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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE NATURE LYRIC IN JAPANESE CANADIAN "NISEI" POETRY OF IDENTITY

BY

CATHY P. STEBLYK

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Nature Lyric in Japanese Canadian "Nisei" Poetry of Identity, submitted by Cathy P. Steblyk in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

Professor E.D. Blodgett

University Professor Milan V. Dimić

Assoc. Professor Sonja Arntzen

October 3, 1991

This thesis is designed to explore the poetic production of Japanese Canadians and to explore this poetry's unique position between Eastern and Western cultural influences, presented specifically in *Issei*, first generation Japanese Canadians, and *Nisei*, second generation Japanese Canadians, poetry of ethnic identity. Within the milieu of ethnic literature produced by other ethnic groups of Canadian writers, Japanese Canadian poetry proves particularly fruitful for study as it is evidence of a direct intersection of two extremely diverse cultures, the Oriental and the Occidental. As set forward by Earl Miner in Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature, the dichotomous premises he proposes-- that of the referential and mimetic character which guides Western literature; and that of the affective-expressive mode which directs Eastern poetics-- in his investigation of the poetics of Eastern and Western traditions indicates how Canadian and Japanese cultural products may generally be differentiated. This thesis, which finds its base in Miner's hypothesis, will demonstrate how Japanese Canadian poetry emerges as a blend of both poetic traditions.

I use the prevalent theme of nature in lyric poetry of the East and the West to display how nature, as a cultural sign, is portrayed differently in both Japanese and Canadian culture's poetry. The cultural sign, which is the presentation of nature in lyric poetry, is closely allied with identity, as the presentation of nature in lyric is a reflection of a poet's individual mental positioning with respect to his or her surroundings. The poetry of Japanese Canadians manifests a Japanese, rather than a Canadian,

attitude towards nature, a tendency which occurs despite the fact that Issei and Nisei poets are subject to the unfamiliar Canadian environment. The cultural alienation which second generation Japanese Canadian poets in particular experience is thematically reflected in their poetry. The second generation Nisei exhibit a Japanese-like affinity with nature, but paradoxically present nature at times as hostile, this presentation being a projection of Nisei feelings of rejection and frustration on to nature but actually felt by Nisei in the hostility of Canadian people and their own problem of place, of ethnic identity.

This thesis is an attempt to define the Japanese Canadian Nisei sense of identity as seen in their nature lyric, and to establish the uniqueness of the ethnic poetry of this group of Canadian immigrants. It is by no means exhaustive, but is rather an investigation of passage, a testament to the fascinating interface between the two distinct cultures of the East and the West.

The Nature Lyric in Japanese Canadian "Nisei" Poetry of Identity

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is designed to treat the ethnic writing of a particular group, the Japanese Canadians, in light of studies done on other examples of Canadian ethnic productions. Concentrating on their poetry, we will attempt to prove that Japanese Canadian writing has unique traits. Our study will encompass two distinct areas: how the poet positions him or herself in his or her poetry with regards to their own identity as a Japanese Canadian, as a reflection of their perceived position as a writing member of an ethnic minority; and the possibility of the poetics of Japanese Canadian poetry being different from either a distinctly Japanese or a distinctly Western poetics. I will also differentiate specifically between the identity poetry of the *Issei*, the first generation, and that of the *Nisei* and *Sansei*, the second and third generation Japanese Canadians.[1] First, we must prove that there is indeed a sound and useful basis for this comparison, which is made possible through a number of different criteria.

As we will shall see in the early historical accounts of the Japanese in Canada, this group of non-native Canadians intended to see themselves through Canadian eyes, only to find that they did not fit in as they had expected.[2] But, so as not to completely base this analysis on socio-historical concerns, which may be questionable, though not dispensable, we will attempt to determine whether Japanese Canadian poetry is unique based on themes, structure, and language we find in their poetry. To do this, we will concentrate on the poetry of Joy Kogawa, Gerry Shikatani, Roy Kiyooka, and other Nisei poets in Canada. As many

comparatists attest, poetry is virtually untranslatable if one attempts to capture the totality of a text, its rhythm, morphology, rhyme, and lyricism, and so, for this study, it is advantageous that the work of these Nisei Japanese Canadians is written in English, consequently requiring translations of Japanese works only in support of our argument.

Currently there is much interest in the area of comparative studies of Eastern and Western literature. This may come as a result of the world's shrinking size in terms of disparate and distinct cultures and countries, but it is also due to the differences perceived at the interface of two disparate cultures. Many literary studies have been done based on a comparison between the Orient and the Occident since travel was made possible: reaching far back into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with primarily historical, though not entirely objective, accounts; flourishing in the eighteenth century, which found the susceptible Romantic literary imagination fueled by exotic and mysterious idealizations of the Eastern cultures; and continuing on into the present age, where geographic, economic, and political exchanges are reflected in the cultural production of our generation. This thesis seeks to present the character of Japanese Canadian poetry, which reflects the intersection of two disparate cultures. We will attempt to resolve the question of the poetics of this literature based partially on the "pre-poetics" of the historical and cultural inheritance of Japanese Canadian poets which shapes these poets' thinking and we will also isolate particular examples which address the theme of ethnicity and ethnic identity. In doing so, we will be able to see

the Japanese Canadian attitude towards their new country, Canada, emerge through their unique approach to identity and their art, and in their own blend of two poetics.

To begin our study, the next chapter will describe the historical circumstances of the immigrant Japanese; I wish to briefly convey a sense of the political and social circumstances which have acted as the "pre-poetics" of Nisei poetry, informing the Nisei perception of self-identity. It will be useful to keep the historical circumstance of Japanese Canadians in mind when we eventually analyze, in the sixth and seventh chapters, the Nisei mentality present in their poetry, that is, their mental positioning with regards to personal identity as reflected in their poetry. That this second chapter is followed by a discussion concerning the distinction between Eastern and Western poetics is an indication again of the unique positioning of the Nisei Canadians, being one between two antithetical cultures. I use Earl Miner's hypothesis from Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature as a foundation: the lyric of the Orient communicates through the affective-expressive mode, while the dramatic mimetic character of Western literature contrarily communicates through the representative mode. Miner's generalization will act as a basis for my investigation of the poetics of Japanese Canadian poetry. The poetics of the Nisei, which reflect an intersection, has a significant correlative in the poetry of identity of this group as we will see in chapter seven.

Chapter four concentrates on the nature lyric in the two diverse traditions of the East and the West. Nature is usually

portrayed, in the former culture, interactively with man, while it is, in the latter tradition, based on the confrontation between human and natural forces. The above distinction which Sonja Arntzen formulates[3] between the representations of nature in Japanese and Canadian poetry forms the basis for my discussion. The ensuing chapter specifically concentrates on the nature lyric in Canadian poetry and the nature lyric present in Japanese poetry, where this notion of different approaches to nature, as seen in the two cultures, is present. In this same chapter, nature is determined to be a cultural sign which manifests itself differently in Japanese poetry than it does in Canadian poetry because of the culturally shaped values that determine an individual's poetic presentations of the subject. As a thematic analysis of the nature lyric will indicate, Japanese poets generally treat nature as a positive interactive force, while Canadian poets have treated nature as threatening.

Chapter six will deal again with the nature lyric, but at this point we will be able to see the cultural sign of nature thematologically presented in Issei poetry with the attendent positive possibility of the nature lyric providing a source of identity for the Issei. This source of identity for the Issei will be contrasted to the Nisei inability to access this cultural sign, as the second generation Japanese in Canada are increasingly alienated from a sense of identity, an identity which the vehicle of the natural object afforded the Issei. This problem of Nisei identity will be reiterated in chapter seven as I position Nisei poetic production at the intersection of two cultures and two cultural

identities. Influenced by both Western and Eastern aesthetic values, and influenced by disparate cultural identities, the Nisei poets and their literary production prove to be a fascinating subject of comparison. I conclude that the Nisei intercultural poetic production, while it is distinct evidence of the interaction of literature across linguistic and cultural boundaries, is also evidence of the Nisei poets' attempt to create a private mythology, an individual and collective identity.

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1 Issei, Nisei, and Sansei refer to first, second, and third generation Japanese Canadian immigrants respectively. The term Nikkei (Ni meaning Japan, and kei meaning of) designates people of Japanese descent.

2 Chapter two refers specifically to this problem of assimilation.

3 In "The Birds Don't Sing the Same: Nature in Pre-Modern Japanese Poetry and Modern Canadian Poetry" in Nature and Identity in Japanese and Canadian Literature(Tsuruta and Goossen), 53-67, Arntzen describes the difference between Japanese positive treatment of nature as interactive with man, and the Canadian predisposition to treat nature as hostile to man.

Chapter Two: The Cultural Positioning of the Japanese Canadian

The problem of the term "ethnic" writing is one that many have tried to resolve. Much of its allusive nature is due to the fact that many authors and critics alike do not wish to isolate any "subalternate"[1] literature from one national literature, but at the same time cannot ignore the culturally or otherwise distinct content of that literature. As far as the Japanese Canadian writers of poetry, particularly the Nisei writers, are concerned, theirs is a problem unlike that of other ethnic or cultural minorities in Canada. The Japanese Canadians as a whole differ substantially in the circumstances they endured concerning the problem of minority identity, as one can see from the examples set for us by the Italian Canadian or German Canadian poets, as well as the example set by the Chinese American immigrants described later.

Many European immigrants were forced to leave their homeland due to circumstances of war, oppressive regimes, and hunger. In these motivations, the plight of Japanese immigrants was no different in that fishing shortages and overcrowdedness forced them to seek a new home in Canada. Often the dislocation experienced by the immigrants led to a consideration of themselves in terms of displacement, as "hyphenated" Canadians. A result of thinking of themselves as a separate group within Canada led to the formation of ethnic centres, individual communities which fostered a sense of ethnic identity as separate from the English, French, and other groups. The Japanese, wishing to assimilate into the Canadian mainstream, suffered even more

than other immigrating ethnic groups because of blatant discrimination which denied them the possibility of establishing ethnic centres.

Ironically, the Issei sought to integrate themselves into the mainstream of Canadian society, rather than attempting to preserve their singular identity by physically or culturally separating themselves. As a whole, the Japanese did not consider themselves Japanese living in Canada, but as Canadians. This Japanese Canadian tendency to embrace the new culture may have arisen from a Japanese Zen-Buddhist inclination to "lay special emphasis upon the love of others"(Nakamura 381), or benevolence. And, as the Japanese are governed by notions of harmony and conciliation where "great importance is attached to rules of propriety based upon human relationships"(Nakamura 407), it is not inconceivable that the Japanese favoured assimilation into the new culture. But, as our historical accounts show, even before World War II, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Canadians, seeking to protect national interests, forcefully segregated the Japanese. This separation of the Japanese from the Canadian mainstream ultimately meant that these immigrants who previously did not seek to prevent their own integration into Canadian society were forced to see themselves in a different light, as set apart from the rest of the inhabitants of Canada. This segregation fostered a sense of alienation which would inevitably be reflected in their poetry of identity.

