his own life. This kind of emasculation was suffered, in one form or another, by all the men interned at Manzanar. (72)

The effect of the government-sanctioned acts of brutality and racism on her father was distressing for Wakatsuki Houston to experience as a seven year-old. She was reliant upon her parents for support, knowledge, reason and help, but the war years stripped them of their power. Unlike many other Nisei texts, her autobiography does not convey an identification of her parents as representative of the Japanese part of her. She yearned for acceptance but never blamed her parents for America’s inability to accept her the way she was. Perhaps, at only seven years of age in 1942, she was too young to formulate such theories preferring, instead, to concentrate on dance classes. Thus the devastating effect the camp years had on her parents was tempered subconsciously by remembering the humorous, the ironic and fun times in camp. It helped her to deal with the immediate trauma of the camps and, in the years afterwards suppress the traumatic memories. When it came time for her family to leave Manzanar, they were filled with dread at the thought of another upheaval. She wondered, “What will they think of us, those who sent us here? How will they look at us? Three years of wartime propaganda – racist headlines, atrocity movies, hate slogans, and fright-mask posters – had turned the Japanese face into something despicable and grotesque.” (127) Although not even a teenager when she left camp in 1945 she was already plagued with guilt, fear and apprehension:

It was the humiliation. That continuous, unnamed ache that I had been living with was precise and definable now. Call it the foretaste of being hated. I knew ahead of time that if someone looked at me with hate, I would have to allow it, to swallow it, because something in me, something about me deserved it. At ten I saw that coming, like a judge’s sentence, and I would have stayed inside the camp forever rather than step outside and face such a moment. (130)
Indeed, she was forced to face several such moments, incidents that forced further repressions and reinforced the negative and cruel assumptions that many camp survivors accepted as a result of the government’s actions. She specifically remembered one girl’s guileless remark, “Gee, I didn’t know you could speak English” as the catalytic moment that cultivated the first buds of shame which Wakatsuki Houston tended for several years afterwards through her acceptance of further discrimination and ill-treatment and, of course, through her complicit silence about her experiences. From that day on, she yearned for invisibility:

In a way, nothing would have been nicer than for no one to see me. . . . They wouldn’t see me, they would see the slant-eyed face, the Oriental. This is what accounts, in part, for the entire evacuation. You cannot deport 110,000 people unless you have stopped seeing individuals. Of course, for such a thing to happen, there has to be a kind of acquiescence on the part of the victims, some submerged belief that this treatment is deserved, or at least allowable. It’s an attitude easy for nonwhites to acquire in America. I had inherited it. Manzanar had confirmed it. And my feeling, at eleven, went something like this: you are going to be invisible anyway, so why not completely disappear. But another part of me did not want to disappear. With the same sort of reaction that sent Woody into the army, I instinctively decided I would have to prove that I wasn’t different, that it should not be odd to hear me speaking English. From that day forward I lived with this double impulse: the urge to disappear and the desperate desire to be acceptable. (158-159)

This double impulse, the conflict between the desire for invisibility and acceptance, permeated into the lives and minds of many Nisei and was translated into aspects and behaviours that affected those around them, especially their children. Desire for invisibility resulted in years of silence, of repression, of a superficial sense of identity, of acquiescence in any potentially hostile situation. The desire for acceptance resulted in a rapid Americanization, a rejection of their ethnic heritage and the embodiment of extremely hard-working values, instilled into their children, thereby creating the ‘model minority’ classification in an attempt to revalue themselves. Although most Nisei married fellow Nisei, Wakatsuki Houston did not but, despite his personal non-involvement with the camps, her husband clearly fostered an interest and became a crucial part of Japanese American literature by collaborating on Farewell to Manzanar, now a familiar text in American classrooms.
Together they made plans to revisit the site of Manzanar but she continually found herself making excuses to cancel, allowing things to get in the way which she admitted were “my own doubts, my fears. I half-suspected that the place did not exist. So few people I met in those years had even heard of it, sometimes I imagined I had made the whole thing up, dreamed it.” (186) Until one day in 1966 when she met a Caucasian woman who had worked as a photographer at Manzanar:

I could scarcely speak to her. I desperately wanted to, my all my questions stuck in my throat. This time it was not the pain of memory. It was simply her validation that all these things had taken place. . . . Something inside me opened then. I began to talk about it more and more. (186-187)

Finally, she returned to Manzanar. When she did, she was confronted by and, it seems, comforted by the ghosts and spirits that lingered there. The theme of hearing whispers of past inhabitants and memories when pilgrimagers returned to their respective camp sites is not unique to Wakatsuki Houston’s writing, but hers is distinguished by an affinity for and a repeated reference to the native Americans who were also dispersed to the same valley before the Japanese Americans.

On her first pilgrimage to Manzanar in the early seventies, she visited the tall white obelisk which marks the Manzanar cemetery, emblazoned with Japanese characters which read “Soul Consoling Tower”. She stated that, as she gazed up at the monument:

I knew I was in the presence of those who died at Manzanar. I also felt the spiritual presence that always lingers near awesome wonders like Mount Whitney. Then, as if rising from the ground around us on the valley floor, I began to hear the first whispers, nearly inaudible, from all those thousands who once had lived out here, a wide, windy sound of the ghost of that life. (190)

Photo by Teresa Goudie. Printed with kind permission of the Manzanar Historic Association.

As she walked through the ruins of Manzanar, she could hear laughter and singing and she could see the old men, including her father, squatting in the dust, smoking their cigarettes and muttering to each other. She was bombarded with images,
sounds and returning emotions and memories that she had shelved for so many years. These were images, sounds and memories that were clamouring for a release from within her traumatised psyche. Decades of silence had not discarded them; they had merely been preserved in a state of latency which perhaps made them even more potent when they eventually found their way to the surface. In a short story entitled “Crossing Boundaries” she recounted her second pilgrimage to Manzanar, this time in the 1990s. She revealed the pattern of displacement that occurred on that stretch of land in the high Californian desert at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. She and her daughter returned to meet with a guide, a Paiute Indian, who confirmed the history of displacement at that site. “This history of exploitation and exile, he says, has left a residue of dark energy that pervades the site.” (177) Indeed, she remembered many occasions during her incarceration when she felt spiritual presences and one night when she saw a group of Indians on horses galloping in a circle. Finally, she understood why she felt and saw such things – the presence of the Indians would always inhabit that land. But during her second visit to the monument in Manzanar, she had a different experience: “It is quiet. I feel the antiquity, the calm energy that accumulates with years of undisturbed tranquillity.” (174)

In the twenty or so years between the two pilgrimages, she had listened to those voices, attended to her memories and allowed the trauma to slowly seep back into her consciousness. She wrote of her experiences, shared her trauma, transferred her memories, educated her children and discussed those painful years in an honest fashion with her nieces and nephews. During those years, the redress movement had also concluded, allowing her to unburden the feelings of shame and humiliation she had previously expressed to her husband, transferring the blame to the U.S. government which then enabled her to regain an honest sense of identity and ethnic pride. That explains why she and the spirits were more at peace during her second visit to Manzanar. Although she conceded that the dark energy that her Paiute guide spoke of had not left – “I agree energy never leaves a place” (2002: 177) – she realised that her perception of Manzanar had changed.

During her childhood in camp, her innocent mind had accepted the criminality of being Japanese:

I can see how growing up within a square mile surrounded by this unmistakable punishment for the being the very person I
was could account, in ways, for my reluctance to take risks, to test certain boundaries, to press limits – in myself and in my writing. Today I feel a sense of liberation. My talk with [the guide] had affirmed one boundary crossing, giving me a new permission to trust my visions, to break through a barbed-wire confinement I had placed around my imagination. (2002: 179-180)

By 2002, she had finally undergone a healing experience and had been able to break through the literal and metaphorical barbed wire. After decades of struggling with the effects of the traumatic years, reflected when she said, “posttraumatic stress syndrome never goes away” (2002: 173), she finally reached a resolution in her own psyche, reflected through her writing. Her superficial reconciliation of her own identity was resolved but, as was the case with Kazuko, Naomi and Ichiro, Wakatsuki Houston, like all other trauma victims, was still susceptible to moments of flashback. Even as she was writing *Farewell to Manzanar* and she recognised that she was on the path towards recovery, she knew it would be a long and obstacle-filled path.

The following paragraph from her autobiography reminds me of the image conjured by Ichiro’s act of sharing in Bull’s pain after Freddie’s death by placing his hand on his heaving shoulder, a wordless acknowledgement of the difficulty of their future. Wakatsuki Houston was also predicting the difficult years ahead:

> I had nearly outgrown the shame and the guilt and the sense of unworthiness. This visit, this pilgrimage, made comprehensible, finally, the traces that remained and would always remain, like a needle. . . . Months might pass before something would remind me. When I first read, in the summer of 1972, about the pressure Japan’s economy was putting on American business and how a union in New York City had printed up posters of an American flag with MADE IN JAPAN written across it, then that needle began to jab. I heard Mama’s soft, weary voice from 1945 say, ‘It’s all starting over.’ . . . Manzanar would always live in my nervous system, a needle with Mama’s voice. (1973: 195-196)

There would be several such triggers that would cause that needle to jab again in subsequent years. By the time of her second pilgrimage, she had been able to quell, or at least control, the rapidity of that needle by achieving a more honest sense of her own identity.¹¹

Each novel I discussed in this chapter offers an invaluable insight into the defining characteristics of the *Nisei* generation. Sone’s novel, through the superficial
sense of reconciliation and adoption of the dominant discourse that abused her in the first place, reveals the immediate effects of the trauma of internment on Sone’s psyche quite clearly. She used repression, justification, rationalisation and identification with the aggressor as coping and defence mechanisms. The external exitations were still so powerful in 1953 and her psyche was struggling to cope with the levels of anticathexis caused by the trauma that her other psychical systems were impoverished temporarily. In *Obasan*, Naomi’s journey to bury the dead and reinscribe the silences served as a warning for the potential destructiveness of complicit, communal silence. Silence, as a product of traumatic repression, will inevitably break, even belatedly through the descendants of the survivors. For example, the silence of the grandmother is literally transferred to Naomi in a letter but her psychological pain and suffering had already been transferred through the silences that characterised the women of her family (with the exception of Emily). *Obasan*, in Freudian terms, is a wonderful example of the transference of trauma from group to individual, spanning a long latency period.

A novel that literally experienced a long latency period was Okada’s novel. Dismissed and ignored for several years due to the sensitive nature of its subject matter, the value of his text is now apparent as a portrayal of the traumatic ‘return of the repressed’ – the return of Ichiro/Okada into a society that, despite all their attempts, still refused to accept and acknowledge them. Sadly, Okada died before his novel was ‘resurrected’ and he was unable to see the impact it had on the community. It generated a great deal of discussion on the issue of the no-no boys and eventually the Japanese American community came to realise that, in their generalised treatment of the no-no boys in the post-war period, they too had committed “persecution in the drawl of the persecuted.” (Okada, 2001: 5) Wakatsuki Houston’s novel, published sixteen years after Okada’s, enjoyed immediate commercial success. It received criticism for only offering a benign version of her life in Manzanar instead of an aggressive quest to place blame and seek retribution in the midst of the civil rights movement but it was nonetheless credited with educating the wider American public about the internment. Her novel portrays the insidious manner in which a repressed trauma can gain potency during its latency period and can erupt with any number of unsuspecting triggers. What I aim to prove in the next two chapters is that the trauma articulated by these *Nisei* authors was transferred to their children’s generation, waiting to be triggered by an unexpected event as well.
population. The farmers were ruined and once again an entire group of people was displaced from their book. She never becomes bitter, even in some of her brushes with race prejudice. With lively pen she begged her for, yet she never sent it because she believed that their pitiful letters were propaganda tools of the U.S. government. When she realised the truth, the milk that she had in abundance yet denied her to do my bidding. Now, I have the children with me but they are like so many strangers – their treatment at the hands of the Canadian government was even worse than the Americans. The events in Canada following Pearl Harbor were very similar to those in America. Headed by Ian Mackenzie, a Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister, over 23,000 Japanese Canadians were moved to interior British Columbia to abandoned mining towns and lumber camps. Some moved onto special camps where they were forced to build their own huts. Their homes and businesses were seized by the Canadian government and sold to cover the costs of their relocation. In 1945, 10,000 Japanese Canadians were issued with what was essentially a forced deportation order. The order was resisted but was not rescinded until January 1947. And it was not until April 1949 that any Japanese Canadians were permitted to return to coastal British Columbia. See Hirabayashi, 1991.

The Japanese Canadians certainly did not escape the devastating effects of mass internment. Indeed, in a 1953 review of Nisei Daughter, Takashi Oka viewed Sone’s skimming style as a positive aspect of her writing, stating, “humor and warmth, not frustrations, characterize the tone of Mrs. Sone’s book. She never becomes bitter, even in some of her brushes with race prejudice. With lively pen she describes the hodge-podge life she led, suspended, as it were, between the two cultures.” (1953: 11)

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The Chauvanist and Other Stories

Notes

1 I have chosen not to examine the short stories of Toshio Mori, a well-known and well-respected Nisei pioneer of Japanese American literature as his two collection of short stories, Yokohama, California and The Chauvanist and Other Stories mostly described pre-war events and conditions.

2 Naniya bushi was a type of ballad singing in which Japanese classical tales were recounted. The singing style was very characteristic and easily recognisable.

3 This is evident in the scene where Ma finally went mad – she repeatedly lined up cans of evaporated milk only to knock them down. Evaporated milk was a commodity that her relatives in Japan were begging her for, yet she never sent it because she believed that their pitiful letters were propaganda tools of the U.S. government. When she realised the truth, the milk that she had in abundance yet denied her family was indicative of her lack as a mother figure.

4 This is evident in the scene where Ma finally went mad – she repeatedly lined up cans of evaporated milk only to knock them down. Evaporated milk was a commodity that her relatives in Japan were begging her for, yet she never sent it because she believed that their pitiful letters were propaganda tools of the U.S. government. When she realised the truth, the milk that she had in abundance yet denied her family was indicative of her lack as a mother figure.

5 A letter written to government authorities by an Issei woman who convinced her children to renounce their citizenship after both her husband and her eldest son died shows how this situation was accurately portrayed. The mother pleaded, “I nagged the children to renounce their citizenship. They reasoned with me…. but I was frantic and urgent. It was their concern over my health, and over my sanity, and the love they had for me who had so lately lost two, which finally drove them, against their will and better judgement, to do my bidding. Now, I have the children with me but they are like so many strangers – they resent me – what I have made them do has alienated them. And thinking rationally, I have come to realize the enormity of the wrong I had done them to restore their citizenship, I will gladly do it.”

(Drinnon, 1987: 158)

6 Two of her brothers, Woody and Kiyo, joke about what was for breakfast one morning. “‘Probably hot cakes with soy sauce,’ Kiyo said. . . . ‘No.’ Woody grinned, heading out the door. ‘Rice. With Log Cabin Syrup and melted butter.’ ” (Wakatsuki Houston, 1973: 27)

7 Her youthful age in camp meant she was a very young Nisei, similar in age to the older Sansei in fact. As I have already discussed, the intermarriage rates of the Sansei with non-Japanese was much higher than the Nisei and Wakatsuki Houston, especially considering her age, seems to reflect Sansei trends more.

8 Until the 1850s the Indians had flourished in that region, successfully maintaining and cultivating the land. In the 1860s, mining districts were established there and in 1862 hostilities broke out between the Paiute Indians and the white settlers. The following year nearly one thousand Indians were imprisoned at Camp Independence, a few miles from the future Manzanar site, and were then forcibly marched to a reservation 175 miles away. Years later, some of the Paiutes returned but had grown so dependent upon the new style of government and economy that had oppressed them that they became a part of it. They were never again to inhabit and care of the land in the manner of their ancestors for centuries before white settlement. The township of Manzanar prospered, with fertile valleys full of apple and pear orchards (“Manzanar” means “apple orchard” in Spanish) until the city of Los Angeles bought the water rights to the water flowing from the Sierra Nevadas and siphoned it to fulfil the needs of their rapidly expanding population. The farmers were ruined and once again an entire group of people was displaced from their homes. Then, in 1942, over 10,000 Japanese Americans descended upon the site, most of them living there for over three years, adding yet “another layer of history to the site” (Wakatsuki Houston, 2002: 173) until they, too, were displaced in 1945.

9 This is perhaps evident in her most recent novel, a love story published in 2003, entitled The Legend of Fire Horse Woman. She began the novel with the intention to write a historical fiction about a picture bride who breaks free from her arranged marriage to live a romantic and exciting life, only to get caught in the internment camp. But the internment itself came to play a much larger role that originally intended and, by crossing between the life of the Issei picture bride in the past, the present situation of the Issei matriarch, Nisei daughter and Sansei granddaughter and how their lives were affected by the camp, she
refocused on the generational impact of the war years. The *Issei* character “considered silence between words more important than the words themselves” (Wakatsuki Houston, 2003: 14) yet she also embodied some traditionally American, independent characteristics. This is a novel full of hope and expectations that was only possible for Wakatsuki Houston to write after she wrote the cathartic novel *Farewell to Manzanar* and after such movements as those for civil rights and redress. Her scarred psyche prior to these events was such that she was unable and unwilling to discuss or relate her memories without it becoming a repetition of the traumatic experience itself.  

12 Interesting to note “the similarity of the surnames of author and protagonist. Both ‘Okada’ and ‘Yamada’ denote hills in the Japanese language, and are essentially interchangeable.” (Yeh, 1993: 130)
Chapter Eight

The Inheritance of Shame

8.1 The Sansei perspective

The Sansei generation emerged from the shadowy past of the Nisei into the bright lights of the civil rights movement. They formed and headed the redress movement seeking justice, answers and an acknowledgement of the government’s betrayal of their community. Due to the government’s inaction and the silence of their community, much of the literature of the Sansei carries in its words a sense of anger and unease at the secretive world of their parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Most of the Sansei generation were born after the end of the war therefore the stories of the Sansei are not generally memoirs of the camps themselves but stories of a discovery of their historical makeup, a desire for the truth, an anger at the silence of their family and an expression of their own inherited sense of shame and worthlessness. They exhibit traces of the trauma of their parents which they inherited through non-explicit mannerisms, actions and words. There is a wide range of Sansei artists who explore their internment heritage through a variety of medium including artwork, fiction, poetry, dramatic texts and films, a selection of which I examine in this chapter.
8.2 The ineradicable nature of traumatic scars

One of the best-known *Sansei* poets, Lawson Fusao Inada, experienced life as an innocent prisoner when he was a young boy. Born in 1939, he was one of the youngest internees and spent over three years of his life behind barbed wire. He wrote several poems about the internment experience because, as he once said, “we’ve lived with the experience since – on a continual basis. And I’ve often wondered: What does it all mean?”¹ In an essay review he wrote for *The Nation* in 1995 entitled “Ghostly Camps, Alien Nation” he suggested the reader try a simple exercise to familiarise themselves with the subject matter:

Make ten little X’s on this page of *The Nation*. Spread them around, arbitrarily – here and there, side to side, top to bottom. There you go! Now, play ‘connect-the-X’s’ and see what emerges on the page. Does it make sense? Or resemble anything? (Hint: Oh, some snippet of something used to contain cattle.) Then erase everything. Or try. You might rub holes in the paper. Or, if you used a pen, you might have to resort to Wite-Out.² Either way, those defaced places remain, don’t they?³

The inability to erase the X’s is equated to the inability to erase the traces of the trauma that he felt remained on his own psyche as well as on the psyche of the Japanese diasporic community, a theory that is evident in the literature of the *Nisei* as well. The exercise that he suggested was repeated in his poem “Concentration Constellation” in which he physically mapped the internment experience onto the American landscape by drawing a line through the site of each of the ten internment camps on a map of the United States. The line he drew created a massive scar on the American landscape, on domestic American history and on the identity of the Japanese Americans for generations to come.

Now regard what sort of shape this constellation takes.
It sits there like a jagged scar,
massive, on the massive landscape.
It lies there like the rusted wire
of a twisted and remembered fence. (1992: 28)

This jagged scar, like the line drawn in the exercise, like the residues of trauma on his psyche, cannot be erased.

This ineradicability is thematically repeated throughout his collection of poems in *Legends From Camp* and, indeed, throughout many of his other poetic works also.
For example, the poem “Manzanar” which he read at the 1977 Manzanar pilgrimage:

> This is part of our enduring geography.
> This is part of who we are.
> No one can take that away.

Is who we are.

Is who we are.