In an essay entitled "Yellow Peril in the Promised Land: The Representation of the Oriental and the Question of American Identity", contained in the collection Europe and Its Others, R. Valerie Lucas describes the Chinese experience in comparison to the Japanese upon their arrival in America, which we may apply here to what were similar Canadian circumstances. Conceived of in terms of a "threat to the dominant culture", these "large groups of non-European voluntary immigrants" are defined by Lucas as follows: "While the Chinese were despised for clinging to Oriental ways, the Japanese, ironically, were denounced for presuming to become assimilated"(Lucas 41). In his essay, Lucas includes the example of Torikai, an Issei who describes his life:

> When I first came to America I made up my mind to be a real American, so I would not speak Japanese at all or eat Japanese food, or wear Japanese clothing, or do anything Japanese...I did it because I thought that to be successful in America I must be American, but now I have changed. I got no success here, all time trouble. Americans do not treat us right. We try hard to be American but Americans say you always Japanese. Irish become American and all time talk about Ireland; Italians become American even if do all time like in Italy; but Japanese can never be anything but Jap. That is what they say. It is not fair so why should we try to be like Americans? (Lucas 49)

This example of the attitude that the above Japanese held towards his new country, that of an open-minded hope of easy assimilation, which was dashed by reason of his racial origin, illustrates the same kind of mentality that the Japanese brought to Canada upon immigration in the early half of the twentieth

century, and the persecution they suffered. Torikai's negative Issei experience is a burden shared by the Nisei, the latter generation's burden being significantly compounded as well, as Lucas points out, by the fact that Nisei were born on North American soil, and had "two names (one Japanese and one English), two languages (Japanese at home; English at school); and after regular classes, most went on to the *Nihon Gakko*, where lessons in Japanese language, etiquette and culture were offered"(Lucas 49). One can observe the problem which arises at the intersection and interference of these two disparate voices, the clash of cultures and values of the Japanese and the North American, as experienced by the Nisei and later the Sansei. This cultural clash will eventually be reflected in Nisei and Sansei cultural artifacts, their poetry.

In Canada, the Japanese were easily scape-goated as members of the guilty party by virtue of their race when the Second World War caused the general xenophobia Canadians had to escalate to a fervent pitch. The children of the Issei, despite their and their parents' attempts at assimilation, and even ironically despite, at times, their own strong dislike of what they construed as "anti-assimilatory" behavior by older traditional Japanese in the new country, would always be segregated by the colour of their skin. This segregation took on a new meaning during the war particularly because the internment camps that the Japanese Canadians were held in forced the Japanese to re-situate their assimilative attitudes with respect to the new country and culture, as they had been, despite thinking, dressing,

and talking like Canadians, racially persecuted within their new home. While this may have led to what might arguably be called a stronger sense of a Japanese collective identity and a weakened individual sense of being Canadian, I would suggest that being held as a group did not ultimately bring about a stronger sense of community identity. By nature, Japanese people traditionally seek their own identity within a group. What the internment of the Japanese Canadians resulted in was a loss of a sense of place they had found in Canada.

To be sure, we acknowledge that a separation of a people based on birthplace is not the only justifiable reason for isolating any particular group of Canadian writers. Though some attempt will be made now at the beginning of this thesis to justify our perspective, it is hoped that by its conclusion we will have proven that there is often reason enough outside of racial concerns to distinguish Japanese Canadian "subalternative" writing from that of other "Canadian" writing. In Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les litteratures de moindre diffusion, a collection of essays describing the nature of ethnic writing and the writing of various minority groups which make up Canada's cultural mosaic, Milan V. Dimic warns the reader that there are many concerns involved in the determination of an ethnic identity of a writer:

> Clearly, important as a language is both to the definition of literary systems and institutions, as well as demographic decisions about ethnicity, it is not the only factor in determining the identity of the writer. Another factor is the content of the work, its thematic fabric which usually focusses on exile, dislocation,

> discrimination, acculturation, assimilation, language issues, and problems of duality. (Pivato 6-7)

Dimic indicates that the use of languages other than those of the dominant cultures, French and English, is not to be the sole determining factor in a study of the ethnic identity of a writer, and also concedes that the thematological features mentioned above are also apparent in English and French Canadian poetry. Dimic adds:

> The situation of writers using their inherited tongue is further complicated by the fact that some important ethnic groups have used a multiplicity of forms of their language: German immigrants, for example, have employed both High and Low German and a variety of dialects. The situation of authors who are bilingual or trilingual is rare and special: their works belong to different systems, and the repertoires they have drawn upon in their *oeuvre* may come from more than one system.(17)[2]

Dimic's discussion of concerns involved in the determination of the ethnic quality of a writer's production proves uniquely applicable here to our study of the Japanese Canadian Nisei poets. What we discover in Nisei poetry is an extremely interesting problem of language. Language, as Dimic indicates, is one of the concerns which identifies ethnic writing as such, and I will discuss this problem of language in Nisei poetry at greater length later in this thesis. Suffice it to say that second generation Japanese were taught English and were surrounded by it in the Canadian public world, but in the world of their homes, their ancestors and

parents often spoke only Japanese, or at best, broken English. Language, effectively one's voice, is of necessity a significant part of one's identity, and we will see how this problem of voice is thematized in some of the poetry of our chosen writers. Though other ethnic groups in Canada often find English, the language of the dominant culture, a barrier and thematize it as such in their poetry, Japanese Canadian poets do not often thematize the problem of language as connected to identity in the same manner or degree as some other immigrant poets have done in their writing. As Dimic indicates, language is not the only defining feature which isolates ethnic writing: themes of exile, dislocation, discrimination, acculturation, assimilation, language issues, and problems of duality also define ethnic writing. Much of our answer to the problem of ethnic writing lies in the distinction that authors make or do not make for themselves in their poetry, how they see and present themselves in their work, whether or not they see themselves and their experience as distinct. Of course, socio-historical information about the Japanese experience in Canada will provide parameters for our interpretation and understanding of the works chosen, but it is hoped that rather than lead to a false reconstruction of a foreign experience, our knowledge of the history, philosophy, and way of thinking of the Japanese will enhance our reading of these Japanese Canadian's works.[3]

Despite attempts at assimilation into mainstream Canadian society, the Japanese met with many hurdles. The segregation of the Asian minority in Canada did not begin with the outbreak of

war in the 1940's, but had surfaced long ago in the early 1900's with "anti-Oriental sentiment evident, for example, in the Powell Street Riot in the "Little Tokyo" area of Vancouver in 1907"(Sakata 31). The fear of the "Yellow Peril" experienced by the people and government of Canada led to restrictions being enforced upon Japanese immigration, business and trade, and the right to vote. Surviving the evacuations facilitated by the racially discriminatory War Measures Act, and the subsequent trials of separation from family and the community, the Japanese

> post-war communities bore the mark of the evacuation experience. The newcomers [the subsequent generations of Japanese Canadians] sought to blend in to be as inconspicuous as possible. Families located in different parts of the city rather than grouping together to form a culturally homogenous core. There was anxiety about triggering further repression...While the desire to maintain a low profile was understandable in light of the racism the Japanese had to face, it was to have far-reaching consequences for the future community. The offspring of the Nisei, the Sansei, would grow up without the rich cultural and linguistic experiences provided by the pre-war communities. Inevitably, the graphic dispersion fostered a migration away from the customs and thought of Japanese culture to an identification with the values of white society. (Sakata 133)

This sentiment of the disasterous effect of their dispersal is shared also by Joy Kogawa, who believes that the ethnic centre of the second generation Japanese Canadian group was damaged by their own unwillingness to maintain assocations with other Japanese, for fear of further suffering. The distinction that Sakata makes between the Japanese and so-called "white" society

indicates that she, too, makes a racial distinction between the two groups which obviously implies more than colour, and includes values and customs. In her autobiographical poem entitled "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation", Joy Kogawa underscores this problem of racial discrimination which led to a denial of identity which she endured, as expressed through a child's perspective:

> What do I remember of the evacuation?
> I remember my father telling Tim and me
> About the mountains and the train
> And the excitement of going on a trip.
> What do I remember of the evacuation?
> I remember my mother wrapping
> A blanket around me and my
> Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy
> Though I was so excited I couldn't sleep
> (I hear there were people herded
> Into the Hastings Park like cattle.
> Families were made to move in two hours
> Abandoning everything, leaving pets
> And possessions at gun point.
> I hear families were broken up
> Men forced to work. I heard
> It whispered late at night
> That there was suffering) and
> I missed my dolls.
> What do I remember of the evacuation?
> I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker
> Who still live in Vancouver
> And who did what they could
> And loved the children and who gave me
> A puzzle to play with on the train.
> And I remember the mountains and I was
> Six years old and I swear I saw a giant
> Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels scanning the horizon
> And when I told my mother she believed it too
> And I remember how careful my parents were
> Not to bruise us with bitterness
> And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life

Who said "Don't insult me" when I
Proudly wrote my name in Japanese
And Tim flew the Union Jack
When the war was over but Lorraine
And her friends spat on us anyway
And I prayed to the God who loves
All the children in his sight
That I might be white.
(A Choice of Dreams: 54)

While this poem captures the Evacuation and its effects, it does even more. These memory "stills", like yellowed photographs, are of objects that signal much for the poet and the audience, and this is also what will be studied in this thesis on Japanese Canadian poetry, precisely, the operation of the sign-object, with its evocative silence and paradoxically its associative lyric power of communication.

To conclude our discussion of the historical circumstances which gave rise to the problem of identity the Nisei experience, Kogawa, during a telephone interview conducted in early August 1991, communicated her belief that the Japanese "were made to feel like the only Japanese in town...were made to feel their dispersal" during and after their internment, so that their sense of community disappeared. But she added that there is now, however, a sense of a core community of the Japanese in Canada, which she believes has helped to focus a sense of a Japanese Canadian identity. Kogawa asserts that the Japanese writers in Canada all know each other, and that this may reflect a commonality in their poetry. Despite the evils that the Japanese Canadians suffered by the hands of the people and government of

Canada in the 1940's, they have produced indefatigably sensitive and optimistic writers. The cultural positioning of the writers reflects many characteristics that are of a Japanese nature, and the attitudes taken by Kogawa, Shikatani, Kiyooka and other second generation Japanese Canadian poets also tend to display some of these distinctly Japanese characteristics. Kogawa ended our interview by stating that the "Japaneseness does show in our work." It is the object of this thesis to determine where this "Japaneseness" lies. Heeding the poet's suggestion that each of the Japanese Canadian poets be considered individually rather than as a whole, we will determine common characteristics their poetry tends to exhibit, and avoid sweeping generalizations about the ethnic minority writing of these Canadians.

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1 This term is derived from Francesco Loriggio's essay "History, Literary History, and Ethnic Literature" in Joseph Pivato's Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les litteratures de moindre diffusion, 21-45. Lorrigio uses the term "subalternity" to describe the nature of the literature of ethnic writing with particular reference to the language of the dominant and the marginalized ethnic writer. p.40.

2 The term "system" in this context refers to a component of the Polysystems theory as developed by I. Even-Zohar in "Polysystems Theory" Poetics Today 11:1 (1990), applied and ellucidated by Dimic in his article with reference to Canadian ethnic writing.

3 The historical study of the Japanese in Canada is greatly facilitated by literary productions within recent years, sponsored, of course, largely by the Ministry of Multi-Culturalism in Canada, which tell of the Japanese Canadian experience.

Chapter Three: A Distinction Between Eastern and Western Poetics

In order that we may clearly define the nature of Japanese Canadian poetics which arises from the intersection and influence of North American-European and Japanese poetics, we will begin by distinguishing between Eastern and Western poetics.[1] Examining traditional pre-modern and even modern Japanese poetry, one is able to isolate particular topoi and literary allusions, which fused, along with style, language, and the mechanics of the poetry, form a distinguishable poetics particular to Japanese writing. It will be useful to keep in mind during the ensuing discussion of Japanese poetics that the Japanese utilize a distinct approach in their poetry with regards to a sense of personal identity, an identity which is very often associated with nature, and one which is also invariably determined through a collective. Later, in chapters four and five, we will discuss some of these characteristics of Japanese poetry reflected in the poetry of the Japanese Canadians.

We begin by acknowledging the Japanese inheritance of Chinese Confucian and Buddhist beliefs, briefly elaborated here to illustrate an aspect of traditional Japanese thinking.[2] Hajime Nakamura in his work entitled Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan describes the prevalence of aspects of Chinese culture in Japan as observed in their inheritance of Confucianism and Buddhism. Nakamura states:

> In the first place, we should notice that the Japanese are willing to accept the phenomenal world as

> Absolute because of their disposition to lay a greater emphasis upon *intuitive sensible concrete events*, rather than upon universals. This way of thinking with emphasis upon the fluid, arresting character of observed events regards the phenomenal world itself as Absolute and rejects the recognition of anything existing over and above the phenomenal world.(350, italics mine)

The emphasis, outlined above, that the Japanese place on the phenomenal object is reflected in their poetry, and readily observed in examples of haiku and tanka, the most popular poetic forms. A phenomenal emphasis is seen in Japanese poetry in its propensity towards displaying objects in themselves, with little intervention and description of human positioning with regards to the object. That is, events are presented with little explicit description of how the poet feels about it. That the poetic object possesses an intuitable nature is stressed by the fact that poetry is an art accessible by any Japanese endeavoring to capture the essence of life through poetry. As evidence of the "intuited" perception of sensible events, any member of society could appreciate the profundity of the sensible event due to the shared nature of the sensible object via a "collective cultural memory".[3] A Cartesian emphasis on the individual intellect as the primary vehicle of comprehension stands in clear contrast to this Japanese mode of perception, of the mind's action in the sensory domain of concrete experience. Western poetics will reflect a predisposition towards a presentation of intellectual attitudes, while Japanese poetics refrain from interpretation, that is, the intellectual positioning of the poet within the poetry itself.

With the Japanese proclivity to emphasize "intuitive sensible concrete events" also comes a poetic tendency towards a certain timeless presentation of specific events. For example, this tanka by Takahashi Shinkichi

> Trampling the hot
> roof tiles, I push my way
> through a bombed area:
> lying dead in my path,
> a blue sparrow.
>
> (Ueda 368)

displays a specific event through the presentation of concrete objects, rather than through intellectual observation. Note that this poem is written in the present tense, as are the majority of Japanese poems which focus on concrete objects. Western poetry generally displays an attitude which acknowledges the presence of an event within an historical context of events or within the context of personal recollection.

I refer the reader here to examples from the poetry of E.D. Blodgett, in his recent collection Da Capo: The Selected Poems of E.D. Blodgett (1990), which almost invariably refer to the passage of time, and the speaker's acknowledgement of this, as even the title of the collection implies. Prevalent in much of Blodgett's poetry is the use of the past tense, even in such poems as "Chair" and "Flowers", "concrete"-ly titled poems which would be, in Japanese poetry, noticeably devoid of the speaker's explicit reference to time past. This portrayal of the poet's own consciousness of the reverberation of the past is much more a

characteristic of Western literature than Japanese. Japanese poetry displays a very strong notion of the impermanence of things which is culturally understood. Japanese poetry will not tend, therefore, to contain the poet's descriptions of his or her own time-enlightened perception or individual consciousness of the object in the same sense that Western poetry might relativize the object in time within a frame of reference of personal perception. The prominent aesthetic notion "*aware*", which means the beauty and sadness of things,[4] specifically applies to this intuition of the mutability of things. The Japanese believe that beauty is created out of the acknowledgement of the end of things; alternatively a Western consciousness would acknowledge the beauty of the subject despite the passage of time. Japanese readers of both ancient and modern poetry[5] have appreciated the beauty of the object because of the inevitable impermanence which resides in it, so that actions need not be presented in time. An object is presented "inside" of time in a Japanese poem because this flux of time is culturally understood. Western intellectual positioning which places things within a life-time indicates an attitude which affirms the uniqueness of things, of the individuality of an object, of the specificity of an event in time.

The intellectualization of an occurence existing in the ordering the mind causes a singular manifestation to gain significance in its positioning within a context of other related but unique events. The presentation of an event is mediated through human perception, through an intellectual placement of the object

contiguous imagery and contextualization in the utilization of the past, present, and future tenses is more the mark of Western poetry than of East Asian poetry. Indeed, Aristotle, in his Poetics defines tragic poetry as imitation "and the objects the imitator represents are actions".(Abrams 9) This Western attitude towards the imitated object is one of events of progressive action, rather than of relative timelessness.

Concerning Japanese perception, I will elaborate on the concept of intuition and its role in the Japanese socio-cultural institution. In this vein, Nakamura proposes that "[t]he [Japanese] emergent and fluid way of thinking, i.e. the way of thinking that asserts that reality is becoming or is in flux, is compatible with the Japanese tendency to be anchored to a particular human nexus. These two factors are combined to bring about an emphasis upon activities within a concrete social nexus."(496) This acknowledgement of the flux of existence, present even in contemporary Japanese society, is explained as the feeling that one's individual life is simply a drop in the stream of life, an event virtually indistinguishable in the grand scheme of things, as a part of the continual generational and regenerational flux of the world. The idea of intuition and the social nexus is realized in Japanese thinking which does not promote unique identity or individual perception; people and events are all seen as part of a flux. This notion of intuition becomes a foundation for Nakamura's following proposal in a chapter entitled "Non-Rationalistic Tendencies"(531) of the Japanese:

> There is a marked tendency of the Japanese people to give special attention to those subjective and social relations and actions which form the basis of mutual understanding and loyalties to the family, clan, and nation. Upon this limited basis, there is little intention to make each man's understanding and expression universal or logical, so that, in general, the thinking of most Japanese tends to be intuitive and emotional. [In linguistics,] expressive forms of Japanese sentences put more emphasis upon emotive factors than on cognitive factors. The forms of expression of the Japanese language are more orientated to sensitive and emotive nuances than directed toward logical exactness.(531)

Based on mutual understanding, objects presented in Japanese poetry come to gain a cultural significance. For a specific sign, the social nexus guides the interpretation of the sign towards a particular referent. This is seen in the common associations the Japanese make with various objects, such as the topoi signifying imperical or familial peity, red colours which refer to courtly elegance, references to particular mountains,[6] and the like. The Japanese understanding of these topoi is emotional, based on the socio-cultural institution from which the signs arise, supporting Nakamura's argument that Japanese understanding is more intuitive than logically exact. The ability to forego pronominal reference (designating the speaker, the subject, or the addressee) to specific humans present in interactions in Japanese speech, as well as in their poetry, is evidence that "[t]he Japanese people can dispense with the subject of their linguistic expression...due to the fact that the intuitive understanding of the scene referred to in their discourse is usually attained beforehand by the close personal bonds and nexus with others."(Nakamura 535)[7]

Here is what Nakamura has to say on the subject of the expression of intuition and of individual emotion:

> The non-logical disposition of the Japanese and their emphasis on emotional moods are revealed in the form of their poetic expression. A conspicuous difference appears when Japanese poetry is compared with that of another Eastern people, the Indians, to say nothing of poetry in Western language. In Indian poetry, the subject and the predicate of sentences are distinguished, and also the relation between the principal and subordinate clauses is clearly recognized, and these characteristics are probably due to the special character of the Sanskrit language. Accordingly, so far as the linguistic materials used in it are concerned, it is almost no different from prose, except for a flavor of poetical emotion produced by rhyme. In the Japanese tanka, on the contrary, the subject and the predicate are hardly ever distinguished, and the relation between the principal and the subordiate clauses is not clear. Although some tankas are composed with logical precision, they are, in the aesthetic opinion of the Japanese, rather poor in artistic value. And in haiku, where the abridgement of wording is carried to an extreme, words are cut down to a still shorter form; consequently the emotional mood which is conveyed by each single word has greater importance.(552)

The Japanese emphasis on emotional mood in their poetry, which one derives largely from the poet's choice of juxtaposed elements, necessitates the reader's close interaction with the text to cull the emotional meaning of the poet's sensory perception of the phenomenal world, and thus share in his experience. I also argue that in fact, contrary to Nakamura's impression of Japanese aesthetic opinion which would consider the tanka "poor in artistic value", there is much artistic merit in this kind of evocative writing even though it does not operate along the lines of causal

logical development, as one can see in the Imagist's adoption of this "new"[8] evocative technique of the juxtapostioning of concrete objects which we will look at later.

The use of intuitive and concrete modes of expression is characteristic of many Japanese poems, which Nakamura attributes to the following: "[T]he Japanese language is, generally speaking, very poor in imaginative words based on abstract and universal ideas. By associating concrete and particular objects and qualities with abstract ideas, and by suffusing them with figurative suggestions of the ideas ultimately to be expressed, the Japanese writer inspires particular and emotional moods."(557) Establishing that the Japanese tend towards the concrete as a mode of expression because of the limitations of the language itself, Nakamura describes how the writer can suffuse the object with suggestions of ideas to be expresssed. He adds that "[t]he Japanese have been inclined to dislike fanciful, complicated expressions and take to simple and naive expressions"(564), describing their fondness for "simple symbolic expressions". These simple expressions have, nonetheless, the possibility of limitless complexity, as we see in the following haiku by Basho.

Around existence twine
(Oh, bridge that hangs across the gorge)
Ropes of twisted vine

Kakehashi ya
inochi wo karamu
tsuta-katsura
(Anderson 748)

Basho does not use imaginative words to describe abstract ideas here, which is a method which is starkly contrasted to Western poetry's frequent incorporation of abstract philosophical descriptions.[9]

According to Earl Miner in his numerous comparative analyses of Eastern and Western literary traditions and their products, particularly of note in his work entitled Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature, a general distinction between Oriental and Occidental poetics may be distilled to this: that Aristotelian or Western poetics are based on the notion of drama's centrality to cultural production, and are thus of a representative mimetic nature; Eastern 'lyric-based' poetics are, on the other hand, affective-expressive. (24:1990) What is most significant here is that the assumption of a poetic system founded on the representation of external reality does not apply to the literary production of the Orient, which focusses its attention on the ability of the thing itself to communicate an emotion or idea. This has phenomenal implications for the student of poetry in that a completely different approach must be taken to works of this latter nature, that is, works which do not attempt to represent, but rather seek to illuminate through phenomena and the juxtapositioning of objects.