Is. Who. We. Are. (2004: 15)

The repetition of the name “Manzanar” in the closing lines of the poem was Inada’s attempt to forcibly sear that word onto the psyche of those listening, the same way that it was seared onto his own. The third repetition of “Is. Who. We. Are.” constituting the final line of the poem is broken up into single words for dramatic effect. It gives every one of those four little words its own power, its own tension and the words, now individually emphasised, are heavily laden with meaning and emotion. It forces the reader/listener to closely examine the meaning of those words, to understand that Manzanar is what defined Inada, is created and shaped him, that he and Manzanar can never be independent of each other, can never be mutually exclusive. Thus the time spent in camp became a permanent facet of the lives of former internees, it was a part of their spirits, their psyche, their being. Nothing can be done to remove it; it is a permanent scar.

The following extract from “Prologue” in Legends From Camp examines how the memories and the scars came to be so indelibly etched in Inada’s soul through the use of repetition, just as the trauma was repeated.

> And then, ‘just like that,’ it happened.
> And then, ‘just like that,’ it was over.
> Sun, moon, stars – they came, and went. (8)

The repetition of the phrase ‘just like that’ is significant because the internment was not an event that occurred ‘just like that’. The statistics earlier in the poem of “10 camps, 7 states, / 120,313 residents”(7) make it clear that such vast numbers required a great deal of preparation and organisation – it was obviously not an event that could occur ‘just like that’ nor could the phrase be used to fairly describe the years (on average over three years) spent interned. The imagery of the sun, moon and stars is especially pertinent in
this case for a number of reasons. As already mentioned, the elements of nature were
Crucial to the Japanese aesthetic and many Japanese art forms were centred on such
elements. The sun, moon and stars were understood as ever-constant, unwaivering
Elements that always returned, day after day, night after night, marking the passing of
time yet never diverting from its own set schedule. The passing of time was something
That the internees would have keenly kept track of, endlessly waiting and repeating the
Monotony of every day and every night until they were free once again.

The imagery is repeated in the final stanza and this narrative repetition,
Signifying the repetition of the events of the sun, moon and stars, also signifies the
Repetition of the ever-constant, unwaivering trauma of racism that the Japanese diaspora
Were forced to endure even after their release.

And then, and then, things happened,
And as they ended they kept happening,
And as they happened they ended
And began again, happening, happening,

Until the event, the experience, the history,
Slowly began to lose its memory,
Gradually drifting into a kind of fiction –

A ‘true story based on fact,’
But nevertheless with ‘all the elements of fiction’ –
And then, and then, sun, moon, stars,
We come, we come, to where we are:
Legend. (8)

The panic, distress and confusion created by the repetition of discrimination are testified
Here through the cyclical repetition contained in the first four lines. It gives the
Impression of being trapped in a whirlpool, spinning through a maze, unable to escape.
The constant repetition of discrimination forced the trauma of the camps to be
Continually recalled even as the specifics of the everyday banality of the camps
diminished somewhat, relegated to the deep recesses of memory and acquired a fictional
Characteristic. Then, with all the inevitability of the sun, moon and stars, their story
Became mythologized due to its inaccessibility created by decades of silence and it
Acquired legendary status, situated outside of the realm of realism.

8.3 ‘Re-tribalization’

Other poems in this volume also deal with the internment but even those that do
Not exclusively discuss the camps still contain traces of the trauma of rejection,
humiliation, loss and an uncertain identity. For example, in a poem entitled “Memory,” Inada remarked upon how memory had been ever-present on the land they briefly occupied.

Memory had been there forever.  
We settled in around her;  
we brought...  
newly acquired techniques  
of conflict and healing, common  
concepts of collective survival (50)

Their acquisition of “common / concepts of collective survival” would aid them in their future to strengthen once again as a community. This was the ‘re-tribalization’ of the Japanese Americans as Inada phrased it that occurred due to the shared experiences of the camps and despite the geographical scattering of the community after the war. Inada’s use of the phrase ‘re-tribalization’ is a culturally-specific example of my argument that a community or a nation is strengthened through the experience of a shared suffering. The Japanese American community shared the experience of forced evacuation, internment, relocation and geographical dispersal that would forever change the way they viewed themselves, each other and their own community. Each member of their imagined community felt a bond and an understanding of their shared trauma.

In the poem “At the Stronghold” the divisive issue of the loyalty questionnaire was brought sharply into focus by a sudden change in the poem’s structure; from very short lines in short stanzas with minimal punctuation to the free-verse recitation of the infamous Questions 27 and 28, printed in italics, complete with military and political jargon. After each question came a short, succinct answer: “No.” Yet in a short stanza that follows, the image of this determined person stating “No” so decisively is changed. Inada captured the simplicity, the confusion and the innocence of this Issei man:

Me no go
Chinchinahtee.
Me go
Tule Lake.
Me stay
Carifornia.
Home. (109)

He is clearly an Issei because of the manner of his speech and his accent. The simplicity of these lines and the economic, clever selection of words are tender and heart-rending. He just wants to go home and cannot understand the events unfolding around him. He would rather go to a camp for disloyals than travel across the country
to a city that he cannot even pronounce, if it means that he can stay at home which, contrary to dominant belief of the WRA, was not Japan, it was “Carifornia”.

Inada is gifted at conveying powerful emotions through a careful blend of subtle language, evocative imagery and repetition. In his more recent book of poetry, Drawing the Line, there are two poems in particular that I would like to focus on. The title of the first one, “Healing Gila”, is a play on the name of the camp, Gila River. The ‘G’ of Gila is silent, so the title sounds like “Healing Healer.” The poem is dedicated to “The People” that is, the people to whom the land belonged. An inference is made that the building of the camp on their reservation had been a great desecration, that it was a massive site of contamination. This unpleasant imagery is accentuated in the description of the site itself by the use of the halting rhythmic pattern caused by the juxtapositioning of two very different alliterative sounds – p and f:

that massive void
punctuated by crusted nails,
punctured pipes, crumbled
failings of foundations. . . (110)

The land was once graceful, healthy, flowing and beautiful, in stark contrast to that stanza. And then:

Then came the nation.
Then came death.
Then came the desert.
Then came the camp. (110)

Again, in a few short lines, Inada sent a powerful message of the cyclical, destructive forces of mankind, returning again and again to wreak more havoc and pain upon the land and its people.

8.4 Gratitude for the Nisei

The poem “Children of Camp” was performed in 1997 by three former child internees: Inada, singer Pat Suzuki and actor George Takei. The three parts share a common theme of gratitude for their parents’ support, guidance and their attempts to make their lives in camp more bearable. Inada created a dialogic interaction between the Sansei and their Nisei parents and when I read his part, I was immediately reminded of Adorno’s statement of the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz. The camp of Inada’s memory was a place where they were stripped of dignity, humanity and freedom. How could there be poetry in such a place? Yet the people found a way to
observe beauty in the most desolate place and cultivated an ability to create poetry out of despair and longing. As Inada said, “the people made it so.”

There was no poetry in camp.
Unless you can say
mud is poetry,
unless you can say
dust is poetry,
unless you can say
blood is poetry,
unless you can say
cruelty is poetry,
unless you can say
injustice is poetry,
unless you can say
imprisonment is poetry.

The people made poetry
with their very own hands –
little gifts from scrap
for precious loved ones,
friends, elders, children.

There was no poetry in camp.
But the people made it so.
With hand, vision, hearts,
the people made it so. (115-116)

These are rousing lines of appreciation and admiration for the men and women who not only survived the camps but who strived to make it a better place for their children and grandchildren, represented by the three adults reciting this poem. The *Issei* and *Nisei* absorbed the injustices, humiliation and degradation of everyday camp life, shielded their children to the best of their abilities and created poetry out of their pain and suffering. They continued to try to shield and protect their children long after they were released from the camps. They employed coping mechanisms of deferral and vagueness, they only spoke with other adult survivors about camp and maintained a code of silence with their children. While there did not seem to be a common practice of denial about the actual existence of the camps, until the government accepted the blame and acknowledged the facts, the *Issei* and *Nisei* wanted to bury their own shame and trauma and in so doing very nearly denied the existence of the camps. They did this so as not to ‘contaminate’ their children but little did they realise that their silence would in fact have a profound and damaging effect.
8.5 The location of trauma in language transition

Their legacy of silence was a difficult one for the Sansei to comprehend. The silence of their parents and grandparents created an invisible barrier, a psychological barbed-wire fence that disappointed and disturbed the Sansei. The following poem by Vernon M. Hayashida, written in 1979, illustrates the confusion he experienced for the first thirty-five years of his life:

Mom, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother, Issei, Nisei, Kibei. . .
Thank you.

I did not understand, now maybe I do.

What did you do during the War, Dad?
No answer. . .

Why was I born in Manzanar? Why did we move to Tule Lake, Mom?
No answer. . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .
NOW, I KNOW!
The first ten years I was too young to understand.
The next twenty-five years the Hurt was still too great.
You could not answer.

I still don’t understand, but I have started!

Otosan, Okasan, Ojichan, Obasan, Issei, Nisei, Kibei. . .
Arigato, arigato, arigato. . . (2000: 153)

The questions he insistently posed to his family were met with silence. We now know what the answers would be and how the silence masked a great deal of pain. "What did you do during the War, Dad?” and “Why did we move to Tule Lake, Mom?” are questions which we now know were linked.

Their removal to Tule Lake labelled them as ‘disloyals.’ Perhaps his father was a no-no boy, prioritising the protection of his young family and elderly, dependent parents. If his father refused the draft he may have spent some time in prison as a draft resister. Even if his family was able to stay together, the stigma attached to Tule Lake haunted and dogged its former inhabitants for decades after the war; in fact remnants of that particular discrimination remain today. The community-inflicted and self-inflicted feelings of shame were expressed through their silence in the face of such seemingly-innocent questions.
Suddenly, Hayashida exclaimed, “NOW, I KNOW!” He realised their silence was not founded by disinterest or a disengagement; rather their “Hurt” – written, significantly, with a capital ‘H’– was so great, so deeply embedded, that it was just too difficult to talk about. His moment of comprehension was marked by a new appreciation of his culture and heritage, expressed through his switch in language. The first two lines of the poem, “Mom, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother, Issei, Nisei, Kibei. . . / Thank you” are repeated, almost exactly, in the final two lines of the poem in Japanese, “Otosan, Okasan, Ojichan, Obasan, Issei, Nisei, Kibei. . . / Arigato, arigato, arigato. . .” (These lines, when translated, read ‘Dad, Mom, Grandfather, Grandmother, Issei, Nisei, Kibei / Thank you, thank you, thank you.”)\(^6\) The multiplicity of ‘thank you’ at the end of the poem, compared to its singular use at the beginning, indicates his increased appreciation, due to his newfound knowledge and understanding, for his entire family as well as for the whole of the Japanese American community.

But the real significance and interest in this switch in language lies in a Caruthian reading of it. She analysed the switch from German to English in a letter written by Freud to his son in 1938 as he prepared for his exilic departure from Vienna that I discussed in Chapter One. She identified a temporal locatability of Freud’s traumatic exile in the aporia of transmission from German to English. Freud’s trauma was carried in his words and in the switch in language, demonstrating that writing not only preserves the trauma of the event, it gives birth to it. The trauma for the Sansei was borne in the silence of the previous generations, in the secrets, and their comprehension of it so Hayashida’s trauma is located between his ‘Americanness’, symbolised by the English at the start of the poem and his ‘Japaneseness’, symbolised by the Japanese at the end of the poem.

In the same way that Freud’s physical act of writing the dual prefaces to the third essay of “Moses and Monotheism” was testament to the repetition of his own personal trauma culminating in his exile, the immigrant Japanese and early Japanese American community also experienced a repetition of traumas, beginning with their original trauma of departure and exacerbated by the years spent behind barbed wire. But for the Nisei, Sansei and later generations, they continued to experience incidents that forced a repetition of the trauma experienced during those war years. A recent tragedy, the attacks on America on the 9th September 2001,\(^7\) triggered feelings of discomfort, vulnerability and unease for many Japanese Americans, not necessarily only
for their own safety as American residents but also out of concern for the backlash against the diasporic Arab community in America and overseas.

8.6 A recollection of trauma for the once-victimised

Janice Mirikitani, *Sansei* poet laureate of San Francisco, is an advocate for the rights of marginalised and disadvantaged peoples. Her poetry is controversial as it engages with the capacity for racism and sexism in American society. Her poem “When Mothers Talk” expressed the unease she felt when she wrote it, eighteen days after 9/11. The attacks served, as it did for several other Japanese Americans, as a trigger mechanism, forcing her to recollect feelings and emotions associated with the internment. Although the following stanza which described her anxiety could have been written by any American in the immediate aftermath of 9/11:

We are uncomfortable.  
Vulnerable. Attacked.  
We want security.  
Protect our children and our cats.  
Feel safe in our homes,  
drink the water without fear,  
travel without checking out  
who’s boarding the plane. (232)

she foreshadowed it three stanzas earlier with:

We laugh about my Nisei mother,  
hiding her coffee can of money under the mattress. 
World War II, depression times,  
before we were sent off to American prison camps. (231)

These lines set a tone for the rest of the poem – they established the persona as a victim of earlier racially-motivated crimes, thus characterising her as a particularly vulnerable, anxious person due to past experiences. She had already suffered the shock of an initial wounding and was susceptible to a repeated trauma that could reopen it, thus explaining why she may have felt especially uneasy. Then, sadly, the anticipated backlash began. This was familiar territory and her suppressed trauma resurfaced:

In California, a Sikh child is almost torched.  
A Sikh woman chased by a car, beaten.  
Rice recipes. Jap profiling.  
Those camps containing the innocent.  
Children behind barbed wire. (232-233)
She felt empathy and fear for the Arab American community and the use of children in her descriptions, given the reference to herself as a mother, seems a deliberate choice designed to evoke sympathy and sorrow for the attacks on the symbols of innocence.

The relationship between mothers and daughters features heavily in Mirikitani’s poetry. In “The Survivor” Sansei Fumi remembered lessons her mother had taught her during the war years. Her mother “Turned that rock farm / into strawberries. / And when they took us, / you didn’t look back once.” (122) When they arrived at the camp, her mother cried noiselessly and told Fumi never to allow their captors to see the pain they inflicted. But years later, Fumi realised that her reactions did not matter – she knew she was indifferent to white America: “they / walk around me. . . clear around / me. / Like I am the clock / or the desk.” (124) The trauma and the indifference that she experienced in the camp continued into adulthood. Fumi daydreamed about her mother as she anxiously waited to hear about a promotion that she later discovered was awarded to Erma, an ignorant, primping woman with “pouting pink” lips and “spun sugar hair” who recommended that Fumi find herself a man, like that “nice Japanese pharmacist down on 2-East, Mr. Ching, uh Chong, er Chow. . . .” (126) Once again, Fumi had been overlooked; ignored as though she was just another piece of office furniture.

In “Yea. She knows.” Mirikitani reversed the dynamics by articulating the problematic relationship between white America and ‘yellow America’ from the Sansei mother’s perspective. The mother recognised that the trauma of internment lay:

. . . heavy within me,
festering.
The turbulence of the times
shatters it.
Shards of anger in my bowels. (222)

When she got together with fellow Asian American women, they used self-parody and dark humour to laugh off the discrimination they continued to endure:

we talk about how Asian-American women would scotch-tape eyes, cinch waists, remove lower ribs
to make hips curve.
I tell my recipes for bleaching skin white –
    Cucumber, lemon, poison oak,
    Marry a white man.
Laughter.
Inside, shards of glass
tearing to find, define, purge
my self-hate.
I, with half white daughter,  
divorce. (224-225)

Even though she married a white man, she did not turn white and did not purge her self-hate. That only occurred when she discovered that writing poetry was a cathartic outlet that allowed her to “step outside / of the glass sharded innards.” (226) Through the act of writing, her wounds were re-opened which enabled a process of healing.

Then she focussed on her children. She asked her mixed-raced daughter questions about her experiences with racism and discrimination and was disheartened to learn that she, too, struggled with the ugliness of bigotry.

Yea, we know racism.  
More virulent. Sins of omission.  
Institutional racism.  
Aggressive racism. Rambo, Year of the Dragon, Chuck Norris rescues MIAs, Deerhunter, Charlie Chan Meets Dragon Lady, Hawaii Five-O. . . stereotypes live today.  
“where are you from? No, really from?”  
“where did you learn to speak English so well?”  
“you seem so well educated”  
“you’re in America. Speak American!!”  
Voices. Keep rising. (228)

Mirikitani is urging for the proliferation of dissenting voices to continue to fight against the insidious and varied forms of racism which continued to perpetuate old stereotypes and forcibly recall past traumas.

The memory of past trauma also rose like bitter bile for fellow Sansei poet Amy Uyematsu in a poem I discussed in Chapter Three, “Lexicon”. The latter part of her poem conveyed her deep anger at those who continued to perpetrate acts of racial persecution. As in Mirikitani’s poem, the following section of Uyematsu’s poem also continued from mention of the internment thus foreshadowing her position as someone once-victimised:

watch what they hide in their hands.  
in Raleigh, North Carolina, Ming Hai Loo was gunned down by two brothers who hated Vietnamese. Loo was Chinese. and it didn’t matter if Vincent Chin was clubbed to death by two Detroit autoworkers who mistook him for Japanese. (132)
As previously mentioned, the case of Vincent Chin’s death had a profound effect on the Japanese American community, especially on the Sansei generation. Such racially-motivated hate crimes taught many Sansei to become hyper-aware of their Asian appearance and some, like Uyematsu, dreamt of altering their ‘too-ethnic’ looks. She expressed her desires in her poem “Second Nature (or Lessons on Beauty)”: “in daydream my fingers / retracing the rounder shape of an eye / which doesn’t fit mine.” (25) She felt that she was either invisible or standing out in sharp contrast to everyone else, her Otherness screaming out for attention:

Some walls have a brightness
which suck the color yellow
back into itself,
if I become invisible
everyone else can keep smiling.
Other walls collapse
from the rising noise
of my own unwantedness (25)

This is the legacy of self-hatred, self-doubt and a self-loathing of ethnicity that many Sansei claim had been passed down to them from their seemingly compliant, assimilation-seeking parents, some still steeped in silence and denial. But their silence was actually complicit in the degradation of the Sanseis’ sense of identity.

The lack of vocal defence or loud anger signalled for Uyematsu, and many other Sansei, an acceptance of the fact of discrimination. Their parents’ silence seemed to legitimate it, made such acts into events to be tolerated, not challenged. But these were unfamiliar and unacceptable concepts for the highly Americanized Sansei generation. By comparing her own habits to those of other Sansei, Uyematsu identified her distrust and unease as a generational problem, one that she implied could only be fixed internally when she travelled to Tokyo where she faded into anonymity:

my darker skin begins to breathe,
my black eyes take back their
original name,
I don’t have to measure myself
against what I can never be.
All at once I am every woman again –
I sleep for twenty days
I pull every feature
back into my face. (26)

This desire for anonymity was one that was definitely inherited from the Nisei generation, as expressed by Nisei poet Yamada and novelist Sone. Yamada embodied
the widely-held belief of the *Nisei* generation that with the much-coveted assimilation would come anonymity and the ever-present threats of discrimination and racially-motivated abuse would disappear.8

8.7  **Sisters Matsumoto**

*Sansei* playwright Philip Kan Gotanda knew that racially-motivated abuse would never disappear. His play *Sisters Matsumoto*, set in 1945, was first performed in 1998. The experiences of the three *Nisei* sisters who returned from camp to their family farm in California confirmed their fears that the racist sentiment that contributed to their internment in the first place was still very evident. Through their conversations with one another and with their husbands (one of whom was a Japanese Hawaiian) the different obstacles that they faced in the post-war period and their different experiences in camp was revealed. One sister embodied the assimilationist thrust and decided that her children would henceforth only speak English, only play with Caucasian children and attend an all-white Christian church. She also removed their Japanese middle names in an attempt to make them ‘more American.’

One of the husbands, Hideo, personified the dilemma faced by many well-educated *Nisei* men who were unable to secure professional work. He married one of the daughters for her father’s money at his parents request as he was unable to capitalise on his university education. When he was mocked for his acquiescence to their request, to the internment and to his outspoken wife, he angrily retorted:

> Maybe my silence is not silence at all but an angry shout I have to keep locked inside. I was a good son. I did what my parents asked me to do. Should I indulge myself, talk about my feelings, tell you what I think of you? Just open my mouth and yak away? (52)

His was a conscious repression of his feelings resulting from his deference to filial piety. He was talking to Bola, the Japanese Hawaiian husband who was stereotypically outspoken and hot-headed compared to the Japanese American men. Bola was especially angry because, like novelist John Okada and contrary to the argument of Kelly and Kaplan, he realised his personal losses in the war still did not grant him the right to be seen as loyal in the eyes of white America:
My little brother, Jun-chan, died in this war. Along with all the other Buddhasheads boys from the Islands, he spilled his blood so that those haole Texans could live. Jun-chan along with the rest of the 100th Battalion knew they were being served up as cannon fodder. . . . Hey, they’re expendable, let’s send them. And they did and they went. Shig dies, Tak dies, George loses his leg, Paul loses his arm. They did it. To prove they were loyal Americans. And they proved it with their blood. . . . And he says to me that Japanese Americans can’t be trusted. That we’re sneaky. That they couldn’t be counted on by the other American soldiers. (2005: 25-26)

His angry speech which denunciated the white Americans who still did not trust the Japanese Americans despite their acts of blood-sacrifice was corroborated by the discovery that the family farm had been sold for an unfair price by their neighbour while they were interned. Their father had trusted Mr Hersham to sell the farm but he cheated him for his own financial gain. The sisters and their husbands were forced to leave their home, yet another traumatic departure, and had to separate from each other to try to forge a future for themselves.

This play is important because it portrays the difficulties that the former internees had to endure after the war ended and the internment camps were shut. The discrimination was not over, their lives did not return to the way they had been four years prior and, although some claim that the forced dispersal of the Japanese community across the continent was a positive outcome, the further fracturing and disintegration of their families was yet another tragic consequence to deal with. It also portrays the multiplicity of voices within the Japanese American community, as did Okada’s No-No Boy, which shows how disunited the community had become as a result of the internment.

8.8 Art therapy

Sansei Roger Shimomura, acclaimed painter and performance artist, was only two when he was interned in Minidoka. For over forty years after the war his parents maintained their silence about the camps. But his involvement in the Pop Art movement in New York in the Sixties, the political movement in Kansas University in the Seventies and an ignorant comment made by a farmer at a 1972 auction (he asked Shimomura if he painted pictures that he liked, of “them gee-shee girls wearing them kimonahs”) propelled him into action. He began to experiment with his art, merging iconic Japanese woodblock images with familiar Americana iconography which
delivered messages about racism, internment and identity-loss. He had his grandmother’s diaries translated – over half a century’s worth – in which she dutifully recorded her life, including the camp years. Shimomura, having been heavily influenced by the very vocal political and civil rights movements, was startled by her genteel expressions and reactions under such difficult conditions.

In 1980, he painted “Diary, December 12, 1941” inspired by one of his grandmother’s diary entries which read in part:

I spent all day at home. Starting from today we were permitted to withdraw $100 from the bank. This was our sustenance of life, we who are enemy to them. I deeply felt America’s largeheartedness in dealing with us. (Relocations and Revisions, 1992: 18)

This is an iconic representation of a Japanese woman seated in a Japanese-style room, deep in contemplation. She is being protected by the man whose shadow against the shoji screen identifies him as Superman, the all-American symbol of protection and peace. When the signifiers of this image are read in context with the diary entry, there is a clear presence of irony and dark humour aimed at the heart of the American government by attacking such an emblematic and popular symbol of American wholesomeness and goodness, re-coding it as hypocritical and shallow.

This particular painting was part of an art exhibition held at the Long Beach Museum of Art in California in 1992 titled Relocations and Revisions: The Japanese American Internment Reconsidered which showcased the works of ten Sansei (or part-Sansei) artists who used a variety of medium such as paintings, installations and video projects to express their feelings about the internment. Shimomura’s grandmother’s diaries proved so inspirational that he painted a whole series of works based on her entries and he called the collection ‘An American Diary Series’ which toured the country to great acclaim. I have included two images here from that collection together with the extract from the diaries that inspired Shimomura:

June 16, 1942. Camp Harmony: As usual, I spent most of the time cleaning and doing laundry. For lunch they served wiener. For dinner, once again, it was bologna. I had a poor appetite.
October 16, 1942. Camp Minidoka: It was fine weather today. I realized that today was Friday because fish was served. How monotonous life is here. Again, another day passed wastefully doing laundry and miscellaneous things.

The first image juxtaposes two contrasting elements of east and west – chopsticks holding up non-Asian fare; a wiener and a slice of bologna. It acts as a metaphor for the misunderstanding and conflict between the Japanese and American identities and cultures during the war. The second image portrays the drudgery of everyday life. What is interesting about this particular piece is not just the backdrop of the barbed wire and the guard tower – these are commonly-used symbols of the internment. The garment that the woman is washing is striped, immediately identifiable as a prison uniform. In this image Shimomura has made a very pointed comment that the internees were, in fact, prisoners in the camp and that the argument made by the WRA otherwise was just semantics.

Shimomura was the only *Sansei* contributor to *Relocations and Revisions* who actually experienced the internment first-hand, yet the trauma and emotions associated with it are just as evident in some of the other artists whose work was exhibited there also. Matthew K. Fukuda, for example, was not born until twenty-three years after the end of World War II, yet his photographic exhibition is infused with a sense of anger and injustice. He juxtaposed photos of the homes of the twenty-two Californian congressmen during the War with aerial photographs of the camps. The startling contrast fuelled his conviction that the internment was motivated by economic reasons. He said:

For this project, I juxtaposed one home with one camp or center, each of which held ten to fifteen thousand people, while a congressman’s home held one to four. And I think that shows how much a Japanese American’s life was worth in 1942. ([Relocations and Revisions, 1992: 10](#))

Another young *Sansei* artist featured at the exhibition was Kristine Yuki Aono whose site-specific installation was based on the well-known Japanese proverb, “deru kugi wa utareru” which translates to “the nail that sticks out will be hit hard.”
Interestingly, this is almost the exact opposite of the American saying, “it is the squeaky wheel that gets the oil.” Covering the walls of the entire gallery, over testimonial transcriptions from the redress movement, copies of Aono’s grandfather’s letters and the American flag were 120,313 dots – one for each internee. About half of the dots already had nails in them and viewers were invited to push nails into the remaining dots. The visual impact of these 120,313 dots / nails was such that Aono hoped to make the viewer understand why the internees, like her immigrant grandparents, submitted so quietly. She hoped to prove that their acquiescence was not borne of fear or cowardice, rather it was embraced in the spirit of cooperation, community and, ironically, a sense of duty and loyalty to America.

The artwork presented by the Sansei at the exhibition demonstrates the wide range of reactions inherent in their generation regarding the internment. The causative factors could be the degree to which the trauma of internment was repressed within themselves and their parents, the length of time the trauma spent ‘mummified’ in the latency period or the manner in which the memory-traces and the archaic heritage was passed on. Regardless, the fact that the trauma is so clearly expressed in the artwork of those who did not experience the internment themselves shows that the trauma was undeniably passed on through the generations.

8.9 Ghostly images caught on film

A Sansei woman of similar age to Aono chose to explore another complex issue faced by their generation – the fact that the cultural silence and self-perpetuated amnesia of the Nisei generation was supported by a lack of physical evidence of the event itself. Filmmaker Rea Tajiri recognised the gap in her own historical past and, in 1988, began her quest to fill that gap because she “felt lost, ungrounded. Somewhat like a ghost that floats over a terrain, witnessing others living their lives and yet not having one of its own.” (Tajiri, 1991) The Japanese American story was absent from history because the dominant discourse silenced and marginalised them. However, they perpetuated the problem by maintaining and transferring their silence about the internment. Tajiri set out to end her family’s cycle of silence by reconstructing a history of the wartime years.
that would serve to fill the void in the history of the Japanese American community, resulting in her 1991 film *History and Memory*.

While she was growing up, she said she had a sense of haunting, of living in a family of ghosts. To counteract the sense of the unknown, she interwove actual video footage from inside the camps (a rarity, as cameras were initially forbidden), propaganda footage which had lain in its own state of latency for decades, interviews with family members and excerpts from letters and diaries. For her mother however, despite her daughter’s conscious attempt to trigger her buried memories, her trauma was so deeply suppressed that she exclaimed, “I don’t remember this. My goodness, I don’t remember this.” (Tajiri, 1991) She couldn’t remember the long train ride to Poston so Tajiri drove along the same route nearly fifty years later and filmed the view for her so that her mother could fill in the blanks in her own memory. One thing her mother *did* remember was when they finally returned home, their house had disappeared – it had literally been raised from its foundations and stolen. Then she realised that although she could not remember *what* she forgot, she knew *why* she forgot: “If you start thinking about how we got in [the camps], you could go crazy.” (Tajiri, 1991)

Whereas Tajiri made her film both to construct a history for her community and to ease her own sense of haunting, fellow *Sansei* filmmaker Janice Tanaka’s films are imbued with a sense of irretrievable, irreversible loss and pain. Her experimental film, *Memories From the Department of Amnesia*, also made in 1991, documented her mother’s life prior to her nervous breakdown in 1963. Her next film, *Who’s Going to Pay for These Donuts, Anyway?* was made the following year and chronicled her search for her father, Jack Koto, whom she had not seen since he left his family when she was just three. He said he hated being a ‘Jap’ and he hated his ‘Jap’ wife and child. He resisted the internment and was incarcerated by the FBI. After he left, her mother withdrew herself and her children from the Japanese community and they were alone, adrift in a “sea of white.” (Tanaka, 1992) Although his words and actions profoundly affected her sense of self-identity and fuelled her self-loathing, she still felt the desire to find him, to understand why he deserted them. She eventually found him in a halfway house for the chronically mentally ill on LA’s skid row; he was a paranoid schizophrenic and had undergone decades of drug abuse and electric shock therapy. Although there was a reconciliation and reunion with several members of his family, the final image of her broken, shattered father reading the words of Bush’s letter of apology
(see Appendix Four) made the words sound hollow and insignificant. No amount of money or apologies driven by the spin doctors in Washington could heal the horrendous wounds her family suffered – the separation, the self (and intra-family) loathing, the breakdown and early death of her mother and the deterioration, abuse and poverty of her father. These are wounds that will never heal and Tanaka admitted that it “could only be dealt with behind the distancing lens of the camera.” (Tanaka, 1992)

8.10 The cultivation of roots established with blood, sweat and tears

There exists such a vast collection of literary texts written by members of the Sansei generation, some of whom deal explicitly with the internment years and its consequences and some of whom do not refer to it at all in their writing. This is a reflection of the varied ways in which the internment affected the Sansei and the texts that I examine in this chapter are samples of the differing attitudes and perspectives. David Mas Masumoto did not experience the internment himself but his parents and grandparents did. However, like so many other Issei and Nisei, they did not discuss that time in their lives with him, preferring to leave those years shrouded in silence. “The confusion of evacuation mutes their stories and muzzles their voices” (Masumoto, 1999: 25) But he knew their silence was not one of subservient resignation, as other Sansei believed which fuelled their frustration and anger at their parents. He believed that “the silence of the Japanese Americans was full of emotions. It signified painful acceptance, not indifference.” (1999: 208) Indeed, his own father enacted his own non-vocal expression of anger and dissent at the evacuation orders:

Dad didn’t leave quietly. As he vacated the house, he smashed every dish and cup they owned rather than leave them. He broke every piece of furniture they had bought or Jiichan15 had made, including the family’s ‘summer platform’ and tossed them into a pile. Then he burned them. The flames danced into the evening sky and glowed in the night’s darkness. They would be used by no one. All he’d leave behind was white ashes. (1999: 205)

As Masumoto began to learn more about the internment camps through history books and snippets of information from his parents, he began to reflect upon what his family had gone through to provide for his future. He described his grandfathers in the beginning of his novel Harvest Son: Planting Roots in American Soil as “broken old men” (27) but when he discovered the truth behind what it was that ‘broke’ them, he was filled with respect and gratitude for their sacrifices and hard work.
At the end of the war any remaining Japanese Americans were forced out of the camps and thrust back into a world of uncertainty and potential hostility. “They were refugees, escaping political persecution and seeking sanctuary in their own country.” (229) When his father returned home from military service, he was forced to turn down the educational and employment opportunities offered by the G.I. Bill in order to support his family. It wasn’t until the Sansei generation could such opportunities be taken advantage of and Masumoto was grateful for their sacrifices:

I never had to dream of a Masumoto farm; no land or property was ever taken away from me. . . . I will never be as bold as my grandfathers or grandmothers. I won’t journey across an ocean to an unknown land, look for work without speaking the language, labor in strange fields with crops I have never seen before. I may never know the empty feeling of losing everything and growing old, then returning to a home and family that was taken away and forever altered. I am given different options. (235)

With his newfound respect and appreciation for his grandparents and parents, he read his family’s silence not as a sign of weakness but as “silent strength” (236), imagining them “biting their tongues and bleeding with pride as they accepted America with a bow of humility.” (236) He understood the significance and meaningfulness that lay behind their silence and finally recognised them for who they were: Strong Americans.

I never considered that thousands of mute voices could become more powerful than a rally or march. Stripped of their rights, guilty by their heritage, the stillness of individuals became a private solution to a personal pain. My family relinquished their Japanese character and replaced it with an American will – they claimed a home in this land through their silence, a willingness to accept conditions and strength to move on. My grandfathers chose to remain in this adopted land. For the first time in my life, I stare at their photographs and see Americans. (243)

By interspersing a narrative of his work on his family’s grape and peach orchards with reflections upon his Japanese heritage and his family history, Masumoto created a lyrical and evocative metaphor as he cultivated the land, ready to hand down to his children. One thing he enjoyed doing to pass the time as he worked in the orchards was imagining that he was in a science fiction film, “in which all memory has been prohibited, for it hinders progress.” (236) He described a sacred tree of knowledge that reminds me of the tree in which Clorinda’s soul was trapped in Gerusalemme Liberata.
Masumoto’s metaphor reinforces Žižek’s theory that a triggered memory can link you to a past moment, thus recalling the emotions and trauma associated with it.

This tree holds the power to trigger memory and release the poet’s soul alive deep within people’s emotions. The power of nature’s creative and chaotic forces can be liberated with a single taste, and the present can be reconnected to the past. (236)

8.11 The importance of early education and challenging racial stereotypes

Ken Mochizuki was not interned but his parents spent over three years in Minidoka. As a journalist during the 1980s working for newspapers that specialised in Asian American issues, he followed the redress movement very closely and was aware of the lack of material written about that shameful event in American history. When Philip Lee, co-founder of Lee & Low Books, a publishing house devoted to multicultural childrens titles, asked him to write a story, he felt it was serendipitous that he, compared to many other Sansei, already had a good understanding of camp life.

Mochizuki has now published three books through Lee & Low Books, all aimed at educating children on the history of the Japanese diaspora.16

Baseball Saved Us is told from the perspective of a young Nisei boy whose father decided to build a baseball field to ease the boredom of the children and provide a sense of community again. The boy became a better ball player and, when he returned to his old school after the war, his baseball skills provided a bridge for his teammates to accept him for what he was rather than reject him for who he looked like. The young Sansei protagonist in Heroes similarly had to fight to gain acceptance. Although Donnie had friends at school, he still felt ostracised because he was always cast as the enemy when they ‘played’ war, “because I looked like them.”17 Not until his friends saw his father and uncle in their military uniforms, bedecked with medals and ribbons, did they treat him as just another regular American schoolboy. They decided to play football together, instead of war. And this time, the story ends, “they were following me instead of chasing me.” This story depicts the importance placed upon and the respect earned by those who committed themselves to serve their country; the acts of blood-sacrifice committed by Donnie’s father and uncle earned Donnie the respect of his friends who ceased to see him as the enemy.
Mochizuki often visits classrooms around the country to help children, like Donnie’s friends, understand the appalling nature and sometimes tragic ramifications of racial profiling and hoped that his books worked in the same way. He often began his visits by asking the children:

How many of you think I know martial arts? Or thought that when I showed up today, I’d be speaking with an accent? Or that I’d be wearing thick, Coke-bottle glasses? Or that when I was your age, math was my best subject? It was actually my worst; history and English, that’s what I was always good at. How many of you think I’m a slow and lousy driver, or that when I go on vacation, I have five cameras around my neck and take pictures of everything in sight? (Engberg and Lee, 2003: 8)

Although these seem like fairly harmless stereotypes that the children could relate to and laugh about, it is still stereotyping that can lead to more bitter and poisonous generalisations as these young minds mature. His picture books prove that it is never too early to begin the education of our children in the acceptance and celebration of diversity.

He continued the idea of challenging racial stereotyping in his most recent young adult novel, *Beacon Hill Boys*. Seattle *Sansei* Dan Inagaki and his friends rebelled against adhering to the Japanese American model minority mould and, not until Dan learned about the camps did he begin to understand why his parents and the rest of the *Nisei* generation acted the way they did. This novel, again, stresses the importance of early education of the children and the destructive nature of keeping secrets. Dan asked his father about the camps when he was younger, to which he answered, “That was something that happened a long time ago. . . . Today and tomorrow is all you need to worry about. We don’t dwell on the past around here.” (42) The phlegmatic response to his questions was matched by the ignorance of his history teacher who stressed the non-importance (and cast doubt on the reality) of the internment camps when he was challenged by Dan:

[The teacher] peered at me over the tops of his bifocals and grunted, ‘I don’t care about any Japanese history. We only teach American history around here.’
‘But these ‘camps’ happened in the U.S. And people in the camps were American citizens. Didn’t that make it American history?’
‘Look, son, I have only a few months to cover over two hundred years. I only cover what’s important.’ (43)
There was a great deal of tension between Dan and his father which culminated in an explosive argument that they had about Dan quitting a job that his father secured for him. When Dan said that the *Nisei* were “a bunch of scared sheep” going into the camps, his father slapped him and told him:

‘You weren’t there – what do you know? . . . What’s the worst that happens to you nowadays? Get called some names? . . . *You* can work any kind of job – that is, if you wanted to. *You* can go to school, to college anywhere. We couldn’t. We always had to work twice as hard as the next guy; our buddies died in the war to get *hakujin*[^18] to accept us. . . . Sometimes you just got to shut up and take it like a man.’ (150-151)

This revealing outburst fuelled Dan’s curiosity and when he found out that his father was in the M.I.S. and was forbidden to talk about his role, Dan felt a surge of respect for his father and for his own family history. He asked his father again why he did not talk about camp. He replied more honestly this time:

Maybe it’s just too tough to talk about. And anybody who was there might have a different version of what was tough. What hurts you bad in the past. . . . you bury it, try to forget about it. And speaking of burying, that’s what we’re good at. You know, *shikataganai*. . . . I don’t know if anybody else thinks this way, but I think we never talk about it ‘cause we don’t want you kids to use it as a crutch so you feel like somebody always owes you for what happened to us, and start making excuses. (176-177)

Now that the lines of communication were finally opening, they could begin to forge an honest relationship, not one hindered by secrecy and silence. The lack of Japanese American role models in the 1960s and 1970s was exacerbated by the unwillingness of the *Issei* and *Nisei* to talk about their past and their achievements, often because they had lost everything because of the camps. They were also reluctant to celebrate their racial heritage for fear that it would target them once again. In fact, Mochizuki said, “all of the [Asian] images were negative” (Engberg and Lee, 2003: 10) and he attempted, through his writing, to educate others, especially children, on how dangerous negative racial stereotyping can be.

8.12 The destructive nature of self-inflicted cultural amnesia

John Tateishi is a *Sansei* activist and current national director of the JACL who was interned in Manzanar at the age of three. His experiences there shaped his entire
Manzanar enforced his knowledge, even as a child, that he was viewed with diminished humanity because of his racial heritage. He understood why his parents generation felt so laden with guilt and shame that they could not talk about camp because he, too, shared in their collective guilt. He admitted to not telling his parents about the discrimination he experienced after camp because he wanted to protect them\textsuperscript{19} which corresponds with Nagata’s theory on the complicit silence of the \textit{Sansei}.