The tendency of Japanese poetry towards simplicity, or naiveté as Nakamura describes it, is not only then a manifestation of the language's general tendency towards implicit description, but of the Japanese preference to reveal objects in themselves and

of themselves, not of representation. In a section called "Lyric in Asian Poetics"(84:1990), Miner breaks down Asian poetics into

> five basic factors: the poet, the (poet's) work, the text, the (reader's) poem, and the reader. [This] also takes into account the world (with a premise of philosophical realism) and, to some degree, the production of poetry. The heart (mind, spirit) of the poet is moved to words, as are the hearts also of the warbler and the frog. Those words of song affect others, and not simply other people, but the whole of things, including heaven and earth and spirits we cannot see. In brief, it is a poetics based on the moved poet, the poet's words, and upon moved hearers. It is the affective-expressive theory that, in one version or another, characterizes the poetics of all civilizations but one [that is, Western civilization].(84-85:1990)

Defining the lyric in order to clarify the basis of Asian poetics, Miner describes it as a "satisfaction with the celebration of the moment" (87:1990). Furthermore, he states that the character of the lyric is one of "radical presence" and that of narrative literature one of "radical continuance", where "the root of lyric is presence, [and] its means must necessarily be--not those of getting and staying on, but--those of being and therefore of intensification" (89:1990).

Miner's notion of intensification, in which the object of study in the poetry has radical presence, which can be alternately described as existence in the vertical plane of non-diachronic order,[10] is likened to what some scholars have found in Eastern poetics. Kuo-ch'ing Tu in "Chinese and Japanese Symbolist Poetics"(665) remarks that the notion of the object in the poetics of Symbolist poets displayed in the Western tradition has a

correlative in pre-modern Japanese literature. He states that Ueda Bin (1874-1916), the pioneer translator of French Symobolist poetry into Japanese, remarked that "[t]he use of symbols in poetry is not necessarily a modern innovation; it may be as old as the mountains" and that "Kakuda Kokoka[illegible]yaku (1916-63) ...understood French Symbolist poetry...[as "*shocho*" in Japanese, meaning] a kind of poetry that "patterns emotions in the shape of objects and refers to intents in the light of things."(665) The notion that Symbolist poetics may have a correlative in traditional and modern Japanese poetry is significant because it indicates again the primacy of the object in Japanese thinking. In his article, Tu quotes from the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics(836) the definition of symbolist poetry, and likens it to that which shapes the character of Oriental poetry: "Symbolist poetry is a poetry of indirection, in which objects tend to be suggested rather than named, or to be used primarily for an evocation of mood. Ideas may be important but are characteristically presented obliquely through a variety of symbols and must be apprehended largely by intuition and feeling."(667) It is my observation that while it is true that Japanese poetry is characterized by indirectness, and ideas are intuited rather than presented, objects and things tend not exactly to be "suggested" as Tu indicates, but *are* rather "named". Observe in this poem by Kikaku, a follower of Basho, that there is a concrete immediacy of the object, indicating a naming. Here, the feeling is intuited and the atmosphere is created to suggest implications of the object and its significance to the viewer. The

reader shares this emotion through the eyes of the poet, in this case, on the luminous harvest moon Kikaku has seen from inside, while presumably others might be out 'moon-viewing'[11]:

> Bright the full moon shines
> on the matting of the floor
> shadows of the pines.
>
> Meigetsu ya
> tatami-no ue ni
> matsu-no-kage
>
> (Anderson 752)

Here, objects are named, but it is the patterns of association between the matting, the pines, the moonlight, and the unobtrusive speaker which evoke the serenity of the poet and encourage the reader to feel the tranquility of the poet's emotional experience. This oblique way of inviting intuitive reception of a thing is a distinquishing feature of this poetics. Japanese poetry displays, I believe, a very strong faith in the passage of communication between the poet and the reader, such that the reader will be as moved as the poet was perceiving the phenomena.

Considering the poetics of the poetry of Japan and that of the Western world, the lyric aspect of the Oriental works necessitates an associative relationship in understanding juxtaposed elements. With this poetic function, we see that the phenomenon of language is made more perceptible in poetry than in prose texts. Roman Jakobson, in his many essays on poetry and poetics, describes this action of poetry on the associative plane.[12]

He supports a belief in the increased palpability of the sign, of the object, such as one finds in poetry, where the distance between sign and what it stands for is increased because of the activation of significant levels of understanding. The plurality associated with poetic texts may be relegated to what may visually be construed as a vertical axis, the metaphoric associative plane, where relations of a lyric poetic nature are present. This is opposed to the horizontal plane more readily associated with the narrative, abounding with metonymic relations of contiguity and description. The lyric nature of Japanese poetry, which demands that meaning be derived from layered reference and association between disparate objects, seems to be ideally suited to this vertical axis of poetics.

All poetry, Eastern and Western, tends towards the connotative rather than denotative dimension. But the relative absence of descriptive passages in popular Oriental forms of poetry, descriptive passages such as one finds in Western poems, for example, in the description of "The Cloud"[13], by Percy Bysshe Shelley, shows a propensity of the Japanese towards non-mediated association rather than more complex descriptive analogy.[14] Much of the beauty of Japanese poetry lies in the reader's ability to evoke a plurality of significance and seek the profundity of a text through the juxtapositioning of elements. Modern Western Imagist poets influenced by this impluse, such as William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and H.D., among others, successfully grasped this iconographic imagistic tendency in their work. Regarding the use of language in poetry, Ezra Pound,

propagating his imagist ideal, captures the essence of the significance of the object to Japanese lyric in poetry born of an entirely different cultural context:

> Use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something;
>
> Don't use such an expression as "dim lands of peace". It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol.
> (from "A Retrospect")
>
> Symbols--I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk.
> (from Credo)
> (Geddes 621-32)

The "natural object is always the adequate symbol". This is very much in keeping with Japanese aesthetic sensibility in that the object will be evocative in itself. Imagist poetry of the simple concrete, of a symbolist nature which uses objects of nature to evoke meaning, is simultaneously of a public and private nature. It depends on the intuition of the reader to move from the private to the larger sphere, but is not limited by the understanding of one writer, nor is the poem without artistic merit if a reader fails to grasp the specific reference, like that of associations with a particular mountain, which the author has intended.

While Miner distinguishes Western and Asian poetic systems respectively as representative versus affective-

expressive, Ernst Cassirer in "The Philosophy of the Symbolic Form" describes a mode of expressive communication, symbolism, as a universal human faculty, creating human reality by giving it symbolic form. He proposes that "[I]t has been more usual to think of art as 'reproducing' experience ...to think of it in fact mimetically"(Howe 184). Cassirer believes that mimetic theory was prevalent "up to the middle of the eighteenth century...[until it was] then largely replaced by the expressive theory". Art then no longer imitated the external world; it expressed the feelings of the artist. Cassirer points out, though, that this is hardly more than a mimetic theory in another guise; instead of reproducing the outer world, art reproduces the inner life, the life of the affections and emotions"(Howe 184-85). Though Miner does not support the notion of mimesis in the way that artistic expression could "imitate" the poet's inner life as Cassirer quoted above would have it, the emphasis symbolism places on the life of the affections and emotions of the poet reinforces Miner's thesis of the predominence of the poet's movement by the object in the affective-expressive lyric of Eastern poetics, particularly in the expressive vein. I have previously indicated that post-Romantic Western poetics has been dominated by the expressive mode, while conversely Japanese poetry, in the modern age, due to Western influence, has tended towards the intellectual. This convergence of these two formerly distinct poetic systems encourages the reader to look for the general characteristics each poetic system contains which are present in examples of the poetry of a tradition. This convergence of the two disparate poetic

systems is also where we will eventually be able to locate the poetic system which guides Japanese Canadian poetry.

Graham Hough, in an essay entitled "Symbolism", states that all literature is essentially mimetic, as the words of a language are already signs signifying something else, and differentiates between literature and symbolism so that symbolism "either tries to cut words loose from their reference altogether...or it tries to use the reference as talismans and charms (symbols) or as pictures (images)."(Howe 186) One may differentiate further the poetry of the Japanese as follows: the mind can not apprehend reality separated from itself, but can only apprehend its phenomenal aspects in an experience which unites subject and object. Phenomena are understood in a subjective context. In keeping with this mode of activity operating on the associative axis of meaning, we recall that Japanese poetry is largely dependent upon the collective memory and the social circumstances which give rise to poetry. In Japanese poetry, the symbolic images are not singly invested with the artist's sensibility. The artist artfully discloses the object which contains significance in itself, because of its existence in the context of intuited human understanding.

Finally, M.H. Abrams has differentiated between mimetic and expressive theories in The Mirror and the Lamp in such a manner that the expressive exemplifies a "work of art as essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and

feelings"(Abrams 22). Miner's definition of Asian poetics by the affective-expressive theory may differ slightly from what Abrams describes as the expressive in that the lyric achievement of Japanese poetics does not depend on the poet's mind, on his "perceptions, thoughts, and feelings", in the same way some Western poetry does. The poet's mind is not explicitly presented to the same extent in Japanese poetry as compared to Western poetry so that in the Japanese forms, the reader must concentrate on reading the objects themselves.

I have shown that the lyric nature of Japanese poetry is conducive to the play of the signifier and signified in the associative dimension, though this play in the associative dimension does not exclude Western poetry despite its "mimetic" tradition. But the prevalence of the concrete object imbued with the sensibility of the author particularly found in Japanese poetry operates, despite the author's limitations of a language which is said to lack imaginative words to describe abstract ideas, to comunicate abstract and sublime emotion. This plane of association can be understood as the plane of the collective, especially in the Japanese mind, because of the social role implicit in the action of the relationship drawn between the signifier and signified. Since the Japanese are particularly predisposed to recognize things and, therefore, emotions because of the collective nature of their society, that is, to make the appropriate associative link between the image portrayed by nature and the link in the human realm, Japanese lyric poetry is capable of encouraging the reader to draw or infer from the juxtapostitioning, rather than

the explication of, particular events. As a final illustration of the nature of this associative action, I chose an example from the famous Japanese court poet, Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241):

As I look about
What need is there for cherry flowers
Or crimson leaves?
The inlet with its grass thatched huts
Clustered in the growing autumn dusk.

Miwataseba
Hana no momojimo
Nakarikeri
Ura no tomayano
Aki no yugure.

(Miner 104)[15]

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1 Studies of a comparative nature between Japanese and Western literature often run the risk of criticism that the comparison depends upon elusive or otherwise vague standards of analysis, even to the extent that the isolation of contrastive or analogous elements found between these two widely dichotomous subjects proves sterile ground for meaningful comparison. It is hoped that this present study of Japanese Canadian poetry indicates the direct, or even necessary, emergence of a combination of two disparate poetics viewed in their poetry as a result of the position of the poet, as a product of Japanese and Western parentage.

2 Even in the modern era of Japanese society, there exists three influential co-existing religions in Japan: Confucianism, Shintoism, and Buddhism. Although there are other religions present in contemporary Japanese society, it is these three which have to a large degree influenced the thinking of many Japanese.