Although he recognised that some of the guilt his parents felt was based on their inability to protect him and his siblings from the internment, he knew that it was important to not become trapped in silence as they had. While he conceded that there were some stories he had kept private, he recognised the cathartic healing power inherent in sharing experiences with the other ‘children of the camps’:

\textit{It was a way for us to cope with our own guilt and shame for having been prisoners in our own land. . . . It was a way for us to keep the memory alive and at the same time a way for us to work out the confusion and hurt the experience brought us.} (131)

He realised that it was crucial for the future of the Japanese American community that other camp survivors also experience a cathartic release so in 1976 he became involved in the JACL’s redress movement and was elected chairman of the Committee for Redress in 1978. In a passage that I feel reflected the motivation\textsuperscript{20} he had for chairing the redress movement, he stated:

\textit{I know that our lives were destroyed simply because of who we were. And even worse, we destroyed ourselves in the process in so many ways. We were torn apart by untenable confrontations that were forced upon us, and instead of directing our anger and hurt at the government, we directed it at ourselves. . . . I read somewhere that psychological wounds cut so deep sometimes that you really never get to the core of them. I know that’s true}
The act of testifying for the redress movement was a painful, emotionally draining experience, but also proved to be cathartic for many. The men and women who testified realised their feelings of guilt and shame were not only undeserved but were felt by several thousand others in their community. The difficulty they experienced to articulate their psychological wounds follows Žižek’s theory that, at the heart of any traumatic loss lies an unsymbolizable traumatic core. He argued for the destruction of that traumatic kernel, achievable through a process of symbolization and historicization. However, as I argued in Chapter Three, wouldn’t the absolute death, the destruction of that kernel, create a possibility for its repetition? The traumatic kernel should be preserved to some extent so that the future generations can learn from it to have a better understanding of their own history and are thus equipped with the knowledge and the power required to prevent its repetition. The articulation of the trauma and the recording of the testimonies not only enable the healing process for the survivors but also preserve the trauma for the benefit of future generations.

8.13 Evidence of the residual effects of the internment in Canada

Another Sansei who found herself involved in the redress movement, this time in Canada, was Kerri Sakamoto whose grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles were forced from their homes into the camps hidden deep within the Canadian interior. Sakamoto grew up in a predominantly white suburb where racial taunts were common and her diminished sense of identity was enforced by her parents’ refusal to discuss the camps or, indeed, anything Japanese. At twenty, she first read about the camps in a magazine article. Two years later she read Obasan and joined the redress movement where she worked alongside Kogawa for two years. Her parents refused to attend the meetings and this compelled her to write about the residual effects of the internment: “it was the idea of being visible once again that was uncomfortable for them, even threatening.” (Sakamoto, 2000: 314) Several years later she wrote The Electrical Field because she recognised that as a child of internees she had felt, witnessed and been affected by the internment – she was living proof of its residual effects.

The suspenseful narrative of The Electrical Field unfolds through Asako Saito, the novel’s “unreliable narrator” as Sakamoto called her who cannot be trusted to
provide accurate or honest memories. The murder of Asako’s friend Chisako forced her to recall the tragic death of her beloved older brother Eiji in camp, for which she blamed herself.  

The guilt that Asako felt about his death is similar to the guilt harboured by Naomi in *Obasan* about Gower’s sexual abuse and both women were reluctant to be drawn into discussions about the camp; Asako’s reluctance inspired by the refusal of Sakamoto’s parents to participate in the redress movement. Asako was often confronted by Yano, Chisako’s husband, who was a tireless campaigner for redress. One day, when he attempted to corner Asako, she tried to make her position clear:

‘Our life is not so bad here. We’ve made our way.’ I kept smiling. ‘These things that happened are behind us now. And they are... private, ne?’ Eiji entered my mind just then, as he always did when these subjects came up. . . . I had no wish to share in [Yano’s] anger, or to make others share in mine; to blame the government, the camps, the war. . . . (110)

Yano felt that the government had to accept blame for the internment which he believed was economically and spitefully motivated. “We were too good. We were doing so well, so they had to set us back didn’t they?” (122) Asako refused to participate in any discussions, even with her younger brother whose questions she “did not indulge him in.” (178) By not ‘indulging’ in discussion of her past Asako, and other non-protesting Japanese Canadian *Nisei* like Naomi, internalised the hatred of their oppressors thus further complicating and intensifying their self-recrimination and identification as both victim and victimiser. Her self-loathing as a woman of Japanese ancestry was also evident in the way she dreamt about her incapacitated father, carrying him on her back like a monkey. Her father, and everything Japanese that he represented, had become, quite literally, the ‘monkey on her back’.  

Yano killed Chisako and their children when he discovered that she had taken a white lover. As Chisako had moved to Canada after the war, he felt that she could never understand the shame the *Nisei* carried within caused by the ‘guilt’ of being of Japanese ancestry. The shame of her infidelity, especially with a white man, was a further perpetuation of the shame he carried from camp:

‘We’re so full of shame, aren’t we, Asako? We hide away, afraid that they’ll lock us up again. That’s it, isn’t it? . . . They were hoping we’d all commit hara-kiri in the camps, don’t you think, Saito-san?’ He laughed a dull, sour roar, but it pierced me just the same. ‘People say it wasn’t so bad. Easy to say now. But it was bad, wasn’t it, Saito-san?’ (231, 258)
Although he was initially portrayed as a strong man campaigning for his people, subtle characteristics and speech patterns reveal a broken man. He was often doubled over, coughing in asthmatic fits and his words in the excerpt above belie a sense of desperation, of a deep-seated need for individual acceptance and acknowledgement. He kept pushing Asako, “aren’t we, Asako? . . That’s it, isn’t it? . . don’t you think, Saito-san? . . . But it was bad, wasn’t it, Saito-san?” His desperation was clearly escaping through his incessant questioning. He had been abused by the white community, rebuffed by his own community and Chisako’s infidelity was something he was finally able to avenge. But the cumulative effect of his multiple traumas was too great for him and he killed himself. His ego had been overwhelmed, the external stimuli too great and he succumbed to the tragic depths of melancholia. Yano and Asako had been so scarred by the effects of the internment that traces of alienation, vulnerability and fear lingered long after the fences and military personnel had been removed.

8.14 The total destruction of the Okada family

Rahna Reiko Rizzuto’s novel Why She Left Us also portrays the devastating and long-term effects of the internment. Half Japanese, Rizzuto was born in Hawaii and had never even heard of the internment until she was in high school and her grandmother shared her story with her history class. Rizzuto recalled a sense of outrage and anger both at the mistreatment of her family as well as at their acquiescence. She said that the outrage she felt then was what compelled to begin her book and to continue writing, even as the writing process became traumatic for her: “Some of it was pretty painful. I found myself wanting to leave the room and not be a part of what I was writing.” (Hix, 1999: 51)

Foregoing a chronological narrative, Rizzuto allows the story to skip backwards and forwards in time, using four different narrators, thus providing different perspectives of history and memory. The ‘she’ of the title refers to Nisei Emi Okada who was sent away to work as a domestic servant at the age of twelve during the Depression to support her family. She returned, pregnant, in 1940 and revealed that she had already given up a previous son for adoption. Her mother Kaori and elder brother coerced the adoptive mother into returning Emi’s son and were successful only because she was unable to process the trauma of the unfolding events as they happened (like Freud’s train crash victim) because she was still stuck in the trauma of her husband’s
arrest. The removal of her adopted baby was a traumatic repetition and would be underscored by her own, final removal from her home, husband-less and child-less. Kaori thought to herself that the girl was “hung up in the past, replaying a nightmare she needed to change.” (Rizzuto, 2002: 155)

Kaori raised Emi’s children and, after the war, Emi disappeared again. When she returned, married, she only took her daughter (who was born in camp) with her and rejected her son once again. Fifty years later, her daughter discovered that her uncle is in fact her brother and, through the four narrators in temporal settings ranging from the 1920s to the 1990s, she pieced together the tragic circumstances that led to the disintegration of her family. Although Emi is the primary figure throughout the narratives, we never hear from her directly which means she remains an ethereal, mysterious character, shrouded in secrets and silences, symbolic of the Nisei generation.

The non-linear narrative device is reflective of the repetitious pattern of traumatic and violent events in their lives, as expressed by Kaori:

My life doesn’t return to me in any order. Moments flip-flop, overlap – sometimes they come only in splinters. The searchlights at Santa Anita can still pick me up so fast I forget what I’m thinking. (48)

The multiplicity of narrative points of view also allows us to see the wounds that have been inflicted and the scars that are left on the succeeding generations. The Issei father Mitsuo, for example, was a terrifying and violent figure but Emi’s public disgrace, the attack on Pearl Harbor and their evacuation broke his spirit completely the way it broke so many other Issei men. “There was ruin all around him, in the way he didn’t notice his shirt bunched at the waist, or his shoes untied. His weary eyes, his slump, said this time it was too much.” (184) Jack, Emi’s younger brother, despised Emi for abandoning her son and compared her actions to the government’s repeated rejection of all Japanese Americans, asking, “do you know what that’s like, being rejected over and over?” (242)

Although Rizzuto constructed the character of Emi as dishonourable and somewhat monstrous, a construction compounded by the fact that she was not granted a voice, one can see glimpses into why Emi made her choices. As a child she was beaten by her father, was sent away by her mother and, as a pregnant adolescent was beaten unconscious by her older brother. Emi interpreted these terrible instances as acts of
rejection, a rejection that was repeated by her government and a rejection that she repeated with her own children. She was unprepared for the violent attacks, thus leaving her more susceptible to suffering from a traumatic neurosis and she was also unprepared for the humiliations she witnessed in camp. Kaori recalled an incident in the toilet block where she and Emi were forced to witness an old lady’s shame who could only go to the toilet if she placed a bag over her head:

Blinded by the bag, the old lady fumbles with her undergarments, then stretches her arms awkwardly behind her to feel her way down. She puts her fingers right where other people sit. We wouldn’t have looked at her. None of us would. . . . Down the line, I could see Emi, then the lady wearing the bag, then, just as background, three other ladies staring into their laps. Emi was crying. [She ran out and Kaori chased her]

‘What are we supposed to do, Mama?’ she asked. She looked damaged. . . . ‘It was bad enough before,’ she continued, spitting out her words like they were dirt on her tongue. . . . ‘It just gets worse and more humiliating.’ ‘It can’t be helped, Emi,’ I said, touching her arm. ‘You know that. There’s nothing we can do right now. We just have to make the best of it.’ (194-196)

Kaori’s words “it can’t be helped” or “shikata ga nai” was an oft-repeated phrase used by the Issei, especially during their years in camp. I have discussed the phrase previously but when Emi used the phrase with her daughter for the first time, her response reminded me once again of Freud’s letter to his son. Her response was to “sound out the unfamiliar words in her head” (282), thus the aporia of transmission in which lay the unfamiliarity of the words, of the language and of the culturally-specific concept of shikata ga nai, signifies this as the site of trauma for Kaori and Emi and, through the verbal transmission of this concept, for Emi’s daughter too.24

8.15 An explosive release of cathartic energy

Sansei author Julie Otsuka’s debut novel is a poetic evocation of a nameless family’s experiences during the war which creates a subtle yet extraordinarily powerful impact. Where Rizzuto used strong, descriptive imagery to horrify and a circuitous narrative structure to confuse and surprise her readers, Otsuka delivered an evocatively powerful story with simple narratives and uncomplicated prose, with a shockingly emotional final chapter. The novel was inspired by the internment of her own family and while camp was not discussed much while she was growing up, she was aware of it. As she learnt more about it, she began to feel that it was “a story that needs to be told, especially since it took place right here, in America, during a time when we were
supposedly fighting for democracy and freedom overseas.” She described how images of the war kept surfacing in her work, a sign of the memory-traces that she had unwittingly inherited, and she knew that it required some form of cathartic release which came in the form of When the Emperor was Divine. Otsuka’s economical, almost restrained prose that characterises most of the novel was deliberate – her style of casual, almost nonchalant imagery actually accentuates the terror of their situation; it creates a pressure cooker-like environment. It constructs a jarring juxtaposition for the release of the pressure, expressed through the final chapter, the father’s angry, dissonant, explosive diatribe which lies in stark contrast to the previous chapters, each told in a calm yet restrained manner by each of the other family members.

The family members remain unnamed, so as to make them representative figures, but Otsuka grounds them with personal, memorable touches. The Issei mother begins the narrative and offers a personification of the Japanese term “gaman”, or endurance. Her husband had been taken away and she was forced to pack up their home, their possessions and their lives and take care of their two young children, taking them to an unknown location. In one extremely poignant scene, she was forced to kill their family pet, ‘White Dog’:

The woman sat down on a rock beneath the persimmon tree. White Dog lay at her feet and closed his eyes. ‘White Dog,’ she said, ‘look at me.’ . . . ‘Now roll over,’ she said. White Dog rolled over and looked up at her with his good eye. ‘Play dead,’ she said. White Dog turned his head to the side and closed his eyes. His paws went limp. The woman picked up the large shovel that was leaning against the trunk of the tree. She lifted it high in the air with both hands and brought the blade down swiftly on his head. (11)

The understated manner in which the mother dealt with such a traumatic experience underscores the reaction of the Japanese American community to their treatment. Her suffering, representative of the sufferings of all Issei women perhaps, becomes so powerful because of the simple, delineated manner in which it is described.

The ten year-old daughter, who presents the second chapter, expressed confusion even as she delivered her cheeky, eccentric responses to adults and children alike. Her character is touching in her fierce protectiveness of her younger brother, whose perspective we gain through his, the third and longest, chapter. He missed his father desperately and thought he saw him everywhere, in all the men at camp:
For it was true, they all looked alike. Black hair. Slanted eyes. High cheekbones. Thick glasses. Thin lips. Bad teeth. Unknowable. Inscrutable. That was him, over there. The little yellow man. (49)

This passage demonstrates how his sense of identity had been corrupted by the wartime propaganda that was unavoidable after Pearl Harbor and it foreshadows the imagery used in the final chapter. The little boy was wracked with guilt – he thought that all that had happened was his fault:

Sometimes he worried he was there because he’d done something horribly, terribly wrong. . . . Breaking a chain letter from Juneau, Alaska. Flushing his dying pet goldfish down the toilet before it was completely dead. Forgetting to touch the hat rack three times when the iceman drove by. (57)

His confusion at his feelings of guilt and blame are so touching because his ‘sins’, the terrible things that must have caused his family’s dissolution, were so innocent, so child-like. His sense of identity, accentuated by the fact that he was not given a name, had been disabled, reflected in his refusal to name his pet tortoise that he caught at camp. Instead, he scratched his family identity number into its hard shell.

The fourth section was written from the perspective of both children as they described their return to their home after an absence of three years and five months. They had become so acclimatised, almost institutionalised that, on their first night back, they arranged their beds in the same pattern as they had in camp. Their sense of self-worth received yet another blow when they discovered that their exit payment of twenty-five dollars was equal to the release payment given to a common criminal:

‘It doesn’t add up,’ our mother had said. Three years. Five months. Twenty-five dollars. Why not thirty-five, or forty? Why not one hundred? Why even bother at all? (117-8)

Their young minds thought that if their own country, their own government, thought they were no better than common criminals, was it possible that they were right? Were they really no better than thieves or even rapists and murderers by virtue of their racial makeup alone? As a defensive response, they tried to disassociate themselves from anything that could make them resemble the enemy race again:

We would join their clubs, after school, if they let us. We would listen to their music. We would dress just like they did. We would change our names to sound more like theirs. And if our mother called out to us on the street by our real names we would
turn away and pretend not to know her. We would never be mistaken for the enemy again! (114)

But the guilt, the tension and the deception were too much for their developing minds and egos. The following passage is wrought with a sense of desperation and fear:

If we did something wrong we made sure to say excuse me (excuse me for looking at you, excuse me for sitting here, excuse me for coming back). If we did something terribly wrong we immediately said we were sorry (‘I’m sorry I touched your arm, I didn’t mean to, it was an accident, I didn’t see it resting there so quietly, so beautifully, so perfectly, so irresistibly, on the edge of the desk, I lost my balance and brushed against it by mistake, I was standing too close, I wasn’t watching where I was going, somebody pushed me from behind, I never wanted to touch you, I have always wanted to touch you, I will never touch you again, I promise, I swear. . . ) (122-123)

The bubbling hysteria in the last twelve lines are emphasised by the multiple commas, creating a breathless, rushed and halting flow to the narrative. The novel is rising from a simmer to a boil; it is building up for its final release which would come from the return of the father.

Throughout the novel the father had been a strong, immutable figure in the minds of his wife and children. When he returned after more than four years away, they barely recognised him: “when we finally saw him standing there before us on the platform we did not know what to think, what to do.” (131) Not only did he look like a stranger but he acted like one as well. He did not speak about what happened during those four years, nor did the children wish to know:

He never talked about politics, or his arrest, or how he had lost all his teeth. He never mentioned his loyalty hearing before the Alien Enemy Control Unit. He never told us what it was, exactly, he’d been accused of. . . . We didn’t know. We didn’t want to know. We never asked. All we wanted to do, now that we were back in the world, was forget. (133)

However, their father’s behaviour made it impossible to forget. He exhibited clear symptoms of a serious trauma and it affected the children. He woke with a fright from his naps, shouting out their names. “He needed to see us, he said. He needed to see our faces. Otherwise he would never know if he was really awake.” (133) His suspension between dreams and reality is similar to the case of the father of the burning child that I discussed in Chapter One. Both men were so traumatised by their experience and their loss that they existed in a state of limbo. The father in When the Emperor was Divine
also suffered from recurring nightmares in which it was “five minutes past curfew and
he was trapped outside, in the world, on the wrong side of the fence. ‘I’ve got to get
back,’ he’d wake up shouting.” (137) In his nightmare he was significantly trapped
“outside, in the world, on the wrong side of the fence” – freedom was no longer
something he craved; it was something he feared. His years of wrongful imprisonment
left him institutionalised and agoraphobic.

The fifth and final part of the book finally offers the father’s perspective.
Provocatively titled “Confession” it recounted his ‘confession’ at his loyalty hearing.
His words reveal a frustration at the ridiculous rumours and absurd theories of sabotage
that he had been charged with. He ‘admitted’ with a strong tone of sarcasm, that he was
guilty of all that they charged him with:

It was me. I did it. I poisoned your reservoirs. I sprinkled your
food with insecticide. I sent my peas and potatoes to market full
of arsenic. I planted sticks of dynamite alongside your railroads.
I set your oil wells on fire. I scattered mines across the entrance
to your harbors. I spied on your airfields. I spied on your naval
yards. I spied on your neighbors. I spied on you. . . . I pulled
the nails from your white picket fence and sold them to the
enemy to melt down and make into bullets. . . . I leaned out my
second-storey window and signalled to his aviators with my red
paper lantern. *Come on over!* (141-142)

He didn’t realise how damaging these ‘confessions’ would be. He lashed out at the
outrageous accusations, furious that he could be arrested and charged with such
inflammatory acts. He knew their reaction was symptomatic of the hysteria created by
racist wartime propaganda and he took an angry swipe at such stereotypes.

Who am I? You know who I am. Or you think you do. I’m
your florist. I’m your grocer. . . . I’m the fisherman. I’m the
ranch hand. I’m the farm hand. . . . I’m the one you call Jap.
I’m the one you call Nip. I’m the one you call Slits. I’m the
one you call Slopes. I’m the one you call Yellowbelly. I’m the
one you call Gook. I’m the one you don’t see at all – we all
look alike. I’m the one you see everywhere – we’re taking over
the neighbourhood. . . . I’m your worst fear – you saw what we
did in Manchuria, you remember Nanking, you can’t get Pearl
Harbor out of your mind.
I’m the slant-eyed sniper in the trees. . . .
I’m the traitor in your own backyard.
I’m your houseboy.
I’m your cook.
I’m your gardener.
And I’ve been living here, quietly, beside you, for years, just
waiting for Tojo to flash me the high sign. (142-143)
The outburst of anger in the final chapter came to Otsuka very quickly. “As soon as I began writing it,” she said, “I knew that it would be the ending of the book. What surprised me was that the father’s anger was so easily accessible to me.”

Perhaps it was simply so accessible because she had found a way to tap into her own trauma and her own anger, traces of an archaic heritage that resulted in a shared catharsis that Otsuka purged through the character of the father.

8.16 The enabling of cathartic experiences

Shame had been integral to the way the Sansei perceived themselves, their community and their ethnicity. It was shame that was unwittingly inherited from their parents almost obsessive quest for acceptance and Americanization which was reinforced during its long latency period by recurring acts of racial vilification and violence. However, they were not, as suggested, “victims of assimilation.” As a result of their parents push towards assimilation, they gained the tools, the education and the opportunities to address their abusive history. The Sansei were, as a result of their Americanization, able to facilitate the cathartic moments for thousands of other Japanese Americans (mostly Nisei) through the commission hearings and the redress movement. Once the spell of silence that had been cast over their community was lifted the Sansei were also able to address their own inherited trauma.

As I have shown in this chapter, the effects of the internment on the Sansei were varied. Some responded with an urgent desire for educating others, especially the younger generations, some vented their anger through poetry. Some wrote novels expressing their appreciation for the sacrifices made for them and others wrote novels as a form of cathartic expression of their own pain and frustration. Many Sansei learned to merge the American ideals of equality and justice with the Japanese ideals of endurance and determination to fight on behalf of those discriminated against, as they had been discriminated against on such a terrifying scale in the past. One Sansei survey participant mentioned that he was still (in 2004) angry at the U.S. government but it:

motivated me to seek higher and higher positions in management where I could reduce discrimination and institute a leadership style that was democratic, participative and emphasized respect for the individual regardless of ethnicity or sex. Because of [the] impact of incarceration, I have spoke out against management or groups when I thought people were treated unfairly.
The participant was very vocal with his children about his experiences because he wanted them to “stand up for justice.” He felt that those in America who did not physically resemble the powerful majority were often considered to be second-class citizens and he refused to accept that as a legitimate opinion. The effects of those kinds of racist attitudes are palpable in David Mura’s self-identity as a Sansei man in contemporary America which I will discuss in my next chapter.

Notes
1 http://mcel.pacific.edu/as/students/intern/interview.html Date accessed: 29th September 2005.
2 Also known as Tippex, or liquid paper.
4 Another poem, also entitled “Manzanar” and also performed at the 1977 Manzanar pilgrimage, was written by Sansei writer, actor and director Lane Nishikawa. His final stanza also embraced the notion of the permanence of Manzanar on his soul:
Manzanar
you became an experience
that followed me home
it is with me now
it will never leave my soul and
I will be back

..............
to become a part of you
as you become a part of me. (2004: 33)
5 This is the phrase that Inada used in his preface to Legends From Camp.
6 I translated these lines using the same nomenclature that Hayashida used in the first two lines.
7 Hereinafter referred to as 9/11.
8 Mitsuye Yamada’s daughter Jeni wrote the essay “Legacy of Silence II” as a sequel to her mother’s essay that I discussed in Chapter Six. Jeni, like her mother, became an activist after she discovered the truth about her family’s history and she raised her own children to challenge social inequities as well. She wrote, “Children in the next generation have to grapple with issues of identity. Many of these children, like my own sons, are biracial or multiracial. To what extent will the ethnic history be preserved and passed on by a generation that draws just part of its identity from the Japanese American experience? . . . In our family the Japanese internment camp experience has contributed to a consciousness and an activism that span the generations. We have only begun to move beyond silence.” (2001: 59-60)
9 See page 92 for a description of the ‘Lost Battalion.’
11 Image from Relocation and Revisions: The Japanese American Internment Considered. May 10 – July 5, 1992. Long Beach, California: Long Beach Museum of Art, 17. All further images from the same exhibition are taken from this brochure.
12 Shoji screens are typical Japanese sliding doors with paper panels set into a wooden frame.
13 Interestingly, in June 1943, at roughly the same time that the loyalty questionnaires were distributed, Superman ‘visited’ the internment camps. In a storyline that ran for six days per week for eight weeks from the 28th June to the 21st August, Superman, as Clark Kent, and Lois Lane visited ‘Camp Carok.’ Superman foiled an escape attempt by the disloyal Japanese there and he and Lois decided to write a piece together to call for increased resistance again the Japanese. (Chang, 1993: 37-60) This, of course, served to fuel the already-feverish anti-Japanese sentiment in much of America.
15 Grandfather.
16 Mochizuki’s third picture book, entitled Passage to Freedom, depicted the then little-known story of Chiune Sugihara told through the eyes of his young son. Sugihara was responsible, through his posting as diplomat in Lithuania during the Second World War, for saving hundreds of lives during the Holocaust.
17 There are no page numbers in Heroes.
18 White person.
20 He reflected upon the differences between the Nisei and Sansei and the difficulty they had of processing their trauma – another motivating factor behind his contribution to the movement. In a
personal email, he wrote, “I know from my own experience as a young boy in the camps and coming out of camp that we, the children of the camps, assimilated the psychic experiences of wartime and post-war years very differently than our parents and elders. In some ways, we were better equipped to survive, although I’m not so sure that our psychic survival was all that smashing. In some ways, I find many in my generation and my parents’ generation still attempting to process the experiences of sixty years ago. Sometimes I think of Wordsworth’s lines. . . ‘the world is too much with us’ . . . and read them very differently as I think about the internment experience.” (2004)

21 The character of Eiji was inspired by Sakamoto’s uncle who also died in camp after an accident. He became a mythical, tragic figure for Sakamoto (as Eiji was for Asako), all the more so because he died without a country or a home.

22 ‘ne?’ is a Japanese term that is used at the end of a statement to turn that statement into a question usually requiring agreement. It has a variety of similar meanings, depending on the statement preceding it. It can mean ‘Isn’t that so?’ or ‘Don’t you agree?’ or ‘Right?’

23 An essay by Marlene Goldman revealed the significance of this phrase. Its colloquial usage described the painful state of drug addiction and in the 1940s, when its usage was first recorded, it was linked with Asians. ‘Monkey’ and ‘Chinaman’ were interchangeable in this phrase to indicate the uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawals. To many white Americans at that time, Chinese and Japanese were also interchangeable, so Asako dreamt of literally carrying her father/Japanese man/Chinese man/monkey on her back. See Goldman, 2002: 377.

24 There is another occasion described in the novel that illustrates the problematic shift between languages and generations at that time, resulting in an ironic misunderstanding by a white American guard who assumed that the Issei father was instructing his Nisei son on some act of sabotage in Japanese. Jack’s friend Henry, also of the 442nd, visited his father who was imprisoned in Crystal City, Texas for the last time before he was to be shipped out. Henry recalled, with a sense of irony, at having to remove his soldier’s uniform to be searched. He was astounded to hear most other Japanese at that camp speaking Spanish, as most of them had been relocated there from South America. Henry’s father, who did not speak English particularly well, was now surrounded by another even more unfamiliar language. Henry sat down and his father “mouthed the unfamiliar English words, ‘I am fine. I am fed and taking care,’ before he broke the rules and switched to Japanese. He got out, ‘Fight for your country. Fight with honor, or don’t come back at all,’ before the guards dragged him away.” (Rizzuto, 2002: 164) In Japanese, those lines would read, “Okuni no tame tatakae, rippani tatakae, iyashikumo kikan narazu.” (Translated with the help of my mother, Noriko Goudie.)

28 See Appendix Six.
29 All participants in my survey will remain anonymous.
Chapter Nine

The Legacy of Shame: The Works of David Mura

What is it to write a ‘history’ of a people? Is it to gather up individual stories and fit them together into a logical, coherent structural whole? But what if the stories are all lost, if those who tell them have been silenced? And no one actually lives a story; a story is a sequence of events which can be arranged as a romance, a tragedy, a comedy, depending upon the viewpoint of the teller, who is constricted and guided by a number of biases. Is the story of the Japanese-Americans a comedy? A triumph? Does the reconciliation of the Nisei with America represent a romance? Or is it a tragedy, followed by a satire, where each identity is tinged with irony, the false fit? (Mura, 1991: 294)

9.1 The unsexing of the Asian male

David Mura, Sansei poet, writer, actor and performance artist, spent decades struggling with questions concerning his identity and sexuality and how they were inextricably linked to his racial heritage. He felt that, as a Japanese American Sansei growing up in an all-white middle-class suburb in America in the 1950s and 1960s, his notions of identity and heterosexuality were repressed and diminished. He questioned whether that was a result of the subjugation of the Issei and Nisei during the war years and the self-repression of their experiences for decades after the camps were shut. During the 1990s he wrote two books – the first was a memoir which chronicled the year (1984) he spent in Japan with his Caucasian wife entitled Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei, the second was an autobiography that followed five years later, Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality & Identity which specifically examined those facets of his life more intently. Throughout his professional life he also continued to write poetry, much of which I discuss in this chapter.

Growing up in a white Jewish suburb, he remembered becoming inured to the verbal taunts and various acts of rejection he received in high school. Interestingly he wrote of one particular insulter, “he was a Jew. He should have known better the power of the word.” (1991: 123) Mura’s words reveal his desire for marginalised groups to empathise and support, not taunt and abuse one another in the same manner that each
had previously experienced. This line is similar to that in Okada’s No-No Boy\(^1\) when Ichiro was verbally abused by a group of young black men in his old neighbourhood and he thought to himself, “[p]ersecution in the drawl of the persecuted.” (2001: 5)

As a consequence of his family’s influence and the normal, adolescent desire to fit in, Mura worked hard to insist on a definition according to his ‘Americanness’ and therefore shunned any Japanese affiliations. As a teenager he assumed a white, middle-class identity and remembered feeling complimented when a white friend told him he considered him white; he saw it as “a sign I’d made it.” (1996b: 83) But before he’d considered his self image as being a result of his family’s suppression of camp discussions and their feelings of shame, as a young boy he had already linked ethnicity to sexuality, a relationship that continued far into his adulthood. He vividly remembered discovering his father’s hidden stash of pornographic magazines – magazines that, at that time, only displayed images of white women:

I’m twelve, home from school
with a slight fever. I slide back the door
. . . . I spill the photo
millions of men, white black, yellow, have seen,
though the body before me is white, eighteen:
Her breasts are enormous, almost frightening. . . . (1995a: 7)

He would henceforth always associate sexual desirability with white women, an association that he candidly admitted contributed to his attraction to his wife, whom he described as “three-quarters WASP and one-quarter Hungarian Jew.” (1996a: C.9) He claimed that his desire for his wife “cannot be separated from the ways the culture has inculcated me with standards of white beauty” (1996a: C.9) and the way that the Asian American male body was marked by a history of oppression and emasculation.

Before he was married Mura immersed himself completely in a self-destructive world of alcohol, drugs, pornography and promiscuity, a reaction, he said, against the sexual place assigned him as an Asian American male in the 1970s: Asexual. In an article entitled “How America Unsexes the Asian Male” written in 1996, he identified the Asian male stereotypes in America as commonly occupying a non-sexual, non-threatening position. The Eastern mythology was feminine thus, too, was the Eastern man, a theory most clearly supported by characters such as the transvestite Madame Butterfly. He cited examples of the desexed Asian male as either the perverted and ridiculous Japanese figures lusting after unattainable white women in Breakfast at
Tiffany’s and Fargo or the studious skinny nerds that defined Asian American boys in
innumerable mainstream American films. Indeed, “Asian Americans never laugh the
laughter of recognition because we are systematically erased from view. We never see
ourselves portrayed the way we see ourselves.” (Kondo, 1996: 103) Subconsciously
wishing to negate these stereotypes, Mura’s desires focussed specifically on ‘attaining’
white women because “I thought if I was with a white woman, then I would be as
‘good’ as a white guy.” (1996a: C.9) Thus his libidinal desires were inextricably linked
to the racialization of his body. It was not until years later did he realise that it was not
just the media and popular culture that was responsible for his mindset – his own ethnic
community, indeed his own family, had been subjecting him and other Sansei to
similarly debilitating messages also. These messages, communicated both verbally and
non-verbally are, in large part, a result of the internment, a factor he examined in his
autobiography which I will discuss in detail later on.

9.2 “. . . blood was a racist, a fascist notion.” -Mura

An important step towards recognising the significance of the internment is
evident in his memoirs. Prior to his first trip to Japan in 1984, he had steadfastly
insisted upon his ‘Americanness’, declaring a stronger affinity for France than Japan.
But his year in Japan “wrenched him out of his American self and forced him to deal
with his Japanese roots” (Calvillo, 2003: 53) and he examined why he had discarded his
Japanese self. That was not easy for him, as is clear in a tale he related about his
teacher in Japan:

  He always expected more from me than from Daniel, a mime
  trained in movement. ‘You have Japanese genes,’ Okinaka
  would tell me. ‘You are Japanese in your blood. You should
  understand these things.’ My ingrained American outlook
  rebelled at this. Blood had nothing to do with ability; blood was
  a racist, a fascist notion. (1991: 137)

Despite some cultural obstacles, Mura began to realise the great significance of his
journey which reversed the trajectory of his Issei immigrant grandfather. He defined his
grandfather as a man whose memories of his real home, Japan, kept him anchored
through trying times and conversely defined his father as a man who sacrificed
everything to make America their home. But that left Mura thoroughly disoriented
throughout his formative years. Although he defined himself as an American, he knew
that the majority of his fellow Americans did not. The conflicting beliefs of his
grandfather and father reinforced Mura’s feeling of displacement and made him realise
that “the new home – in my case, a Jewish suburb – is no home; is in fact, for me an absurdity, a sham, and that the old home is lost in unreality.” (1991: 33)

Thus it would be crucial to monitor how he reacted to his year in Japan. His recordings of his year there “unsettles the premises that undergird traditional anthropology” (Li, 1998: 141) as it threw the traditional anthropological roles of the East and West off-balance. Although he was technically an occidental investigator travelling to Asia, like so many before him, the significant difference lay in his oriental ancestry which allowed him to identify with the ‘natives’ in a way other occidental explorers could not. Despite his cries of blood as a racist, fascist notion, he conceded that he felt great happiness at his invisibility, his anonymity in Tokyo. He even relished the fact that the tables had been turned on his wife who was now feeling awkward and uneasy with the sudden, unwanted attention caused by her ‘otherness’. Mura reflected upon his changed notion of sexuality whilst in Japan:

My sexuality didn’t seem to be tied up with some wound. It seemed – I don’t know – more natural. It wasn’t just being in a culture where Asian men weren’t looked at as geeks or just bucktoothed slant-eyes. I realized that if I had grown up there, I wouldn’t have had to keep guessing why a woman might not be interested in me, if it had anything to do with race. After all, they couldn’t reject me because I was Japanese. (1996b: 240)

Mura’s experiences in Japan allowed him to create a new space for himself, distanced from the cultures of both the homeland of his birthplace and the homeland of his ancestors. He refused to accept Japan as his homeland regained but approached it instead as a “site of defamiliarization, in order to question the received relations of race and place, national space, and individual consciousness across the Pacific Rim.” (Li, 1998: 141) This site of defamiliarization is also the site of the transmission of trauma, the site where his traumatic core exists.

9.3 A renewed appreciation of his ancestors

After his year in Japan he was able to forge a more informed definition of self-identification and this is where he began to examine the effect of the internment upon his sense of identity. Having now experienced a more ‘authentic’ Japanese culture, he was able to decipher and understand his parents’ and grandparents’ reactions to the camp and their behaviour afterwards.
Some went to the camps demonstrating their rage, others directed it inward. And by their quiet obedience, by their decision not to protest, by their willingness to fight in the service, by their efforts to educate themselves, by their hard work, the Nisei did, as the history books tell it, become part of America. By assimilating, the Nisei shed what had made them guilty: their Japaneseness. Is it any wonder that the next generation would inherit, instead of Japaneseness, a sense of shame? (1991: 217-218)

Mura’s altered sense of identification with both the Issei and the Nisei as a result of his time spent in Japan was expressed in poems offered in his first anthology, After We Lost Our Way, first published in 1989. The poem “Suite for Grandfather & Grandmother Uyemura: Relocation” was dedicated to his Aunt Ruth, the only relative who spoke openly with him about the camps. His father claimed that camp was a time of fun and baseball, his mother claimed that she was too young to remember something that wasn’t very important. His understanding of camp and his grandparents therefore came from Aunt Ruth’s stories which served as inspiration for this poem. It depicted his grandparents as different to many other Issei labourers and their picture brides; theirs was a relationship that seemed more honest and tender:

[the picture brides] burst into tears: chests heaving, their lungs sucked in the air, and the New World tasted of salt, how the photos had lied.

But he, he’s so handsome he’s fetched her in person, holds her as America rises and falls ahead.

(Last night in their cabin, still shy, she fumbled at his collar button; he unravelled her black silk obi). (11)

Unlike many other Issei men, Mura’s grandfather sent a real photo of himself to his new bride thus beginning their relationship with honesty. His hold on her as “America rises and falls ahead” does not just refer to the pitch of the ship; it is an analogy for his support for her during the forthcoming years of successes and failures, triumphs and the debilitating lows in the camps. Twenty years after their first night together, Mura’s grandparents were successful with their greenhouses and flowers (despite his grandfather’s fondness for gambling) and raised very Americanized children who “shoot coppers, hit homers, buy Photoplay”(12) despite the grandmother living in a world of “udon, / utsukemono, tea in pale green cups.”(12) The grandmother retained all her ‘Japaneseness’ while raising her children as Americans; as I have shown this was in fact the source of a great deal of intergenerational conflict.
Then, suddenly, they were imprisoned. Mura does not go into detail about the evacuation – “And then it’s Pearl, Heart Mountain”(12) – preferring instead to focus on their relationship. It remained tender and sweet; the grandfather folded a paper crane out of a napkin for her, she smiled and “forgets that moment, barbed wire and guards.”(12) A year later, when the war was over and they were in a cheap hotel in Chicago, her cancer got worse and she passed away. She revisited him in his dreams:

. . . He offers her
mo**ch**i, puts his palm to her forehead.
 Touches only air. When she reappears
in the blue shade of a cypress, she’s saying
like a music box just opened, it’s child’s
play, isn’t it, this living, this song? He
wakes, confused. . . . (12-13)

Her reappearance in the shade of a cypress is reminiscent of the emergence of Clorinda’s soul which had been imprisoned in a tree in *Gerusalemme Liberata*. The grandmother’s reappearance by the tree constituted the grandfather’s double wounding, in much the same way that Clorinda’s admonishment was Tancred’s double wounding. Tancred unwittingly murdered Clorinda, carried the trauma with him and repeated the initial trauma when he cut the tree / her soul. The grandfather in the poem was unable to save his wife firstly from the trauma of internment and then from the cancer that ravaged her body. Her reappearance in his dream resurrected his initial trauma and his ‘retraumatisation’ was reflected in a haiku he wrote some years later which alluded to the relationship of his late wife to the cypress. He had returned to Japan and sat in quiet contemplation and “thinks of a woman” (13) who, as is clear by the haiku, was his late wife. “bonsai tree / like me you are useless / and a little sad.” (13) Varieties of cypress were often used to make bonsai, thus connecting the bonsai (and the cypress) to his wife. He felt that despite her death and his continuing life, he was as “useless” as she and, without her presence, he was sad and lonely. He felt that their lives had ultimately been as futile and pointless as a bonsai tree, as a cypress, and his sadness is palpable when he realised that he had returned, a sad old man, to his former homeland where, ironically, the bonsai were prized.

After a long marriage and a successful business, Mura’s grandfather transformed from a confident man, “Cuban cigar jammed / in his jaw” (11-12) to a sad and lonely old man, “limbs folded / with an old man’s muscleless elegance” (13) who had been unable to protect his family from the trauma of camp and was ultimately unable to save
his wife’s life. He relived his grief and shame through his dreams and expressed his pain through poetry. Mura’s portrayal of his grandfather certainly fits the general portrayal of *Issei* men after the war as “broken old men” as Masumoto described them.\(^6\) Mura had sought, and found, a point of identification, of similarity, with his *Issei* grandparents – he identified with their victimisation. And the fact that they were utterly defeated by their internment experience generated more sympathy for the *Issei* than for the *Nisei*:

> Despite the obstacles in their path, the *Nisei*, our parents, were in some sense able to succeed in America, to enter the middle class. We love the *Issei* more unequivocally because they were defeated. They never recovered from the camps. They verify that they camps were horrible, represented an overwhelming power and authority that could crush the spirit. Thus, the weakness of the *Issei* allows me to identify myself as one of the downtrodden, one of the powerless. (1991: 226)

He felt a different kind of relationship with the *Nisei*, as shown through his poems, “An Argument: On 1942” and “A *Nisei* Picnic: From An Album” both in *After We Lost Our Way*. Despite their external appearance as successfully assimilated figureheads for the model minority dream, there was clearly an underlying tension and trauma that was struggling to emerge. As Mura said, the successful assimilation view “wraps things up too neatly and hides the rough edges, the doubts and lingering bitterness, whatever would not make the *Nisei* an American success story, a paean to patriotism.” (1991: 218) His poems illuminate the concealed traumas.

### 9.4 Written on behalf of . . .

The poem “An Argument: On 1942” was subtitled “For my mother” but could be read as ‘on behalf of my mother’. Her reluctance to discuss the camps was evident in her response to Mura’s incessant questioning yet, by writing this poem, he gave her, and other *Nisei* women, a voice.

- No, no, no, she tells me. Why bring it back?
The camps are over. (Also overly dramatic.)
Forget *shoyu*-stained *furoshiki*, *mochi* on a stick:
You’re like a terrier, David, gnawing a bone, an old, old trick . . .