3 This term is derived from the structural anthropological work of Claude Levi-Strauss.

4 Earl Miner defines this notion of aware (the suffering of things) as suggestive of the anguish that takes on beauty or a sensitivity to the finest--the saddest--beauties. Both the condition and the appreciative sensibility are implied.(161: 1968)

5 See An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry (1968), wherein Miner describes the aesthetic notions which have shaped both the production and reception of poetry in Japan.

6 I.e. Mount Yoshino, Mount Fuji, etc.

7 In this chapter of non-rationalistic tendencies of the Japanese, Nakamura also posits that the work of Japanese logicians lacks the same character of formal logical inquiry as possessed by the West,

Indian, or Chinese people although the introduction of Western formal logic into Japan since the Meiji era has led to increased work in the area of formal deductive logic.(550)

8 I.e. new in the innovative sense of the Modernists who experimented with techniques to rejuvenate, reactivate, or, to borrow from Victor Schlovsky's ideal of "ostraneynei", to "make strange" poetic objects by presenting them in a non-canonized (non-Western) way.

9 See this exemplified in the poetry of William Wordsworth, such as in "Mutability" and "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood".(Allison 273-295)

10 This vertical plane refers to a later discussion I engage in with reference to Roman Jakobson and the metaphoric and metonymic poles.

11 Moon-viewing is a popular outing in which everyone engages, evident in ancient times in the towers erected at various castles for this express purpose.

12 In the "Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles", Roman Jakobson realizes that it is "the predominance of the metonomy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called 'realistic' trend,,,,[and] following the path of contiguous relationships, the realist author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time"(255). The complementary arguement would be for the predominance of metaphor in the symbolist vein.

13 From The Norton Anthology of Poetry, edited by Allison,(339).

14 Japanese poetry may be described, by contrast, as primitive in the sense that it pertains to concrete objects, but I hesitate to do so because of the negative connotation this implies considering the aesthetic merit of the poetry.

15 Makoto Ueda has described a tendency for the modern poets to adapt the ancient popular forms of the haiku and tanka to the adopted Western form of free verse, which was introduced to Japan in the late nineteenth century. The syllabic regiment of the ancient form was dropped in favour of the looser free verse form, but it is important to note that this did not entail that the Japanese poems would become as lengthy. The Japanese preference for brevity is a manifestation of the Oriental lyric form, where the lyric is of the essence of the moment, the lyric of "radical presence".

Chapter Four: The Nature Lyric and Its Manifestation in Japanese Poetry and Western Poetry

The abstract summary of the Japanese mode of thinking made earlier has led us to our present discussion of possible distinctions which may be drawn between Japanese and Western nature poetry. Here we will concentrate on a selection of nature lyrics produced by these two groups, narrowing the thematic scope of our discussion to the specific way each of the Western and Eastern cultures disclose their own peculiar identity in their poetry. Makoto Ueda argues that "Japanese poets prefer not to distinguish rigidly between the self and the external world...None of the traditional religions of Japan has conceived of human identity as distinct from other existences in nature; man has always been considered part of nature and therefore able to return to it" (Ueda 383). Japanese thinking includes an element of Shintoism,[1] which supports a belief in "spirits that reside in all kinds of things...[and in ancient instances the practice of this belief consisted of] the invocation and worship of spirits in some specific natural object, e.g. mountain, river, forest, tree, stone"(Nakamura 350). Nakamura combines the idea that Japanese held with regards to spirits in nature's objects with a description of the Japanese attitude towards spirits in nature as a "[w]ay of thinking that recognizes absolute significance in the phenomenal world [which] seems to be culturally associated with the Japanese traditional love of nature."(Nakamura 355-56), and he cites the example of the Japanese garden, which we know endeavors to

contain within its limited nexus all the elements of the cosmos. In Japanese thinking, human existence is coupled with nature, rather than considered as separate from nature, so that human presence in Japanese poetry is understood through nature and its configurations. Probably the most famous haiku poem, written by Matsuo Basho (b.1644-d.1694), illustrates the interactive attitude Japanese take towards nature:

An ancient pond
A frog jumps in
Sound of water.

furuike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto.

(Meskill ii)

A specific event in nature is presented objectively, but importantly, man's presence is indicated by the perception of sound. However, man's presence is not intrusive, which is representative of the way that Japanese aesthetics incorporates the human element, but does not allow for the intellectualization of the object.

Related to this love of nature, of the phenomenal world, is the Oriental's understanding of his place in the natural universe. According to Nakamura, the Japanese transformed inherited forms of Buddhism from China and India to make it more "this-worldly"(362) to the extent that "[i]n Japanese mythology, nothing is said about the future world,...[and] Japanese mythology as a whole is attached to this world and makes much of this

life."(Nakamura 361) The Japanese are very much concerned with the immediate, the tangible, the presence of nature and their presence within nature. As well, Nakamura proposes that "in the West, pessimism means to be wearied of existence in this world. In the case of the Japanese, by contrast , it means to be wearied only of complicated social fetters and restrictions from which they wish to be delivered. Consequently, the sense of pessimism is dispelled as soon as one comes to live close to the beauties of nature, far apart from human society....though they never cease to long for humanity"(371)

Much like the poetry of Japanese Canadians we will explore later, the modern age of Japanese writing, considered to begin around 1868, the beginning of the Meiji era, and the introduction of many Western ideas, shows a significant Western influence because of the increased cultural and economic exchange between the Eastern and Western worlds, which is ultimately displayed in the changing form of their poetry. The haiku or waka were thought to be rather restrictive in scope largely due to their revity, and the *shintaishi* ("new style" verse or free verse) eventually developed as the standard vehicle for modern Japanese poetry. The free verse form of *shintaishi* is closer to contemporary Western verse than to the forms of Japanese tradition in its increased length and its subsequent allowance for the intellectual positioning of the author; yet "through the use of image and verbal suggestion, some of the old genius of the poetic language remains visible as well."(Rimer and Morrell 48) In order to maintain that modern Japanese poetry still displays the

characteristic juxtapositioning of phenomena to portray the emotion of the poet, that the genius of the poetic language of the Japanese affords, but that is not by any means devoid in examples of Western poetry, we look to the imagery of the objects present in these poems by modern Japanese writers. The first of two modern Japanese poems chosen to illustrate the juxtapositioning of poetic objects is by Shinkichi Takehashi:

My Body

I have been broken into pieces:
those green leaves thick on the persimmon tree
are my hands and feet rustling in the wind.

That bright-coloured butterfly fluttering by
has my eyes in those dots on her wings.

The future is surrounded by
a moving wall of earth.

A dog is pregnant with the earth,
the gods sucking its pointed nipples.

Each nipple is as big as the point on a red pencil.

I have been swimming in fire and water.
A plane has flown between my straddled legs.
The sky is my body.

(Ueda 84)

Shinkichi's poem displays evocative juxtapositioning of objects, and he compounds the effect of this by positioning disparate images together. Not only does the above poem display successful juxtapositioning of objects, but in both Shinkichi's and the following poem by Hakushu Kitahara (1885-1942), the poets

capture the Japanese attitude towards the integration of nature and man through their choice of imagery.

Unrequited Love

The acacia's leaves of red and gold are falling,
Falling in the dusky autumn light.
The heartache of my unrequited love
Shivers with cold along the river where the boats
Are beached.--Softly your sighs are falling on me,
Falling like the acacia's leaves of red and gold.

(Ueda 8)

Writing in an innovative Western-influenced vein these modern Japanese poems move towards increased intellectual content. This "foreign" trend towards intellectualism, however, co-exists with another trend in modern Japanese writing, that of the maintainance of traditional Japanese aesthetic standards. Significantly, writers in both modernist modes nevertheless maintain the distinctly Japanese tendency to present objects rather objectively, with little or no intrusive authorial "narration". To further illustrate the presentation of nature in modern Japanese and Japanese Canadian poetry, I chose this comparison between a modern haiku written in the traditional vein by a prominent modern writer, Soseki Natsume (1867-1916) followed by a traditional haiku by Basho.

The crow has flown away:
swaying in the evening sun,
a leafless tree.

Karasu tonde
yuhi ni

ugoku fuyuki kana

(Soseki, in Ueda 40)

On the dead limb
squats a crow--
autumn night.

Kareeda ni
Karasu no tomarikeri
Aki no kure

(Basho, in Stryk no. 52)

Similar thematically, these poems are useful to show the semblance between modern and traditional Japanese poetry. Because of the regimented form of the haiku, seventeen syllables, the restricted subject matter of the poetry, specifically a theme of nature in a discussion of a specific event usually referring to a season, and the objective presentation of the subject, these two Japanese haiku indicate that the objective treatment of concrete phenomena has not drastically changed. Contrast these two Japanese poems to these from the "crow poems" which follow by Wallace Stevens from "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird":

V
I do not know which to prefer
the beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VIII
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

(20-21)

Both these poems by Stevens exhibit, unlike those by the Japanese, a placement of the individual poet within the perception of the object, the crow. The perception, hence the attitude, of the author is therefore a placement which forms and directs the audience's reception of the poetic object presented. Readily apparent in the phrase "I know" is the power of the poet's mind which actually mediates existence for the things of the poem.

Another modern Japanese poem, this time by Hisayo Suyama (1882-), shows moderate intellectual content

The Stream

Rushing
      and dashing
and rolling in torrents
      pounding the falls
washing the rocks
      swirling the leaves
whispering here
      crying out there
the stream goes down to a wide wide ocean.

The long voyage of water
like a human life.
--I feel like crying out
      crying out

(Davis 276)

in the simile the speaker makes between water and human existence, and the fear he consequently suffers with the realization of this image. Nature does not stand alone, and mediated through the poet's perception, objects in nature become tools for artistic comparison between external reality and man's

perception of human life. The traditional haiku form would not have permitted the simile we see in Suyama's poem, but in modern Japanese poetry we find that the slightly more relaxed expanded forms give way to descriptions of human states of mind, such as existential positions and the like, which show some influence from themes of Western literature. However, though there is more intellectualizing of objects in modern Japanese poetry, we do not witness, by and large, the same sort of individually mediated descriptive passages that one frequently finds in Western poetry.

If one looks to the Romantics, who were fond of using nature as a theme in their poetry, one will observe a different treatment of nature than that which we find in the poetry of the Japanese. Northrop Frye has described William Wordsworth as "one who saw nature as exquisitely fitted to the human mind"[2], which anticipates my ensuing discussion. Specifically, this discussion concerns the intellectual versus objective presentation of the natural object. In the following excerpt from "Lines,"[3] Wordsworth, in keeping with the tenor which colours his native thinking, displays a Western propensity to treat nature intellectually as he describes his changing understanding of it, rather than objectively presenting a scene to elucidate the poet's inner emotion. "And I have learned/To look on nature, not as in the hour/Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes/The still, sad music of humanity"(l.88-91). I suggest that Wordsworth's other poetry, including "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"[4] exhibits an underlying fabric of the individual's perception of events in a

continuum. Miner has described Romantic poetry as possessing the "hidden agenda of narrative"(123), and this is readily apparent in Wordsworth's lyrics which chronicle the growth of the poet/speaker as reflected in nature.