Mostly we were bored. Women cooked and sewed, men played blackjack; dug gardens, a *benjo*.
Who noticed barbed wire, guards in the towers?
We were children, hunting stones, birds, wild flowers.

Yes, Mother hid tins of *utsukemono*\(^7\) and eel
beneath the bed. And when the last was peeled,
clamped tight her lips, growing thinner and thinner.
But cancer not the camps made her throat blacker.

... And she didn’t die then. ... after the war, in St. Paul,
you weren’t even born. Oh I know, I know, it’s all
part of your job, your way, but why can’t you glean
how far we’ve come, how much I can’t recall –

David, it was so long ago – how useless it seems. ... (10)

Although many Nisei, Mura’s parents among them, espoused a rapid and complete
assimilation into white society, her frequent use of Japanese terminology disclosed her
still-apparent affiliations to her Japanese heritage. The Nisei was the generation that
was caught between two cultures and the flickering switch between English lines and
Japanese words mark the site of his mother’s trauma of being torn between America and
Japan. This, of course, is a Caruthian reading of the language-switch, one that I feel
works very well in this poem. The language switch in the second stanza clearly defines
the location of trauma in its words by switching from the ordinary, uneventful chores
written in English to the extraordinary and distasteful chore of digging their own benjo
(toilet) written, significantly, in its Japanese translation. In a day of common, mundane
tasks that took place in every household in America (cooking, sewing, gardening), the
one chore that did not ‘fit’ this routine was written / spoken in Japanese. It reflects the
way that all things Japanese (including themselves) did not fit into the dominant white
society.

The final stanza, through the use of pauses and hesitations, emphasises Mura’s
mother’s uncertainty and distress about the past, about her mother’s death and her clear
discomfort at her memories being forcibly recalled by her too-inquisitive son. The final
line recalls the grandfather’s haiku and his sadness at how useless he felt. It was an
emotion shared by survivors of the camp, a bond that was denied to Mura through their
silence and, therefore, their exclusion. So while the Sansei continued to suffer from
external, racially-motivated exclusionary tactics, they had to contend with exclusionary
tactics from within their own families as well. The dialogue between Mura and his
mother is a portrayal of the intergenerational lack of communication that occurred in
thousands of Japanese American homes across the country between the Nisei and the
Sansei. The mother’s dramatic monologue revealed the deeply embedded denial of her
trauma, of her conscious desire to leave that trauma suppressed. A successful
suppression was integral to successful assimilation which the Nisei hoped would, like
their efforts on the battlefields, prove their loyalty and their validity as worthy Americans but this poem, and the next one I discuss, show that their efforts thus far had been in vain.

The poem “A Nisei Picnic: From An Album” is representative of the effects of hegemony on the identity formation of the Nisei and Sansei. In the poem Mura clearly idolised his veteran uncle who, despite his heroic war efforts, was still discriminated against upon his return to America. But his uncle sighed those familiar words, “Shikatta ga nai”, ever striving for acceptance, unwilling to face confrontation in his own homeland:

Here is my uncle, a rice ball in his mouth,  
a picnic basket (ants crawl in the slats) at his side.  
Eventually he ballooned like Buddha,  
over three hundred pounds. I used to stroke  
his immense belly, which was scarred by shrapnel.  
It made me feel patriotic.  
Once, all night, he lay in a ditch near the Danube,  
Shoved in his intestines with his hands.  
When he came back, he couldn’t rent an apartment.  
“Shikatta ga nai,” he said. Can’t be helped. (14)

The resignation of his uncle and his aunt who, in the second stanza, resorted quite unsuccessfully to raising minks in her cold basement for extra money, stood in opposition to Mura’s father in the third stanza whom he described as “the one pumping his bicep. / (Sleek, untarnished, he still swims two miles a day.)” (14) He projected himself as having been undamaged, untarnished by the camp, but by the end of the stanza, we see that he too carried his trauma as a stain on his psyche which he passed on to his son through acts of physical violence. The father had sacrificed too much in his quest for acceptance, “He / worked too hard to be white. He beat his son.” (14)

Mura’s voice emerges in the final short stanza with a duality of childlike confusion and adult anger and frustration at the Nisei’s resignation and silent acceptance:

Shown here, my head like a moon dwarfing my body  
as I struggle to rise. Who are these grown-ups?  
Why are they laughing? How can I tear  
the bewilderment from their eyes? (14)

His voice reveals a desire to hear their stories, a desire to shake them out of their quiet acquiescence. The final lines serve as a warning for the scenario in the poem that
follows in his collection, a poem that berates against the legacy of racial stereotyping that needed to be challenged.

“Song for Uncle Tom, Tonto and Mr. Moto” utilised the voice of Kitsune⁸, the sneaky fox of Japanese folklore, to embody the cliché of the inscrutable Japanese. Mura also included other ethnically-typecast and marginalised cultures in his diatribe against an antiquated vision of race. The poem is virtually devoid of any punctuation and it races through various hateful images such as, “Yes, we shingles, the tuberculars, the descendants of plague / we live in the monstrous sarcophagi of your white cultivated heart” (15) and:

Witch rage and primal cohesion
an inveterate blackness
a torrential demonry
an infinite journey
from kissing ass (15)

The poem crescendos to a dramatic, almost shrill, climax which is very similar in tone and manner to the final chapter, the father’s ‘Confession’, in Otsuka’s novel When the Emperor was Divine. Mura’s lines similarly recount the ‘confessions’ of the invading yellow/black/brown peril:

and we are all good niggers, good gooks and japs, good spics and rice eaters
saying memsab, sahib, bwana, boss-san, señor, father, heartthrob
oh honored and most unceasing, oh devisor and provider of our own obsequious, ubiquitous ugliness, which stares at you baboon-like, banana like
dwarf-like, tortoise-like, dirt-like, slant-eyed, kink-haired, ashen and pansied
and brutally unredeemable, we are whirling about you, tartars of the air all the urinating, tarantula grasping, ant multiplying, succubused, hothouse hordes
yes, it us, it us, we, we knockee, yes, sir, massa, boss-san, we tearree down your door! (16)

Mura mimicked and parodied the racist, dehumanising rhetoric of colonialism and imperialism. It was a call to arms for all peoples of colour in the United States to redefine themselves and rally together to challenge negative stereotypes.

I believe this poem personifies Mura’s psychological transformation by the end of his year in Japan. As Li described it, Mura had changed from a “single-minded American, though a racialized alterity, eager for national incorporation, to a
multicentered cosmopolitan U.S. citizen cognizant of his rights and commitments [who] represents the birth of a diasporic sensibility.” (1998: 149) His burgeoning interest in the internment as a site of personal trauma was beginning as he developed an awareness of the relationship between individual and nation, blood and birth rights, ancestral longing and at-home belonging, real places and imagined communities. His work through the mid-nineties reflected his transformation both in his poetry and his autobiography.

9.5 The Internment of Desire

A precursor to his autobiography was the essay “The Internment of Desire” published in an anthology edited by Japanese Hawaiian Yonsei Garrett Hongo. This essay, much of which reappears in Mura’s autobiography, focussed on the link between an inherited sense of shame and inferiority, stemming from the internment, and his own sexual identification. He had clearly moved on from his uninformed anger and frustration at his parents – “we have to consider the great shame many Nisei felt about that experience” (Mura, 1995b: 280) – but was still aware that the manner in which his parents dealt with their shame had serious repercussions on his sense of identity which he linked to the formation of sexual desire. He said that while it is well known that:

if you repress one memory, other things get repressed too. Because memories reside not simply in the mind or spirit but also in the body. And prejudice and racism reside not simply in racial slurs or job discrimination but also in the ways all Americans feel about our bodies, the skin which surrounds us. (1995b: 280)

what was not so recognised was how the socially created definitions of race affected the formation of sexual desire. Of course, this was a subject matter that was entirely taboo in Mura’s home, as well as in the homes of most other Japanese Americans, due to the very private nature of the Japanese character. As Mura discussed with Roger Matsuo, an older Sansei political science professor, his parents couldn’t discuss their shame because the very nature of their culturally-specific shame was silence.

At the end of the war, my parents left the camps wanting to prove to America that they were ‘true’ Americans, whiter than the whites. Any mention of color would have spoiled that illusion, challenged their sense of acceptance. . . . ‘White is better, we are inferior. There’s a color line in America – don’t speak of it and perhaps it will vanish’ – no one ever said this out loud in my family. But I know that message was there. (1996b: 244)
Mura’s own way of breaking that silence was through his writing. He knew it was impossible to fully assimilate into the homogenising dominant society, much less ‘outwhite the whites’ because he would always be unmistakably ‘Other’. His autobiography recounts the road he travelled upon as he struggled to come to terms with his interwoven notions of race, identity and sexuality.

Mura found it interesting that nearly all Nisei married other Japanese Americans, even after the final anti-miscegenation laws were lifted in 1967 yet, in the subsequent generation, his generation, the majority of Sansei married ‘out’, mainly to whites. Mura, as we know, married a white woman and he attained a realisation why he desired white women in his identification with Jean Veneuse in Franz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks. Veneuse was trapped in a world of self-hatred because he had accepted that his blackness was a flaw and part of his quest to elevate himself to the level of the white man was to conquer white flesh:

. . . I recognize in Veneuse’s wish to blame each flaw and defeat on the color of his skin my own explanations of my sexual insecurity: I was a Japanese in a white world. Viewing sexuality in this way, growing up in a white community, I felt that every girl who rejected me somehow reaffirmed both my sense of a color line and my sense of inferiority. (1995b: 285)

But why were his feelings of inferiority so strong? Yes, he grew up in a predominantly white neighbourhood and was bombarded with negatively stereotyped images of Asian men, but the biggest influence was his parents. Their unconsciously transferred negative impact stemmed from the fact that the racial climate they had to contend with was far more severe than that in which he grew up. The trauma of the camps damaged his parents’ psyche so terribly that they allowed themselves to be burdened with shame:

they did not feel guilt, which comes from a sense of responsibility for one’s actions. Instead they felt shame. . . . then perhaps there lay within the psychic network of my family an unspoken assumption about our color and race. This assumption was communicated silently and unconsciously, as is so much of what is communicated in families. (1995b: 287)

But the silence of his family about the camp, about issues of race or sexuality, was a means of repression and the build-up of cathartic energy would eventually find a way to erupt, to ease the pressure. All that was needed was a trigger mechanism to force the recollection of the shame or, as Mura phrased it, the “unexamined rage.” (1995b: 288)
Mura found an outlet for his own trauma, his own feelings of shame, inferiority and self-doubt that was not as self-destructive as his prior penchant for alcohol, drugs and promiscuity. He used poetry to provide a voice for those who could not or would not speak, a voice for those who had been ignored and marginalised.

The gulf I write against is not just my parents’ silence, but the political and historical and cultural silence induced by the camps, a generational wound and amnesia buried in so many of the bodies and psyches of Japanese America. . . . America did not want to hear their tale, and told them in so many ways it was unimportant, shameful, something to be forgotten. . . . The secrets of my family, the secrets of this country, the secrets of race in our history, are all intertwined, and there are powerful forces arrayed against remembering and telling, unravelling the truths that have shaped our lives. In my writing, I am trying to make central what is marginal, to re-create and reveal what others say should not be spoken of. (1996b: 19-20)

For example, in his volume of poetry After we Lost our Way, he gave his mother and his grandfather voices through his poetry. He also gave an Issei man separated from his wife a voice via his letters to her in “Letters from Poston Relocation Camp (1942-45).” The Issei man postulated on what it was about them that white America hated so much:

I think that’s what the whites hate,
our beauty, the way we carry the land
and the life of plants inside us,
seedlings and fruit, the flowers
and the flush tree, fields freed of weeds. (6)

This was a commentary on the injustice of the internment. It was not a case of ‘military necessity,’ it was more likely due to the economic and agricultural successes of the Japanese farmers and the threat they posed to white agrarians. The man wrote candidly of his fears for their future and the prospects of the men in battle. “I’m frightened. So many dying” (7) and he heard their anguished cries in the night winds. His final words were prophetic for the effect of the silence of the Japanese Americans on the future generations after the war:

all I can do is moan.
And yet, if I didn’t tell you,
I would be angry at you for not listening,
blaming you for what I haven’t spoken.

I feel so poor now.
These words are all I own. (8-9)
For many Japanese Americans, this final line was ironically accurate. They lost their land, homes, businesses; many had to start all over again. Yet one thing they did own was their voice, their words. Tragically, however, most did not utilise the power of their voice to educate and inform their children, thinking their silence would protect them instead. As Mura said, the nature of shame is silence. And it was that very silence that affected Mura so profoundly, as is evident in his second book of poetry, Colors of Desire and in his autobiography.

As we know from his poem “A Nisei Picnic: From An Album” Mura’s uncle served in the 442nd. In the poem “The Blueness of the Day” he gave his uncle a voice from the battlefields of France. His uncle went to battle with another boy, Shig, from the same barracks at camp, but envied the way Shig’s family supported him. When Shig left, his father took him aside and said, “This is your country. Make me proud.”

When Mura’s uncle left, the grandfather in contrast “spat at me: ‘Bakka, when they let me out, then / I’ll sign the oath.’ ” This story, told to Mura by his Aunt Ruth, made him identify with his grandfather more than his father again: “Certainly, he never bought into the dream of America the way my father did.”

Mura’s disgust with the way the Nisei strived for the white American dream is made clear in another poem, “The Affair: I – His Version” in which he described a Japanese American man’s pursuit and conquer of a married white woman.

Certainly, this was a state of affairs I’d arranged so many times before it inevitably brings to mind the repetition compulsion. But what initial trauma was I repeating?

Wasn’t what I sought, suffered, desperately needed, [fashioned by] the fascination and seduction of my father, of Japanese America, by the all white American dream (I almost wrote ‘whore’)? I mean not so much in the later years, when Nisei after Nisei settled into a comfortable, seemingly colorless bliss of suburbia; but in those years just before and after the war. . . . (56)

The Niseis way of dealing with the trauma of internment was to embody the American dream, to settle in suburban bliss, to be “whiter than the whites.” Mura’s way of dealing with the feelings of inferiority inherited from their silence was to embody (that is, in his case, to conquer the corporeal) the all-white American dream / whore. The Nisei thought that by possessing all the trappings of the American dream that they
would prove their worth, whereas Mura thought he would prove his worth by conquering white American flesh. Clearly the initial trauma that he questioned in the poem was the trauma of the internment which served as the catalyst for his own feelings of shame and inferiority. These emotions were exacerbated by certain events that occurred throughout his life, perpetuating the intensity of the compulsion to repeat.

The poem “Colors of Desire” was written from his own perspective at different moments in his life but, by imagining the history of others in his life, he gave them a voice as well. He constructed a history for himself, and possibly for other Sansei men who felt their sense of personal history was inaccurate and misinformed also, by omitting the narrative of the victors and using the voices of the disenfranchised:

I read Benjamin’s essay on how history is the tale of the victors. He talked about the way the readers of history identify with the victors, the tellers of the tale who make themselves the heroes. ‘That means... there are other tales to tell. History is a construct and is created by an interested party, and the interested party is always the powerful and the rich.’ (1996b: 158)

“Colors of Desire” illustrates how the role of men with power was so clearly inscribed into Mura’s father when he was forced to make a decision where to sit on a bus when he was permitted to leave Jerome camp on a weekend pass:

[he] stepped on a bus to find white riders motioning, ‘Sit here, son,’ and in the rows beyond, a half dozen black faces, waving him back, ‘Us colored folks got to stick together.’ How did he know where to sit? (4)

In his autobiography, Mura said the question of where to sit was written in response to an article written by Bill Hosokawa about the confusion of where these yellow-skinned Americans belonged in the polarised world of the South. Most Nisei chose to sit in the front with the whites, making the decision, consciously or not, to gravitate towards the power. “Don’t associate yourself with those who are more oppressed than you; don’t become partners with the powerless if you can avoid it,” (1996b: 237) wrote Mura but this equation of whites with power and their inclination towards them as a safety measure was directly linked to Mura’s fascination with pornography and the unabashed stereotyping and exclusionary acts that persisted in the 1970s.

... And how is it, thirty-five years later, I found myself sitting in a dark theater, watching Behind the Green Door with a dozen anonymous men? On the screen
a woman sprawls on a table, stripped, the same one on the Ivory Snow soap box, a baby on her shoulder, smiling her blond, practically pure white smile.

. . . .
 Lean, naked, black, streaks of white paint on his chest and face, a necklace of teeth, it’s almost comical, this fake garb of the jungle, Africa and all-America. . . (4-5)

The white woman was further ‘whitened’ as the symbol of absolute purity, of innocence (particularly with the baby on her shoulder), of unattainable desire (earlier in the poem she is identified as a “kidnapped body”) and the black man is symbolic of an overt, exaggerated and animalistic sexual stereotype. When Mura left the theatre in a hash-laced haze, he was filled with a sense of rage at ‘his’ non-inclusion:

I don’t know what I did afterwards. Only, night after night, I will see those bodies, black and white (and where am I, the missing third?), like a talisman, a rageful, unrelenting release. (5)

Mura noticed that the response to these particular lines when he read this poem at various lectures and workshops around the country varied depending on the racial makeup of the audience. Only when there were Asians in the audience did they discern what the missing figure was from the binary opposition of black and white. Mura’s hyperawareness of the “missing third” can be linked back to his childhood when his father would quietly accept racial taunts only to explode with rage later on and beat his sons. A few years after one particular beating, he recalled finding his father’s pornographic magazine, an event I mentioned briefly earlier, and the images of white women and the power of her image began to solidify his formation of sexual and racial poetics:

. . . I spill the photo
 millions of men, white, black, yellow, have seen, though the body before me is white, eighteen. . . (7)

The trauma that Mura inherited that so profoundly affected his identity formation was, for his parents, an unrepresentable and unarticulatable event. Yet Mura, through his poetry, revealed its ability to be represented and representative of those who shared the same trauma in their imagined community. His narratives gave birth to the trauma of his parents and grandparents. As a young adult writing his poetry, his questions about camp still unanswered, he could only imagine the events of his parents’ history and memory:

I will have to imagine it, again and again,
just as I have tried to imagine the lives
of all those who have entered these lines. . . (9)

His imagination and construction of past racial parameters worry him about the future of his yet-unborn daughter. He pictured his child growing within his wife’s swelling belly and reflected upon what his daughter’s future held if nothing was done to reconstruct her own (and his own) history in an honest manner, not told from the perspective of the victors:

As if what is granted erases nothing,
if history remains, untouched, implacable,
as darkness flows up our hemisphere,
her hollow still moves moonward,
small hill on the horizon, swelling,
floating with child, white, yellow,
who knows, who can tell her,

oh why must it matter? (9)

Yet he knew it did matter. He knew his daughter would have to face discrimination herself one day, “I think how someone / someday will call her gook” (1995a: 91) he wrote in his poem “Gardens we Have Left” and although he felt that had his father spoken, or spoken out, about the internment the way Gordon Hirabayashi had, his sexual desire would not have been linked to his racial inferiority complex which drove him to desire white women which, he implied, would mean that he would not have this half-Japanese child. But his father was not like Hirabayashi and Mura could not change the reality of history. He could, however, alter future perceptions of it for the sake of his daughter:

Had he been my father, had my father spoke once like this, I would not be dabbing shoyu

from the chin of our happa-eyed daughter;
your Pilgrim face could not have compelled me
in quite the same way. (1995a: 93)

He was espousing a concept imbued with a sense of responsibility. He could not continue the legacy of silence passed down to him from his parents, for the sake of his “happa-eyed daughter” so he felt compelled tell his story, interwoven with the narrative of his ancestors:

Telling is a form of healing; the Catholics with their confession,
Freud with his couch, both acknowledge this. To be shriven, to be understood, to be purged. To find the buried, the necessary emotion, and release it. . . . It is like the act of writing, it is
writing. It is what you tell yourself so that you may begin anew, with a different set of imperatives, an altered sense of that you must do. (1996b: 224-225)

Although he did not consciously wish to inflict messages of perceived white supremacy upon his own children, by his 2004 collection of poems Angels For the Burning he recognised the influence of the dominant white culture upon his daughter. In “Darker Desires” he went into her room:

what of my daughter
who clips no photos of Asian guys
to her walls where Angels Cameron, Drew, and Lucy Liu,
toss long locks in the winds of desire

which drives the black girls mad
though no one notices but in hip-hop,

Missy Elliott strutting ‘boys, boys. . . .
black white Puerto Rican Chinese boys’

and ching-chong samples a chorus
wound backwards so no one deciphers? (2004: 65)

Again, the Asian male voice had been excluded from the established binary discourse of black and white. Lucy Liu, the exoticised, feminine Asian woman, had been included with the desired white ‘Angels’ Cameron and Drew yet the Asian male was still excluded from the realm of desirability as dictated by the hegemonic powers at work in American popular media. Although aware of the potential harm for future sons, he was more concerned with the exoticisation of the Asian female in America and the effect that would have on his daughter.

In “Suite for Miss Saigon” Mura worried whether she would become one of the exoticised, fantasised bodies for the white men and did not know if he had done enough to protect her, to educate her:

Within a future I can’t quite change, some man comes on to you in class, a street, or bar, libido hot-wired with all these screenings he denies, though not his desires;

and says how pleased, how absolved, how freely he’s commingled with the other, so unencumbered by impediments of skin, much less lost colonies and wars –
Will you recall, as he will not, Miss Saigon? (2004: 55)

In order to protect his daughter\(^{15}\) should he have been, as a young emerging \textit{Sansei} writer berated against him in 1992, more aggressive in his poetry? The young writer said to Mura:

\begin{quote}
Don’t you see, we’re all too nice. . . . Sometimes I think we’re all numb. Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, you, me, the whole shitload of us. . . . Because it can’t happen again. You’ve got to fight back. But all the while, I know I won’t do it. Because I’m sane, I’m a good JA boy, I’m a model citizen. It’s fucking crazy. And you know, somehow, I think it’s all because of the camps, that it goes back to that. It’s what we’ve inherited. We’re just a bunch of toadies, little Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, always toeing the line. (1996b: 251-252)
\end{quote}

But Mura had reached a level of comprehension that this young writer had not yet reached with regards to his attitude towards why his generation inherited a “Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts” mentality. Mura understood that most of the \textit{Nisei} could not even admit their rage to themselves and they certainly could not have discussed it openly nor sought treatment for it:

\begin{quote}
[Their rage] was stamped down in the camps, in the Japanese concept of \textit{gaman} – enduring, preserving; it was muted by their belief that by fitting in, by forgetting their cultural past, by becoming the model minority, they could assimilate. . . . Yet I know the rage was there, shaping their lives, the world of my childhood. I need only look to my father’s rage to succeed. . . . I failed to consider the public history, to ask how deeply the events of the internment or the forces of assimilation shaped him. (1996b: 252-253)
\end{quote}

As for his own rage, I have already demonstrated instances of escaped trauma and rage in his poetry, as well as a desire for providing a voice for the voiceless. In \textit{Angels for the Burning}, much of his poetry also provided a voice, an outlet for the rage of a variety of victimised Asian groups in America. In a similar vein to the tone he employed in the poem “Song for Uncle Tom, Tonto and Mr. Moto,” the second part of the poem “Two Imperialist Ditties” subtitled “Caliban’s Curse,” also expressed his rage at racial stereotypes and lashed out on behalf of all Asian American men:

\begin{quote}
Oh Mr. Motto Fu Manchu
Kung Fu ninja chopping you
Charlie Chan
chink and jap man
\end{quote}

\textit{“Vincent Chin Murder”}\(^{16}\)
houseboy gardener laundry coolie
Miss Saigon’s chop-chop suey
this is how our balls were banned
this is where they played our parts

fuck their yellow minstrel farce
fuck them in their white white hearts
fuck them till they fall apart
weeping for their white white art (62)

The line “houseboy gardener laundry coolie” is immediately reminiscent of the furious
diatribe of the father in Otsuka’s When the Emperor was Divine as well as Uyematsu’s
heated poem “Lexicon.” Mura’s poem contains an element of sexual-identity
frustration that Otsuka and Uyematsu’s texts lack, thus tying his racial and sexual
identity poetics together. The lack of punctuation, the staccato of the succession of
mono and duo-syllabic words in the first two stanzas build up to the furious crescendo
of the final stanza, punctuated by the alliterative and rhythmic repetition of “fuck their”
and “fuck them,” words spat out in hatred. This is a good example of what Mura meant
when he said that his poetry existed between two poles – one being the aesthetic, the
beautiful, of sublime form and imagery, the other being the stories and darkness of
history, often brutal and unjust:

I think that if poetry gets too far towards the realm of the
aesthetic, the formal, and the beautiful and doesn’t acknowledge
the other side of existence – the history that we live in, the
changes and the darkness of history – then the life goes out of
poetry, and it becomes an escape. (Moyers, 1995: 302)

In a similar vein, Mura discussed his reaction to the internment with his wife,
Susie, and they identified the link between his poetry, the camps, his identity and the
influence of his parents, particularly his father. Mura initially dutifully followed the
model minority myth but then rebelled against it when he realised that it was ineffectual
against the discourse of racism and stereotyping. Mura’s father, like so many other
Nisei men, had become so institutionalized by the trauma of internment that they
accepted rejection and derisive treatment quietly. They suffered emasculation like their
fathers did when they were stripped of their roles as household heads during the war. In
terms of Mura’s father’s career, Susie used the internment as a metaphor for the glass
ceiling. Mura thought it went further:

But there was another level to that. There was also the
internment camp as inducing the mentality to accept the glass
ceiling. The internalized internment camp. Perhaps I had to kill
the internment camp within me, to free myself of all its bonds. My father dealt with it by pretending the walls weren’t there, the internment camp didn’t exist. (1996b: 261)

So how could Mura deal with it? His reaction, following Žižek, was to destroy those walls, to destroy the traumatic core, his “initial trauma [that he was] repeating.” (Mura, 1995a: 56) But, as I mentioned in Chapter Eight, the total annihilation of that traumatic kernel could lesson the emotive responses and educational responsibilities that are necessary in the relationship of the survivor with the succeeding generations in order to ensure its literal non-repetition. Yet there exists in American domestic policy the lurking shadow of repetition, shown especially in the treatment of Arab Americans in the post 9/11 period. Mura recognised the importance of support for other marginalised groups which is why he gave them voices in his poetry. But since there will always be people who are discriminated against (the Arabs and Muslims in present-day America come to mind immediately), Asian American writers of the future, Mura said, must “pay more attention to other people of color and to look at our own experiences within a larger global context.” (1994: 32) Although the Sansei like Mura may have been able to limit the debilitating effects of the traces of trauma that they inherited, the lessons learned need to be passed down through the generations to prevent history being told only from the perspective of the victors.

Notes
1 When Mura first came across No-No Boy in graduate school, he did not know what the title referred to, so complete was his disassociation from the wartime experiences of his own ethnic community. But, he said, at that time, he had no desire to rectify that aspect of his own ignorance – he wanted to be classified as a writer, not a minority writer or a Japanese American writer because he felt it would “relegate myself to a literary ghetto, to enter the door only as a beneficiary of some poetic affirmative action. I want to be a writer, plain and simple.” (1996b: 153)
2 This poem was revised and republished as “Relocations” in his collection Angels for the Burning.
3 An obi is the silk sash tied around the waist of a kimono.
4 Udon is a Japanese meal made of thick rice noodles. Utsukemono, which should actually be written otsukemono or tsukemono, are Japanese pickles commonly served with most meals.
5 Mochi is a sticky treat made of pounded rice usually served as a savoury dish with shoyu and seaweed or ground soybean powder.
6 See page 229.
7 Shoyu or oshoyu is soy-sauce, a very common ingredient in Japanese cooking. A furoshiki is a large printed sheet that had many practical uses especially in the dusty camps. It was used to wrap and protect any delicate items, to wrap and transport items, to wrap and present gifts. Benjo or obenjo is a toilet. Utsukemono (or otsukemono / tsukemono) are Japanese pickles.
8 Kitsune was a fox with supernatural powers. He would assume other human forms in order to intervene or mock humans.
9 The Supreme Court invalidated any existing anti-miscegenation legislation in all states of America in 1967.
10 And also in “Bruyères (1944)” in Angels for the Burning.
11 Bakka means stupid, fool, idiot.
12 Jerome Camp, where Mura’s father was, was situated in Arkansas.
13 See my notes on Hirabayashi on page 151.
Happa refers to one who is half-Japanese.

This poem reminds me of a one-act play written by fellow Sansei Philip Kan Gotanda, White Manifesto and Other Perfumed Tales of Self-Entitlement, or, Got Rice? in which a white male instructs his audience on the advantages and disadvantages of bedding various Asian women. When he referred to Japanese women, he said, “If they’re shin-issei, that is F.O.B. [Fresh Off the Boat] girls, then don’t even worry, the black ships have landed, the pearly gates are open. They like any color but yellow anyway. . . . and no J.A.’s, that’s as in Japanese Americans. They consider it a faux Japanese culture, inauthentic, a kind of bastard child they’d rather forget. So white’s big, black, too, among the counter-culture ones. . . . must be ‘cause they have to break out from such a rigid society of conformity when they do break out, they really explode. . . . [the internment camps] scarred them, made them feel ashamed and fearful about who they were and made them not want to be who they were and to run as far away as possible to being American, that is, Caucasian American.” (2005: 260-261)

Chapter Ten

The Repetitious Return of the Repressed

10.1 What does the future hold?

We have seen the ubiquitous nature of the trauma of internment upon the Japanese American diaspora and how it was transferred intergenerationally to profoundly affect even those who did not experience it personally. Indeed, many *Sansei* were not even aware of the internment until they were in high school or university. But the trauma was clearly manifested in the silence of the earlier generations, inevitably emerging and repeating itself in altered states, perpetuating the cyclical nature of trauma and continually generating double wounds. But if, as I have argued in previous chapters, the sense of community healing that resulted from the redress movement, the transference of guilt and shame to the U.S. government and the gradual disintegration of the barriers of silence was being continued by the *Sansei* reclamation of ethnic pride and identity even as they became more fully assimilated into American society, what does the future hold for the forthcoming generations of Japanese Americans?

With approximately 60% of *Sansei* married to non-Japanese, the majority of *Yonsei* children are of mixed heritage. For them, the history of the internment was no
longer shrouded in mystery and silence and they were growing up in a more ethnically diverse America where it was socially acceptable to express curiosity in and embrace one’s own heritage. Indeed the 1990s experienced a surge in popularity of all things Japanese; not only was Japanese culture more accepted, it was actually fashionable according to popular culture. But with that level of acceptance and healing, the dilution of racial strains, the assimilation and acculturation of the younger generations and the declining numbers of survivors of the internment, does that indicate a gentle disintegration of the traumatic core of the Japanese American diaspora? This chapter will demonstrate that is not the case. Despite all the progress that the Japanese Americans and other minority groups made in the post-war era thanks to the civil rights movement, the redress movement, the battle for racial equality and against racial stereotyping and so on, the response to recent events in America indicate that the kernel of trauma is still easily locatable, easily retrievable and, unfortunately, easily repeatable within the psyche of all Japanese Americans. After a brief examination of the Yonsei, I will look at how recent events in American history impacted upon the Japanese American community and what position they occupy in their traumatic history.

10.2 The responsibility of the Yonsei

While the Sansei were predominantly driven by a thirst for personal and familial historical knowledge, the Yonsei were always aware and informed of their own histories. They seem to be driven instead by a sense of responsibility to their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents to preserve their story, to share it so that it is not repeated. Garrett Kaoru Hongo is a Hawaiian-born Yonsei who grew up in Los Angeles. His family, in Hawaii during the war were not interned but his Kibei grandfather was arrested and questioned by the F.B.I. after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was not incarcerated and, perhaps because of that, his family discouraged him from speaking about his experience, distraught by his demands for justice when he, unlike the Japanese Americans amongst whom they were now living, was not interned. Hongo recalled, “he’d tell me the story and no one else would listen, they were embarrassed by his passion and by his giving me a responsibility for this story.” (Moyers, 1995: 202)

This feeling of responsibility was clearly transferred to Hongo as he continued:

I share with so many Japanese Americans of my generation a feeling that we have a story to tell, that we have a responsibility to that generation who suffered the humiliation and the loss and who did not have their presence in this country endorsed.
(Moyers, 1995: 202)
Similarly, young *hapa-Yonsei* Zeni Whittall wrote a letter to his grandfather asking him to tell him about the internment so he could inform his sixth grade history class. His grandfather complied and Whittall said of his letter:

> This letter is the only time that my grandfather shared his story with anyone in my family in writing. . . . After reparations from the government, however, they are now finding the strength to tell their grandchildren. I’m sharing this letter with you because I want this to be remembered. My grandfather can never tell his story again, because he has passed away. So read this and remember what has happened, and never let it happen again. (Whittall, 1996)

Whittall shared with Hongo an acknowledgement of his responsibility as a descendant of a traumatised family to ensure the longevity of the survivors’ memories and stories and to fight against its repetition. Refusing to allow the stories and the memories to die with the survivor is a way of ensuring the survival of the traumatic core and using it to educate others is a way of empowering the previously disempowered victim. One way that Hongo advocated of preserving memories and educating others was through poetry, as he said, “I think poetry can bring such presences back, whether they’re the dead or evanescent feelings or insinuations, or glimmerings, or vanishings.” (Moyers, 1995: 207)

One fourteen year old *Yonsei* was touched by such presences and by the intangible emotions in the air when he went to the 1996 Tule Lake pilgrimage. Whilst there, he wrote the following poem entitled “From a Yonsei” (possibly inspired by “From a Sansei” read at the 1979 pilgrimage which I discussed on page 217-218):

> I come not knowing anything,  
> but I leave in a whole new light.  
> The hurt still lives,  
> and the feeling of shame  
> I now understand.  
>
> Trees that were once invisible  
> are brightly colored,  
> but the sadness is still in the air.  
>
> I learn something about myself  
> and let the pride shine through,  
> for the courage has only  
> begun to rise. (Shimizu, 2000: 157)

By listening to members of the older generations (the once-invisible, now brightly-coloured trees) speaking about their experiences and by travelling to the physical site of
the trauma itself, Shimizu experienced an awakening of knowledge and understanding. Embracing the sadness of their trauma and accepting their desolate history as his own actually led him to a sense of pride and courage. Yonsei like Shimizu, Whittall and Hongo have exhibited signs that clearly indicates their acknowledgement of the existence of the trauma within themselves and their community and that the preservation of that traumatic core, through stories, poetry and education are crucial in the fight against its repetition.

10.3 The inevitable return

Certain recent events in American history have acted as trigger mechanisms for the Japanese American community to immediately force a recollection of their own victimisation in their past. I have already discussed the significance of the murder of Vincent Chin as representative of the tragic extreme to which racially-motivated hate crimes can escalate. But another more recent attack, on a much larger scale, was the 9/11 attacks, the ramifications of which I have briefly examined already. The American government’s response prophesied an uneasy and daunting future for all minority groups in America.

America was stunned, shocked and deeply disturbed by 9/11. As a nation, their collective lack of preparedness was just as crucial to their response to the external influx of excitations as it was in each individual who was personally affected by the attacks. The nation felt threatened by elements previously unknown to the majority of American society and their reaction was to embrace suspicion and paranoia. But the response of many Japanese Americans was more complicated, given their own history in America and the similarity of the tense atmosphere between the immediate aftermath of the attacks on 9/11 and Pearl Harbor. David Furukawa, historian for the Atlanta chapter of the JACL, said that it took the 9/11 attacks to remind him why it was so important to continue a dialogue of the infringement of civil rights, especially during times of apparent peace and prosperity:

On Sept. 12, I saw a man in a turban and automatically wondered if he was suspicious or not. . . . I had to catch myself and realize that this is the same atmosphere that prevailed on Dec. 8, 1941. My goal is to get out there and make sure what happened to my family doesn’t happen to Arab-Americans. (Parker, 2004: F.1)
Similarly, the superintendent of the Manzanar historical site, Frank Hays, felt an obligation to continue to encourage and foster civil rights dialogue after 9/11. He was instrumental in opening the new interactive centre at Manzanar in 2004 which includes exhibits that not only document the history of Manzanar itself but, by showcasing images of the U.S.S. Arizona in flames next to images of the burning World Trade Center, an implicit link was made between the two historic events. Therefore an obvious link can also made between the reactive treatment of the Japanese Americans in the 1940s and the Arab Americans in the 2000s. Hays stated:

> The exhibits are designed to change, because who knows what issues the country will be facing in the future. . . . Sixty years of looking back on 9/11 will give us the time we’ve had to look back on Pearl Harbor. (Song, 2004: 20)

Thus continues the cyclical repetition of trauma in history. The tragic events of 9/11 were also followed by racial profiling and targeting similar to those which followed the events of December 1941.

Robert Chang, university lecturer on Asian Americans and the Law, recognised the link between the two events also. An increasing number of his students had begun to view the Japanese American internment as a rectified historical event, one to be relegated to the pages of their textbooks. Then 9/11 occurred. There were calls to intern all Arab Americans. Over 800 Muslim men were arrested and detained with no charges laid and often no access to legal aid. Thousands of men possessing visas from countries with links to al-Qa’ida operations were questioned and many were quietly deported. And, of course, as described in Mirikitani’s poem discussed on page 219, there was the reactive hate-violence. As Chang said, “these events brought and continue to bring a fresh and unfortunate relevance to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.” (2002: 286) Despite the apparent ‘rectification’ of the government’s unjustified actions over sixty years prior, the repetition of racial profiling and mass detainment in the aftermath of 9/11 illustrates how the legal doctrines had not been adjusted to make such actions constitutionally impermissible.

For example, plenary power over immigration and distinctions based on alienage were legal doctrines that were used to ‘legalize’ the treatment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s and was used to the same effect concerning the recent treatment of Arab Americans. And, despite the overturned convictions of Korematsu, Hirabayashi and
Yasui by the U.S. Supreme Court, the legal principles used to convict them in the first place remain today. As Chang concluded:

this is perhaps the . . . most disturbing lesson, that the deformities in the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution brought about by racism remain available today . . . After 9/11, my students said that they could understand how the internment happened. If 9/11 makes the internment of Japanese Americans understandable, then educators, scholars, and activists have much work to do. (2002: 289)

In that spirit, Japanese American and Muslim activists joined forces in California on the 7th December 2001 (the sixtieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor and less that three months after 9/11) to organise an event promoting racial awareness. Amjad Obeidat of AMILA (American Muslims Intent on Learning and Activism) said he did not fear the same widescale systematic incarceration for his community as the U.S. Patriot Act granted Attorney General John Ashcroft power to track the activities of ‘potential terrorists’ without resorting to incarceration. Although ‘only’ hundreds of Arab Americans were detained indefinitely, the barbed wire fences of the 1940s were merely replaced with a twenty-first century ‘e-internment’ which circumnavigated the constitutionality of the government’s surveillance.

10.4 A revival of cultural pluralism?

Mitsuaki Ohata, whose 2002 PhD thesis made a link between the internment and 9/11, first examined the difference between the Sansei and Yonsei. He claimed that (while accepting the limitations inherent within his survey) the Yonsei were more ethnically identified than the Sansei, thus reversing the trajectory of declining ethnic identity. He cited several reasons for this, including the fact that the Yonsei are further removed from historical events such as the internment that directly affected the course of the Japanese Americans’ sense of identity. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, it is clear that the younger generations, including the Yonsei, continue to exhibit signs of being affected by the trauma of internment. While Ohata did recognise this fact – “the Yonsei continue to be affected indirectly by the many injustices of the past and by the legacy of their Japanese American ancestors” (84) – he made a contentious point when referring to the 9/11 attacks:

American culture shares many of the inherent characteristics that have been categorized as Japanese characteristics . . . such as collectivity, dependence, duty and obligation, deference, and hierarchy. (81)
While I do not deny that American society possesses such characteristics, I do not agree that those particular characteristics recognisably define or exemplify American culture. The defining characteristics embraced by American society lean more towards the individual as opposed to the group; characteristics such as individualism, independence, courage and espousing one’s own opinion are more highly valued than the traditionally Japanese characteristics Ohata listed such as duty and deference. It was precisely the differences between the two cultures that caused so much of the tension and difficulties between the different Japanese American generations as the younger generations, especially the Sansei and Yonsei, became more acculturated and assimilated.

Ohata used the example of the response of the American public after 9/11 to prove his point and stated that it was an example of their characteristics of collectivity, duty and obligation and that they “joined together as a nation to support, rally, and assist one another unselfishly during this difficult time.” (81) While I agree to a certain extent, it was not an atypical response to a tragedy in one’s own country, regardless of ethnic background. Large-scale tragedies, wherever they occur in the world, are usually followed, especially as represented in the media, by generous and selfless acts of courage, generosity, community-spirit and bravery.