Rather than juxtapositioning concrete objects-- which demonstrates an incompleteness but which demands the reader's participation in the creation of the necessary link between the poem's subject, man, and the poem's object, nature--the metaphorical connection Wordsworth provides his audience with, that of the sad music of humanity being nature, directly informs the reader of the poet's experience of nature. This same attitude towards nature might have been portrayed in Japanese poetry simply by the juxtapositioning of elements, which would connote the same breadth of meaning, that of the power of nature, but would not pervade the simple presentation of the objects. The Japanese tendency rather to hint at the poet's emotion contained in juxtaposed images presented, yet allow the objects to speak for themselves, can be found in the following thematically similar haiku by Basho, which demands the interaction of the author, reader, and the text in a suggestive rather than expository nature lyric.

On the moor: from things
detached completely--
how the skylark sings!

Hara-naka ya
mono ni mo tsukazu
naku hibari

(Meskill 35)

As Northrop Frye described Wordsworth, as "one who saw nature as exquisitely fitted to the human mind", from the above poem we can see how antithetical is that position of Basho's, like other Japanese poets', who did not see nature as exquisitely suited to the human mind. Basho rather saw nature as object as interactive with the human mind, where the mind has the power to assimilate the objects of nature into poetic juxtapositions, not to bring them into particular existence within the scope of the poet's own conception, echoing the poet's own emotion. The Japanese poet's emotion, through his poem, the text, and the reader's poem, would be eventually communicated to the reader who would in turn experience the same emotion the poet felt on his initial encounter.

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1 Ancient Japanese civilization believed in the presence of spirits in objects, folk beliefs which could not be considered a distinct religion, but which were later classified by scholars as Shinto.

2 Frye, in "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology"(166)

3 The full title being "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey on revisting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798."

4 The full title is Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" from The Prelude: Selected Poems and Sonnets, 152-58.

Chapter Five: Nature as Object, As a Cultural Sign in Canadian and Japanese Poetry.

In this chapter, focussing on nature as a cultural sign in Canadian and Japanese poetry, I will begin with the thematic comparison of the presentation of nature in Japanese and Canadian poetry which Sonja Arntzen has conducted in her article entitled "The Birds Don't Sing the Same: Nature in Pre-Modern Japanese Poetry and Modern Canadian Poetry"(Tsuruta and Goossen 53-67).[1] Arntzen describes a difference she perceives in the relative importance of natural themes in Canadian and Japanese poetry.

> In the Japanese tradition, nature and poetry cannot be separated. In Canadian poetry, while descriptions of nature appear in many poems, few are written exclusively about flora and fauna. Rather, nature forms the back-drop for man who occupies center-stage, be he the poet himself, his human subjects, or the abstract intellectual concerns proper to human beings...[As well, the] Japanese tradition drew no clear distinction between man and nature. In the Canadian mind-set, however, as with the North-American-European tradition of which it forms a part, man is not only quite separate from but much more significant than nature."(Tsuruta and Goossen 54-55).

One can extend Arntzen's study of pre-modern Japanese poetry in which there is a tendency towards a treatment of nature in a "interactive" manner, versus that of a presentation of man more significant than nature as Canadian poetry displays, to that of modern Japanese poetry. Much of modern Japanese poetry takes

on the tenor of the haiku, tanka, and choka[2] poetry of pre-modern Japan. Despite the increased degree of abstract subject matter in later Japanese free verse poetry, the poems exhibit a characteristic lyricism largely dependent upon the associative plane of the individual mind and contain analogies between nature and man which illuminate man's inner nature, as we see in the following poem by Haruo Shibuya (b. 1924)

A Stone Pile

This hard, dry mass,
Sticking up in surrounding vacancy,
Disappears completely at times,
Leaving a hole scooped
In this transparent space.

Lemon-coloured coldness
Is intensified and subdued
By its rusty will, leaning a little.

Laughter of old age, strangely
Hardened and plastered,
Is kept silent
In front of me:
A severe fruitlessness.

(Ueda 186)

In accordance with what Arntzen indicates in the previous quote, nature is generally portrayed in North American-European poetry not as an objective existence apart from man's recognition of it, but as a subject existing through the observer's perception. It is not nature alone that is described, but nature imbued with human perception, nature portrayed in a different manner than we

witness in the poetry of the Japanese. One can see nature forming a back-drop for man in, for example, the Purdy poem "Arctic Rhododendrons", which is also the poem chosen by Arntzen in her comparison between Canadian poetry and traditional Japanese haiku.

Arctic Rhododendrons

They are small purple surprises
in the river's white racket
and after you've seen them
a number of times
in water-places
where their silence seems
related to river-thunder
you think of them as 'noisy flowers'
Years ago
it may have been
that lovers came this way
stopped at the outdoor hotel
to watch the water floorshow
and lying prone together
where the purged green
boils to a white heart
and the shore trembles
like a stone song
with bodies touching
flowers were their conversation
and love the sound of a colour
that lasts two weeks in August
and then dies
except for the three or four
I pressed in a letter
and sent whispering to you

(Geddes 201-02)

The distinction made earlier which determined Canadian poetry's [illegible] to exhibit nature as a back-drop for man, is an attitude

present in Purdy's poetry in the sense that nature is mediated through human perception apparent in the lines "and after you've seen them" indicating that the existence of the rhododendrons depends on human eyes. "[T]heir silence *seems*" and "*you think* of them", is a perception which necessitates relativization or intellectual positioning towards that which "seems", an analytical recognition rather than a purely objective cognition. The heavy use of the definite article "you", a covert indication of the author's own understanding of the flowers, also implies a subjective interpretation, rather than the objective description, of the lone existence of objects in nature. This non-objectivity is compounded by the Purdy's choice of such adjectives as "purged", and the abstract mental picture of "love the sound of colour". In this example of Western lyrical poetry we see that it is read as a process of the human subject and his reaction to the world, where the speaker's mind is shown encountering outside nature and ideas, and where the objects of nature are secondary to the emotions conveyed and experienced by the poet as he extracts the flowers from nature and presses them in the present the poet makes, which operates emblematically not unlike his poem.

Arntzen has compared the above poem by Purdy with one of Basho's, which she has chosen for its similarity of perception, and which goes as follows...

> Softly, softly
> the yamabuki petals scatter?
> sound of waterfall.
>
> horo horo to

yamabuki chiruka
taki no oto

Arntzen analyzes, in these poems by Purdy and Basho, the lyric juxta-positioning of the waterfall and the flowers, the petals of which "acquire through proximity the awesome din of the cascade"(Tsuruta and Goossen 60), but indicates that the Purdy poem is "discursive in mode,... us[ing] reason to draw the connection", showing how "[g]enerally, as here, a more intellectual treatment of nature dominates Canadian poetry"(Tsuruta and Goossen 60).

In the following poem by Wordsworth we see the Pantheistic notion of the presence of God as identical to the material universe or the forces of nature. This common Romantic sentiment may be likened to the Japanese Shinto-inspired notion of spirits present in every element of creation. Both these approaches to nature show a close interaction of the poet with nature, but in the Occidental poetry we find nature realized in the mental ruminations of a poet; man gives form to nature. In Oriental poetry, nature is recognized intuitively as possessing power. The Japanese do not give form to nature as individuals Western poets tend to do, as will become apparent in the following study of the theme of threatening nature in Canadian poetry. Nature, as an intellectual extension of the human mind in Western poetry, is the recipient of mental projections. If the poet or perceiver of nature feels comfortable with his or her positioning with regards to other circumstances, it is unlikely that they will project negative values onto nature. By this same token,

Wordsworth viewed nature positively as a possessor of the source from which all things arise

> ...And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with a joy
> Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought.
> And rolls through all things...

(Lines.: 1 93-102, 96-101)

In his treatment of nature, Wordsworth imbues the natural object with his individual sensibility. As "one who saw nature as exquisitely fitted to the human mind", Wordworth fits the object of perception to his own conceptions, that of his own mental growth. As Miner observed, Romantic poetry seems to have a hidden agenda, that of narrative, which implies how the author's orchestration of the poem towards fulfillment describes his own historical movement and enforces the notion of a continuum. These notions of progression and movement of narrative applied here to Wordsworth's poetry imply the chronological ordering of human perception, which remains in stark contrast to the dominant mode of the Eastern lyric, exhibiting "presence" in intensification of the object and in the object's relative stasis. As we will also see in the following paragraph, nature is mediated as an object of human understanding particularly in the Western tradition.

Like Arntzen, other authors, including other contributors to Nature and Identity in Canadian and Japanese Literature, have determined the difference between a Canadian presentation of nature and a Japanese one to be typically characterized by the former's threatening versus the latter's interactive attitudes between nature and man. In his "Preface to An Uncollected Anthology", Northrop Frye describes "two central themes in Canadian poetry: one a primarily comic theme of satire and exuberance, the other a primarily tragic theme of loneliness and terror"(166). Observe the latter theme of terror in these two poems by Margaret Atwood under the title "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer":

I

He stood, a point
on a sheet of green paper
proclaiming himself the centre,

with no walls, no borders
anywhere; the sky no height
above him, totally un-
enclosed
and shouted:

Let me out!

VII

Things
refused to name themselves; refused
to let him name them.

The wolves hunted
outside.

On his beaches, his clearings,
by the surf of under-
growth breaking
at his feet, he foresaw
disintegration
      and in the end
through eyes
made ragged by his
effort, the tension
between subject and object,

the green
vision, the unnamed
whale invaded.

(Geddes 462, 464)

As Arntzen has discerned in other examples of the Canadian nature lyric, nature is here portrayed as life-threatening. If the

Prevalent here is what Frye has described as the centre of the Canadian tragic theme, "a theme of the indifference of nature to human values". In obvious opposition to this attitude are those poetic themes of the Japanese of rejuvenation in nature and of man's close interaction with nature's elements in a positive, non-threatening way. Nature is seldom portrayed as malevolently life-taking in Japanese poetry because Japanese man does not see himself as pitted against the insurmountable forces of nature. Nature, rather, is loved, worshipped, and coupled with human nature. To expand Frye's notion, I argue that the centre of the tragic theme in Canadian nature lyric is significant precisely *because* it revolves around a human perception of the "indifference" of nature to human values. The tragedy stems from the poet's perceived inability to alter his or her destiny, which is where the notion of the indifference of nature in the tragic portrayal of nature in Canadian literature is founded. In the following excerpts from a poem by Atwood, the tragic sacrifice of a son to nature's avarice is lamented by the poet.

Death of a Young Son by Drowning

He, who navigated with success
the dangerous river of his own birth
once more set forth...

...His feet slid on the bank,
the world took him;
he swirled with ice and trees in the swollen water...

...he looked out, reckless adventurer
on a landscape stranger than Uranus
we have all been to and some remember....

> ...I planted him in this country
> like a flag.
> (Geddes 467)

The speaker, feeling vindictive towards natural forces, plants the memory of the son "in this country/ like a flag" as though hostile nature was to blame for the loss of the son.

Nature as a cultural sign, manifest in Canadian lyrics and Japanese nature lyrics, differs considerably between each of the two poetics. Canadian literature, as I indicated above, tragically portrays man pitted against the indifferent forces of nature due to a Canadian's perception of his or her own circumstance in relation to the presence of nature. In an interview conducted by Gary Geddes contained in Twentieth Century Poetry and Poetics, Purdy inadvertently confirms this. In response to the editor's query, "In "The Country North of Belleville" there is a sense of beauty and terror in the description. Do you find the Canadian landscape hostile?" Purdy responds: "Landscapes hostile to man? I think man is hostile to himself. Landscapes, I think , are essentially neutral."(Geddes 633) Purdy's perception of the Canadian attitude typically taken towards nature, attributing to nature the power of hostility--when, as Purdy states, it is essentially man who is hostile--supports the hypothesis of the negative mental positioning of the Canadian poet, as opposed to that of the Japanese poet, with respect to nature. I propose that the cultural sign of the "tragic" position of man in nature in the Canadian nature lyric is largely characterized by fear, particularly

concerning the common Canadian problem of identity and of finding one's place. The tragedy for the Canadian is that they will be personally consumed by forces beyond their individual control. The feeling of the destructive power of nature is no more apparent in Canadian literature as it is in in the following poem by Atwood:

This is a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago.
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print:blurred lines and gray flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you see in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake, and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where
precisely, ot to say
how large or small I am:
the effect of water
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,

eventually
you will be able to see me.)

(Atwood 11)

The terror the landscape holds for the above speaker swallowed by it is clear. As a final example of the cultural sign of nature in Canadian poetry, this poem will presage our discussion in the next chapter. Whereas the Canadian poets frequently recognize the action of forces of nature against man, the sometimes negative portrayal of nature in Nisei poetry finds its impetus not in the threatening power of nature, but rather in the threatening power experienced by the Nisei of Canadian people.

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1 In the preface to Nature and Identity in Japanese and Canadian Literature, Kinya Tsuruta suggests to the collection's contributing panelists that they compare one Japanese novel with a single Canadian novel with similar themes in order to restrict the parameters, so that a comparison of two diverse literatures will have some feasibility, and a contrast of the meanings arising from the inevitable differences between the treatments of similar themes will prove significant. The contributors, in their turn, describe the differing attitudes towards nature found in Japanese versus Canadian writing which summarily prove interactive versus threatening. This worthwhile and successful comparison illustrates what Heh-hsiang Yuan defines as the aim of East-West comparative study, consisting of "a branch of literary study which compares literary works of both the East and the West beyond the confines of national boundaries, seeking mutual understanding through exchage and comparison of ideas, denying not the uniquenss of a national tradition but giving its manifestation a new dimension and making Comparative Literature a universal medium of communication.", which A. Owen Aldridge emphasizes is a definition which "speaks of comparing individual works of the East and the West rather than comparing the two cultures...an analysis of forms of communication which resemble each other."(fr. Deeney, John J. ed. Chinese-Western Comparative Literature Theory and Strategy. Hong Kong, 1980, viii)

2 The choka is a long form of Japanese verse which alternates between 5 and 7 syllable lines, until the last two, which are both 7 syllables each.

Chapter Six: The Cultural Sign of Nature in the Lyric Poetry of the Issei, As Opposed to That of Nature in the 'Nisei" Poetry of Identity

In an article entitled "Landscape and the Poetic Act: The Role of Haiku Clubs for the Issei" from Landscape, Audrey Kobayashi discusses the importance of nature for the Japanese members of poetry clubs in forming their sense of identity, realized in the social and aesthetic experience of creating nature poetry. Kobayashi shares a similar attitude to what I will elucidate in this thesis, that "[a] sense of place...involves an integration of many aspects of the landscape--history, memory, conflict, institutions, hopes, values, experience"(42). The integration process of immigration psychologically linked to place, and place, or lack thereof, will be an important theme in the lyric of identity in Issei and Nisei poetry. Kobayashi finds that there was a need among the first generation Canadians to "communicate with others, to establish a relationship with the landscape that could be read and understood by others, the need to establish a moral and cultural place, and the need to acknowledge an over-riding set of values, culturally and socially derived..."(43). Because Japanese poetry is an art which encourages participation from anyone, any Japanese could feel part of the group and gain a sense of cultural security from this. This Issei drive to articulate their landscape will pave the foreground for our discussion of Japanese immigrant poetry.

The reality of nature, as opposed to the nature of reality, was, for the Japanese Canadians Kobayashi studies, significant: they were "intensely aware of the aesthetic aspects of the physical landscape with an emphasis on the human place in that landscape: a recognition that landscape is strongly related to, and perhaps seen metaphorically as, the social structure; and that the new landscape should be justified in terms of the one left behind in Japan-- a landscape of history, tradition, and precedent."(44) One sees that the haiku created in Canada represented more than simply artistic curiosity. Because of the close association with the landscape emphasizing human place in it, nature poetry was, in a sense, a way of coming to terms with one's surroundings, one's place, and one's identity. Attempting to come to terms with what they perceived as Canada's lack of tradition, history, and precedent, the Issei attempted to create a new myth, a new place. The position of nature with regard to Japanese Canadians is one of trust placed in the phenomenal world. Thus the Japanese had faith in their ability to culturally position themselves within the realm of sensory objects perceived in nature. Again this illustrates a phenomenon unique to Japanese sensibility, that of nature's role in determining one's place.

This haiku by Midori Kobayashi illustrates the Issei experience of cultural identity through poetry:

> The peaches blossom
> after three years of nourishing
> And I am happy.
>
> San nen no saka

E mo utsukushii
Momo no hana.

(circa 1940, fr. Kobayashi, A. 46)

Clearly, a sense of belonging has been established in this poem, an artistic idea and identity mediated through the objectively presented landscape. Transplanting the Japanese topoi of pink peach blossoms, which herald the coming of spring and are thus associated culturally in Japan as symbols of rejuvenation and of hope, this Issei poem displays, as the poets discussed below do, a positive attitude towards the eventual integration of the poet within the new country, thematically portrayed by the poet's relationship with nature. As well, the "I" of the English translation is not present in the original Japanese version, indicating the Japanese lack of "personal positioning" and emphasizing the Japanese tendency to downplay the individual and define oneself within a social sphere.

A sense of belonging and identity as Canadians did not come easily for early Japanese as we saw in their history. Nonetheless, the optimism of the immigrants is reflected in many of their poems, among them this tanka by Tomio Eto, an Issei Canadian, from her tryptich "Footprints" contained in Maple: Poetry by Japanese Canadians With English Translations, a collection of poems gathered in 1975 to commemorate the centennial of the Japanese in Canada:

The frequent moves
And relocation were unavoidable.
Such are the evils of war.
With hope, Toronto
Is now final home.

I-ku-ta-bi no
I-do mo yo-gi-na-shi
Se-n-ka na ra
I-ma to-ro-n-to wo
Tsu-i no su-mi-ka ni

(Nishimura 16)

The optimism of Eto's poetry is also present in that of Seizen Higa in his triad of poems entitled "Achievement" in the same collection:

Prejudice and
Discrimination endured.
That was long ago.
Looking back upon the past
Enjoy the present.

He-n-ke-n to
Sa-be-tsu ni ta-e-shi
To-o-ki hi wo
Fu-ri-ka-e-ri mi-te
I-ma wo ta-no-shi-mu

(Nishimura 35)

This poetry of the Issei, the optimistic poetry of the return to a sense of well-being, is proof of the process of Japanese acculturation and "cultural acclimatization" to Canadian nature. With this the Issei sense of place is established.

The Issei, speaking Japanese as their first language, maintained a degree of "Japaneseness"[1] in their formation of haiku and tanka poetry clubs, and, being closer to the cultural inheritance of Japan, their familiarity with the Japanese poetic tradition and its inherent topoi led to a kind of covert cultural communication in this particular "language". The language of the poetic tradition of the nature lyric developed, in a sense, a mythic

identity for these Issei, who found common roots despite their transplantation in the Western world. To illustrate, we take this poem by Hosui Kobayashi:

> Even here in a foreign country
> Yoshino's cherries blossom.
>
> Gaikoku ni
> Kite mo Yoshino no
> Sakura ka na.
>
> (Kobayashi, A. 46)

The reference to Mount Yoshino is representative of a "reinforced traditional social metaphor that could act back, dialectically, upon the minds of the poet and those who shared the poetry to provide cohesion and continuity"(Kobayashi 46), a metaphor which aided in establishing a unique identity for these Japanese Canadians. Traditionally evoking sentiment for the Japanese by the topical allusion to Yoshino, the use of this symbol in the surroundings of a new home established and reinforced a collectively held mythology of meaning, which contributed to their understanding of place, their Issei identity. On the other hand, for the Nisei, the second generation Japanese Canadians, this was impossible. They were not only increasingly unfamiliar with the collective mythos of Japan, but they were taught English as their first language, severing them from the inheritance of their cultural voice.[2] I will discuss the problem of language after first looking at the problem of place for the Nisei.

The optimism and success of the Issei with regards to their integration with the landscape and their identity is not apparent

in the poetry of Kogawa and other Nisei writers. Their relationship with the landscape is a troubled one, which they have not yet been able to use to define their identity. Although a Nisei poet, Carol Matsui's poem which follows below shows nature to be a non-threatening subject, but this poem also does not necessarily thematically feature the Japanese Canadian problem of self-identity. When poetry is written about self-identity, as identity reflected in nature, however, nature is often portrayed as a negative entity.

You birds
who dip and circle
high
between the freeways
lithe gliders
on a soot coral sky
what do you covet
in the cloverleafs below
and stalk
with such urban skill
what
enticing enough
to tie you here
in this piece of sky
spirits
in rein?

(West Coast Review, 16:1, 20)

The personal experience of Nisei Canadians grappling with the problem of nature in their poetry is understood socio-culturally as the result of a rift in self-identity. While it is true that the Japanese generally show a positive integration and interaction with nature, and that the poetry of the Nisei illustrates

a need for integration, their identity poetry also illustrates the unsuccessful union of these second generation Canadians with the Canadian environment. Nisei poets struggling to come to terms with their identity through their poetry have not shared a tendency to form clubs and cultural groups within which to establish their identity as the Issei had. The haiku clubs formed by Issei poets enabled them to share their cultural inheritance through their poetry by referring back to traditional poems, social metaphors, and a communal structure exhibiting faith in nature. The Issei thus constructed a myth or a history for themselves which, being unattainable by the second generation, forced the latter group to look elsewhere.

Gerry Shikatani acknowledges the need for a myth for contemporary Nisei Japanese Canadians in his preface to Paper Doors: An Anthology of Japanese-Canadian Poetry, the need to contribute towards a communal myth through language and poetry. An apt description of the problem of identity read through the nature lyric of their poetry is found in the poem "Zen Graveyard," which deals with the problem of identity Kogawa underwent as a Japanese Canadian both in Canada and in Japan, describing the confusion of the poet without a country.