Ohata continued and said that following the 9/11 attacks “there appears to be a resurgence of interest in cultural pluralism” (81). But I propose that once the events of 9/11 fade into collective cultural memory, the temporary revival of cultural pluralism that Ohata identified would surely rescind and the dominant American ideals as I identified them would re-emerge. I disagree with his argument of a resurgence of cultural pluralism in the post 9/11 era and the most obvious proof of his flawed argument lies in his non-acknowledgement of the disgraceful treatment of Arab Americans. Their community, like the Japanese American community sixty years prior, was purposefully disenfranchised further from mainstream society by racial profiling and stereotyping, by selective incarceration and deportment, by the manipulative and secretive ‘e-internment’ tactics and, sadly, by obvious targeting for acts of physical and psychological violence. They were not, however, subjected to the same levels of propaganda and media-fuelled hysteria as the Japanese Americans were in the 1940s in the more politically-correct twenty-first century.
A more recent example is the response to the devastation caused by hurricane Katrina, particularly in New Orleans. George W. Bush’s administration was horrifyingly slow at providing assistance and the media came under attack for its own racial stereotyping of black Americans ‘shamelessly looting’ alongside white Americans ‘desperately foraging’ for food. The stories that emerged from severely traumatised survivors told of racial-taunting and racially-motivated acts of violence. Survivors turned on each other in desperation, victimising ethnically identifiable ‘others’ and displaying animalistic tendencies in anguished times. Of course, there were many examples of heroism and courage, bravery and ‘brotherhood/sisterhood’, but the tarnished image of the non-solidarity of that part of the nation dispels Ohata’s claim of a resurgence of cultural pluralism following a tragedy.

10.5 A pernicious defence of internment

Michelle Malkin’s 2004 book In Defense of Internment also raised some very controversial points. Her intention was to stir debate on a subject matter that she thought had attained an unjustifiably sacrosanct reputation and she defended the evacuation, internment and relocation of the Japanese Americans. She derided Reagan’s decision to sign the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 as one of his biggest blunders and claimed that the ‘internment card’ had been wielded in a state of hyper-political correctness in the post 9/11 period by the civil liberties absolutists who defended the redress movement and made the internment issue untouchable. They attacked, she claimed, all necessary forms of homeland security measures which were “aimed at protecting America from murderous Islamic extremists.” (xx)

Malkin believes that it was reasonable to evacuate and intern all Japanese Americans, regardless of citizenship in the 1940s because, she argued, there was proof of widespread espionage. Her ‘proof’ was the MAGIC cables, the Japanese diplomatic messages intercepted by American cryptoanalysts in 1940. She claimed that the cables “revealed in message after message the alarming extent of Japan’s ongoing espionage operations on the West Coast, in Hawaii, and along America’s southern border.” (37) However, the major flaw in her argument is that the MAGIC cables was clearly not a significant factor in the decision made in the upper echelons of power to intern the Japanese population as neither Roosevelt nor Stimson ever mentioned it. Further, the CWRIC (whose hearings she described as an “untold embarrassment” (114)) reported that MAGIC did not provide any evidence of disloyalty. The cables constitute the very
unstable core of this book\(^2\) that has been referred to as ‘‘‘distorted’, ‘historically inaccurate’ and ‘presents a version of history that is contradicted by several decades of scholarly research.’’” (Westneat, 2004) Malkin’s belief that some civil liberties should be yielded and racial profiling should be accepted in the name of homeland security certainly touched a nerve in the Japanese American community.

By an overwhelming consensus, the CWRIC found that there had been no military necessity for the unjust treatment of the Japanese Americans and that the causes for their internment were rooted in racial prejudice, war hysteria and a profound failure of political leadership. Yet the case was far from closed. As civil rights activist Charles R. Lawrence stated:

> the racism of the internment is not an isolated incident. It is not an aberration in American history. It must be understood as a manifestation of the racism that is deeply embedded in American culture.” (1993: 3)

The tragic murders of Vincent Chin, Jim Loo and other Asians in racially motivated crimes in America not only disclosed the deeply embedded racism in American society but it also served as a repetition of the past trauma of internment. Malkin’s book was another repetition, another wounding for the Japanese American community.

Fred Korematsu, whom I discussed in Chapter Five, spoke of the burden he carried for over forty-five years. He felt the burden ease after the Supreme Court overturned his conviction and the Civil Liberties Act formally declared the internment had been unjustified. “But now the old accusations are back,” he said, and decried Malkin’s argument that:

> it is ok to take away an entire ethnic group’s civil rights because some individuals are suspect. . . . It is painful to see reopened for serious debate the question of whether the government was justified in imprisoning Japanese Americans during World War II. (2004: B9)

Korematsu’s traumatic wound was reopened by the publication of Malkin’s book. While her supporters praised her book as an attempt to halt the paralysing and debilitating effects of hyper-political correctness, I believe her book is a poorly researched and aggrandizing attempt to circumvent the constitutionality of the government’s treatment of Arab Americans in the post 9/11 period. The government’s reaction, much like the publication of Malkin’s book, “proves that no victory is
permanent” according to civil rights lawyer Dale Minami. (Viotti, 2004) The response to her book, both positive and negative, reveals that trauma is always simmering under the surface, ready to be recalled and repeated at any time.

10.6 Concluding remarks

I proposed at the beginning of this thesis that the internment of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in 1942 was a traumatic event that was repressed within the individual sufferers, preserved in a state of indeterminate latency, transmitted between individuals and groups, transferred down through generations by an inheritance of memory-traces and was recalled and repeated in dreams and actual events that triggered remembrances of their earlier trauma (either experienced or inherited trauma). The circumstances affecting the publication of Freud’s “Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays” and a Caruthian application to his multiple prefaces illustrates the performativity of trauma in language. In fact, Nisei Reverend Harry Baba unintentionally provides a perfect comparison to use in this instance:

Our situation reminded me of Moses, the servant of God who long ago led his people through the hot Sinai desert to return eventually to the land that God had promised them. It took him forty years to reach that Promised Land – a long journey for an exhausted people. (Okada, 1998: 10)

Freud’s engagement with the metonymic myth of Moses and his explanation of how his murder was a trauma that had lain dormant in the Jewish people for several generations can be applied to any diasporic community. A significant trauma for all diasporic communities is the trauma of verlassen, the trauma of departure and this was no different for the immigrant Japanese workers.

The trauma of departure for the Issei was repeated continuously through discriminatory acts of racism perpetrated by the governing bodies of their hostland. They clung to their traditional values as a means to endure hardship and passed these values on to their children while encouraging them to assimilate at the same time. Unfortunately, assimilation at that time (and, arguably, even now) required not an Americanization of the Nisei but an Anglo-Americanization which, given their physical features, was an impossibility. After the attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in the systematic evacuation and incarceration of all peoples of Japanese descent on the west coast (and 1% of the Japanese Hawaiians), this act of ‘double wounding’ gave rise to some very heartfelt traditional Japanese poetry written by the Issei. Their years of
dedication to their work and loyalty to America were unashamedly ignored and many were separated from their wives and families for many years. Their agricultural successes and economic achievements compelled nativists and competing agrarians to support the evacuation and internment proceedings. Their incarceration was one traumatic event in a long succession of discriminatory measures enacted against them since their arrival in America. Their poetry and stories captured their sadness at the loss of years of hard work and, when they were freed, their silence expressed their shame and resignation of their losses. Conversely, their silence at their treatment also demonstrated their highly disciplined moral fibre that led to their children to abide by their codes of duty, obedience and the subordination of the self to the larger interest. The Issei displayed great dignity and forbearance in the face of great adversity which helped the Nisei to cope with their situation even as the internment widened the cultural divide between the two generations.

Many Nisei decided that the only way to be accepted into mainstream American society was to become Americanized as quickly as possible. Their generation embraced a comprehensive rejection of their ethnic heritage which was symbolised by the Issei. Their wholesale rejection of the Issei’s ‘Japaneseness’ was demonstrated in many of the texts I examined, especially Monica Sone’s Nisei Daughter, John Okada’s No-No Boy and in the poetry of Mitsuye Yamada. Despite their desire for assimilation, they intriguingly employed typically Japanese characteristics to succeed, most notably in their acts of blood-sacrifice discussed in Chapter Three. Voluntarily sacrificial acts were conducted through the abdication of the rights of the individual for the benefit of the community, a feature not unlike the traditional Japanese value stemming from the Bushido code, the code of the samurai warrior which demanded total dedication to the master. What was so unique about the case of the Nisei soldiers compared to other American soldiers was that their individual rights as American citizens had been so grossly violated. They took the chance to serve their country so as to lay claim to a nation that was also theirs by birthright. Their shared suffering on the battlefield created a particular solidarity, indeed an imagined community, for which they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

However, their sacrifices would not be enough to end the continuous cycle of racism inherent in post-war American society. Although it certainly hastened the political and social progress towards their acceptance as valid and loyal Americans,
their traumas of internment and wartime experiences were continually repeated in post-war acts of discrimination. Indeed Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation was a “perversion of reality” (Hsu, 1996: 51) as the American nation was in fact imagined as a coalition of dominant white and subordinate ethnic groups. The repetition of the phrase ‘Once a Jap, always a Jap,’ was, explained one Nisei, “depressing and disappointing. . . after we fight and fight and shed our blood for the victory of our country.” (Terminal Island: 84) Their trauma was like a deep wound on their psyche that was continually being ripped open when certain events triggered memories of their past. Although they may have appeared to have achieved reconciliation with their past, especially when considering their successes (the Japanese Americans are often referred to as the ‘model minority’) it was a superficial healing marked more by silence than by activism. Their trauma was clearly still in the latency period, their traumatic core, according to Žižek, resisting a process of symbolization/historicization which would allow for its destruction. However, as I argued throughout this thesis, the destruction of that core would negate the opportunity to pass on the invaluable stories of the marginalised which would rewrite history in a more authentic manner.

But a characteristic feature of trauma is its ineradicability. A vocalised healing of the wounds of trauma for the Nisei would not necessitate its destruction but the alternative, the corrosive nature of silence as I examined in Joy Kogawa’s Obasan, could create a lobotomized society, unaware and unappreciative of its own ethnic history. The redress movement, facilitated by the more articulate, action-oriented Sansei generation, provided a safe and appropriate forum in which the Nisei could finally break the barriers of silence that had characterised their generation to allow a cathartic healing process of testimony and witnessing to proceed. Even the Nisei texts that claimed to have reached a reconciliation with their past were, as I argued in Chapter Seven, inauthentic and superficial resolutions. It was not until the redress movement that an authentic process of healing was able to begin. The Niseis’ proclivity to non-communication until that time had created a tense and misinformed division between themselves and their children which is evident in the Sanseis’ often angry and frustrated literary productions.

The Japanese Canadian Sansei narrator in Hiromi Goto’s Chorus of Mushrooms recognised that, even though her family arrived in Canada after the war, the trauma inherent in any diasporic community was something that was:
tattooed on to you something awful. Or something good. Just depends. Hysteria or history can become one and the same. Passed on from daughter to daughter to daughter to daughter. . . . The list is endless and the tattoo spreads. (36)

Like other Sansei, she knew that it was essential to stop the spread of the tattoo for the sake of the health of her family and community. But the silence of the Nisei during the formative years of the Sansei affected their self-esteem and the formation of their identity. Their silence communicated a great deal to the Sansei – it communicated their shame, their humiliation and their perceived lack of self-worth. It communicated that being of Japanese heritage was something that they were ashamed of. But the Sansei, as they learned the awful truth of their own history, emerged in the 1980s as a more vocal and defiant group, their literature characterised by poets such as Lawson Fusao Inada, Janice Mirikitani and Amy Uyematsu. Although the Nisei had achieved a degree of healing, their trauma had been passed on to their children (even those who were born after the war, as shown by the contributions of Matthew Fukuda, David Mas Masumoto, Rahna Reiko Rizzuto and Julie Otsuka among others) and they realised that education was the key to resist the repetition of their experience on other minority groups in America. Thus many Sansei, like Ken Mochizuki, chose to produce texts that focussed on educating future generations about the negative consequences of racism and stereotyping.

One Sansei who chose to speak out on behalf of all Asian American groups against negative stereotyping was David Mura, whose works I examined in Chapter Nine. His formation of identity and sexuality was implicitly linked to the trauma of internment that had lain dormant in his father for decades, erupting in bouts of violence and recriminations towards his children that shaped Mura’s conception of what it meant to be an Asian male in America. Mura recognised the proliferation of inaccurate and inauthentic representations of Asians in dominant culture and used his poetry to articulate his own sense of trauma and shame and to fight on behalf of all disenfranchised groups, urging others to write themselves into an authentic existence. On behalf of all Asian Americans he wrote:

something new, something that exceeds previous categories. . . . that despite the human suffering incurred through dislocation, incarceration, and diaspora, the historical experiences of Asian America can become a source of strength, the openness of identity a field of possibility. (Kondo, 1996: 116)
The openness to new formations of racial identities became a lot more urgent as the *Yonsei* (and more so for the *Gosei* (fifth generation) and so on) were far more racially mixed than the preceding generations. The distillation of their Japanese racial makeup did not preclude them from an inheritance of the memory-traces; in fact the more recent events in American history since the attacks on 9/11 served as a timely reminder of the importance of maintaining an open dialogue about race relations and not succumbing to the old tactics of racial profiling and scape-goating. As one *Yonsei* wrote in a poem performed at a pilgrimage to Manzanar in 1998:

```
To forget is to deny that it could happen again,
  to deny that it could happen to me.

To forget is to deny that nothing has changed,
  racist attitudes still prevail.

Instead, I burn with this legacy,
  and it prods me to remember and fight.
Hopefully, it will never happen again,
  unless you blow out that light. (Kawaoka, 2004: 17-18)
```

Recent violations of the spirit of the Constitution demonstrate the “American propensity to react against ‘foreigners’ in the United States during times of external crisis.” (Daniels, 1993: 113) In order to prevent the relegation of other minority groups to the sidelines of dominant discourse in the way in which their own history was ignored and devalued, the Japanese American diaspora must resurrect their own trauma to ensure that history is not only written from the perspective of the victors. In this resurrection the aesthetic becomes the expression of lives traumatised by the uneven history of a nation; the literature of the Japanese diaspora bears ample testimony to this fact.

Notes

1. There are no page numbers.
3. The phrase ‘e-internment’ is taken from Boyden’s 2002 article in *Radical Society*.
5. Malkin was also very dismissive of the Munson Reports, an investigation carried out by Special Representative of the State Department Curtis B. Munson to determine the degree of loyalty among residents of Japanese ancestry on the west coast and in Hawaii. The investigation was carried out in October and November 1941 and found that 90-98% of the *Nisei* were loyal to the United States and they were in fact “pathetically eager to show this loyalty.” (Weglyn, 1976: 43) Munson concluded that there was no Japanese problem on the west coast and declared that the Japanese did not trust the *Issei or Nisei* and would only seek assistance from *Kibei*. He stated that he did not believe that “they would be at the least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war” (Weglyn, 1976: 47) and recommended that the public’s attitude towards those of Japanese ancestry be led by positive and reassuring statements by Roosevelt in order to halt the tide of hysteria and paranoia. Unfortunately his recommendations were not powerful enough to dissuade the decision for mass evacuation and internment.
Appendices

Appendix One: President Roosevelt’s Address to Congress. 8th December 1941.

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Wake Island.

This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our Nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at that fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces – with the unbounded determination of our people – we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God.

I ask that Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Empire of Japan.

(Slackman, 1990: 313-314. Original quote from Congressional Record, 87:95045)
Appendix Two: Memorandum from U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle to U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. 17th February 1942.

For several weeks there have been increasing demands for evacuation of all Japanese, aliens and citizens alike, from the West Coast states. A great many of the West Coast people distrust the Japanese, various special interests would welcome their removal from good farm land and the elimination of their competition, some of the local California radio and press have demanded evacuation, the West Coast Congressional Delegation are asking the same thing and finally, Walter Lippmann and Westbrook Pegler recently have taken up the evacuation cry on the ground that attack on the West Coast and widespread sabotage is imminent. My last advice from the War Department is that there is no evidence of imminent attack and from the FBI that there is no evidence of planned sabotage.

In view of the fact that you may be asked about it at your press conference, or may wish to say something about the steps being taken, I am supplying you with the facts.

I have designated as a prohibited area every area recommended to me by the Secretary of War, through whom the Navy recommendations are also made. The less populated areas are already in effect and the remainder have been designated to be evacuated by February 24. I have also designated a number of restricted areas in which alien enemies may live only under rigorous curfew and other restrictions.

We are proceeding as fast as possible. To evacuate the 93,000 Japanese in California over night would materially disrupt agricultural production in which they play a large part and the farm labor now is so limited that they could not be quickly replaced. Their hurried evacuation would require thousands of troops, tie up transportation and raise very difficult questions of resettlement. Under the Constitution 60,000 of these Japanese are American citizens. If complete confusion and lowering of morale is to be avoided, so large a job must be done after careful planning. The Army has not yet advised me of its conclusions in the matter.

There is no dispute between the War, Navy and Justice Departments. The practical and legal limits of this Department’s authority which is restricted to alien enemies are clearly understood. The Army is considering what further steps it wishes to recommend.

It is extremely dangerous for the columnists, acting as ‘Armchair Strategists and Junior G-Men,’ to suggest that an attack on the West Coast and planned sabotage is imminent when the military authorities and the FBI have indicated that this is not the fact. It comes close to shouting FIRE! in the theater; and if race riots occur, these writers will bear a heavy responsibility. Either Lippmann has information which the War Department and the FBI apparently do not have, or is acting with dangerous irresponsibility.

It would serve to clarify the situation in the public mind if you see fit to mention it.

(Hosokawa, 2002: 277-278)
Appendix Three: Excerpt from Executive Order 9066, 19th February 1942.

Now therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction the Secretary of War of the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for the residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary in the judgement of the Secretary of War, or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order.

Appendix Four: Excerpt from the ‘Instructions to all persons of Japanese ancestry.’ Posted in May 1942 in Los Angeles

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions.

2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
   a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
   b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
   c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
   d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
   e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.

4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.

5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.

6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

J. L. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Commanding
Appendix Five: George Bush’s Letter of Apology

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation’s resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

George Bush
President of the United States

October 1990
Appendix Six: Author’s 2004 Survey.
Internment of Americans of Japanese Descent During World War II

1. Were you or any members of your family interned during WWII? If yes, please continue to Q2. If no, please proceed to Q6.

______________________________________________________________________

2. Please provide the following details:
Who was interned, and what is their relation to you?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

3. Please list the places and dates (if possible) of the internment.
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

4. If internees were released before the end of the war, please state the reasons why (e.g. fought in the army, relocated to the east coast).
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

5.a. Did anyone in your family volunteer to fight in the army?
______________________________________________________________________

5.b. If yes, where did they fight (e.g. Europe, Pacific)?
______________________________________________________________________

5.c. Did you and/or your family receive any kind of compensation?
______________________________________________________________________

5.d. If yes, in what form (e.g. financial settlement, letter of apology)?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

6. What kind of an effect has the internment of yourself and/or family members had on you personally, especially emotionally and psychologically?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
7. Have any members of the older generations of your family discussed their experiences with you? If yes, can you sum up their feelings and the effect it has had on you? If no, can you explain why they have not discussed it and the effect it has had on you?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

8. Would you like to see a change in the way that the internment is or is not discussed between the generations? If so, what kind of change would you like to see occur and how could it be implemented?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

9. Do you think that the trauma experienced by those who were interned can be/ has been passed down through the generations? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think that is? Do you have any personal theories about the ways in which a personal trauma can be passed down through the generations?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

10. Are you going to share the experiences of the internment with your children? If yes, in what way will you share them and why will you share them? If no, why will you decide not to share them?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

11. Has the internment affected the way that you perceive your own identity (i.e. as a Japanese American)? If so, in what way?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
12.a. Please answer the following if applicable:
Has there been, or are there any, events, signs, words or occasions that have suddenly triggered a memory or an image, a thought or an emotion about the internment? If yes, what was the trigger and what was the image/memory that was set off?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

12.b. Was this a one-off occurrence, or has it happened more than once?
______________________________________________________________________

12.c. Do you have an explanation for it?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

13. What literature, film or artwork relating to the internment has had an impact on you?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

14. How important do you think it is for the younger generations to read/watch these portrayals of internment, and why?
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Any Further Remarks:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

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