Zen Graveyard

Thick night mist
Mountainside, stone ghosts, graves
Rising in steps into trees
Strange familiarity
Small girl once upon a time
Red and white kimono, short hair

Not here perhaps but somewhere
A wild boar perhaps, perhaps not
Waterfall, a sound not unlike a violin
Bell tone of insect, praying mantis nearby
Curled coloured snails on mossy trees--
To have to stand alone here
In this almost place when
Once upon a time, perhaps--

("About Japan"14)

In this poem, the voice suffers some confusion as to her positioning, her identity, as seen in the questioning tone of "perhaps", being neither here nor there, connotatively neither Canada nor Japan. This concept of identity as related to place is an important reflection of Japanese poetry because of the acknowledged Japanese tendency to associate place, specifically a place in nature, with particular connotations and with identity of self. Japanese poetry is largely concerned with the actual nature of things, of the physical configuration of the object which connotes the interior state of the subject's mind. That this above poet cannot find her place is indicative of her struggle to pinpoint the physical which will lead her to the mental discovery of self. This poetic system of self-discovery is different from that of the West, the latter being a system of self-discovery which focuses more on interior states of an individual, and rather than presenting the subject predominantly as inferred from the representation of the natural world which is the preferred mode in Kogawa's poem, the self-discovery of Western poets generally occurs in the mind of the poet, or through the back-drop of nature for the mind of the poet.

Tamio Wakayama[3], who succeeds in creating a mystical/mythical relationship with the Canadian landscape while developing a uniquely Japanese Canadian identity, published a powerful collection of poetic photographs whose captions read thus:

A Portfolio: Quatsino

I was born just before the outbreak of the Pacific War
and spent the first five years of my life in a concentration camp for Japanese Canadians in the interior of B.C.
At the end of the war we were forced to relocate west[4] of the Rockies
and so I suffered the ultimate indignity
of having to grow up in Ontario.
I returned to the West Coast several years ago and spent six months in the bush,
living in a plastic bubble and photographing the Cosmic Logging Company.
On a mountain top on Thurlow Island I shot my first deer which I skinned, gutted, and eventually ate.
Since then my dubious purpose in life has been to photograph this primordial ritual and produce a sequence of slaughter, sustenance, and woman,
as the stunning climax to a nude series that I had begun over ten years ago on the rolling dunes of Prince Edward Island's battered north shore.
The hunt, however, was postponed for five years by an intense period of coming to terms with my history. I moved into the tattered remains of what was once a thriving community of pre-war Japanese in Vancouver's Powell Street area
and joined up with a band of errant Japanese. Together we spent two years discovering and sketching with photographs and text, a worthy outline of the lives of our parents and grandparents. The result was a book and an exhibit which has toured extensively in Canada, the States, and Japan.

> In the pocess we have forged a new identity for ourselves and a dynamic community which continues to sound the depth of the Japanese Canadian character. Having completed this endeavor I went to Quatsino Sound to kill a deer and conclude the main body of my work. My model was Haruko: a consummate artist, the creator of these fine masks, and the first naked Japanese I photographed.
> For three weeks we scoured the length and breadth of Quatsino Sound and a good apart of the Pacific Ocean in a twelve foot skiff, but the deer eluded us. However we did manage to bring back these images on masks which echo the enigma of Noh in the rain forest and kelp beds and rivers that cut through the rock of our Pacific nation.
> (West Coast Review 16:1, 21-64)

In this poetic text one can see that the brevity of description encourages the recipient's imagination, an imagination which is titillated with the juxtapositioning of the writer's problem of identity with the imagery of killing a deer. In this case nature is presented in a positive manner, not as a threatening beast, but as one with man, with man as a part of the land. Wakayama has chosen to position his story of one-ness with nature against the background of the difficulty of finding one's place in urban society, in Ontario and in Vancouver. In his spare poetic text, Wakayama succeeds in articulating the prevalent attitude of many Japanese, of the positive character of nature. Though this Japanese Canadian treats nature positively as an interactive force with man, other Nisei poetry we will look at will show a general tendency to reinforce a theme of nature as possessing a threatening power, construed by Nisei poets as such because of the action of the dominant class, projected into portrayals of the

Canadian environment, as persecuting the "other", the racially segregated Japanese Canadians.

"In the Woods", a section of poetry in Kogawa's collection Woman in the Woods contains many poems about the Japanese Canadian experience, and indicates by its title that the woman has not yet come to recognize herself. Kogawa, like the Japanese, tends to exhibit a close association with nature, and this poet seeks her ethnic identity through nature lyrics which largely thematize an interaction with it. Metaphorically her own woman in the woods, this writer indicates that she shares a close association with nature, but because of her negative racial experience, this positive identifying tie has not been successfully completed. She is not one with nature. Kogawa is threatened by it, but she does not tragically portray it as a potentially life-taking subject as other Canadian poets might. To her, nature is a life-giving thing, but the Canadian wilderness is not without its thorns. I will show that it is not so much nature itself which threatens Kogawa's existence, but that being forced into harsh climates and circumstances due to the human folly of racial discrimination causes her to portray nature in her poetry as dangerous. Her imaginative projections of the threatening character ascribed to Canadian forests is not a feeling of nature's malevolence, but of human malevolence.

Unlike the Issei, Kogawa cannot seem to find a country or a place she can return to. In the section of A Choice of Dreams entitled "Forest Creatures", which thematize her experience as a child growing up in Slocan, an incarceration camp in the interior of British Columbia, the forest, a manifestation of nature which is

usually loved by the Japanese, becomes a threatening place. In terms of the Japanese attitude towards nature, the following Japanese Canadian poem differs in that it presents nature as a harbour of danger, rather than as a delivering force. This may be attributed to the fear and confusion Kogawa suffered as a result of the Evacuation, in turn resulting in her choice to present nature as having the human quality of persecution.

Snakes

Suddenly in the woods a
Green and yellow snake as if he
Slithered down my back
A moving rope of wind slinking an instant
Barber shop sign round my spine
And as I clambered out of the woods--
Suddenly on the path a presence
Of children, one fearful whispering
"Chinese" and the other
Moving swiftly past--

("Forest Creatures" 59)

The feared snake which slinks its way into the core of her being is for Kogawa an effective image to describe the total invasion of a threatening place, in this case understood metaphorically as Canada, which has turned its back on the assimiliatative hopes of the Japanese who might metaphorically have embraced the forest. Kogawa's juxtapositioning of nature and man echoes the Japanese attitude of the intrinsic nature of the two, and in this poetic rendering of menacing tension, where the child does not feel safe either in the woods or in the open, there is an indication that the author is losing her identity on this threatening Canadian soil.

Japanese poetry, where nature is treated primarily as a non-threatening subject, lies in stark contrast to this Japanese Canadian product.

In the following poem by Kogawa, set in Japan, one again recognizes the topos of nature as closely tied to a sense of identity for the Japanese Canadian writer.

This Is a Clearing

This is a clearing
There is the forest
This is the forest
There is the clearing
My gentle relatives are standing in dark sunlight
Whispered about with monumental propriety
Gathering on the occasion of a wedding
To impale and dismember a missing relative
Chanting a creed "We belong. We belong."
I stand on the edge
If I enter the forest I am lost
If I enter the clearing I am still lost
I move in a direction
Chanting a creed, "We belong. We belong."
A large tree cracks

("About Japan" 18)

In the above poem the author searches for herself in the family, and then in nature, but again cannot find her place. The trees and the clearing repeated in the opening lines emphasize the attempt by the speaker to establish what is good, a solid relationship of identity which she can enter into, against which the final image of the cracking tree implying severance, recognized by the poet as that quality which will characterize her relationship to nature and

her identity, is sharply contrasted. It is significant to note that the poet, Kogawa, is "individualized" in her self-perception, appearing to locate her own voice with repetition of the "I" and "we belong" in her poem as it displays the inner mental state of the author, rather than focussing solely on concrete objects, a focus which would be in keeping with the Japanese mode of presentation I outlined in an earlier chapter. The reader is given a sense of a conjuring magic, of an attempt to establish and feed a growing myth, in the images presented by Kogawa. But despite the personalization of the poem, the reader is, nonetheless, primarily presented with concrete images which are not coloured excessively by self-reflexion or surrealistic significance on the poet's behalf. The objects of her poems remain objects in themselves. Kogawa, like other Japanese Canadian poets, is primarily an imagist of objects, not of emotions. Theirs is not a richly textured verse, though it has the capability of profundity all the same, displaying their psychological existence as part of things outside themselves through concrete phenomena.

The above relationship Kogawa experiences with the landscape is described as if it were a specific moment in time, yet it also maintains a certain timelessness. A specific event is described, just as one finds in traditional Japanese haiku poetry, yet despite the specificity of the occasion, the poem attains a degree of existential synchronicity, or presence in the cultural memory of individuals, in a flux, because of the non-discursivity of the poem and because of the poem's lack of progressive action. Both the traditional Japanese form and Kogawa's Japanese

Canadian form demand the reader's associative power. The timelessness of events such as that of the mountainside and the red and white kimono, displayed but not described, in "Zen Graveyard" even with the addition of the phrase "Once upon a time" which is even in the Western tradition chronologically "out of time" communicate a profound feeling that the things that have happened to the speaker are part of a grander scheme than the author's own experience. Kogawa manages to outline a personal experience while refraining from completing the picture, yet she hints at the picture's, life's, enormity. She utilizes imagery of death juxtaposed with the speaker's search for a birth or origin, shrouded in mists which hint at the human flux of life, but it is the (literally) concrete objects, the graves, which are presented to the reader's own imagination, and which serve to indicate the temporality of the objects of this world. The poet, breaking from the stricter, sparse description which might be more characteristic of early Japanese poetry, admits a mental image into her poem, that the graves of Japanese people seem "oddly familiar" to the young Canadian poet, hinting at the ancestry felt in her blood. However, the intellectual probing characteristic of, for example, metaphysical poets is not present here in Kogawa's poetry. Exploring the landscape of her ancestry, physically, the poet does not seek through intellectualized imagery to illustrate the significance of the landscape with absolute reference to herself.

What is remarkable about Kogawa's poetic production is that the second collection of poetry, A Choice of Dreams , takes on a different character concerning nature itself in the poetry, though

the poet is also trying to come to terms with her identity. The first collection, The Splintered Moon focusses on a woman's experience of love and life, while the second, A Choice of Dreams, describes a Japanese Canadian woman's experience of social identity. The abundance of natural imagery in this latter group of poems suggests that the problem of integration which the poet undergoes is directly associated to and mirrored in natural imagery. This tendency to use the exterior physical world to explicate or elucidate inner states, as I argued in chapter three, has been a common tendency favoured time and again by the Japanese. Not only does Japanese poetry largely thematize nature, and with it man, as he is considered a part of nature, but, in her poetry of A Choice of Dreams, Kogawa, like the Japanese poets, relies heavily on natural imagery juxtaposed with the human object so that scenes in nature come to illuminate her human nature. This leads eventually by association to a "social" identity for Kogawa as she attempts to assert her position within both Japanese and Canadian cultures. As the word "dreams" from the title of her collection of poems indicates, the attempt to find self-identity in the passage between the two cultures eludes her, and hence Kogawa's poetry presents the difficulty of belonging to either.

The cultural sign of nature in Nisei lyric poetry is defined in the passage of influence between the diverse productions of Western and Eastern sources. While the Issei have been able to maintain a closer connection with their native cultural production and its inevitable poetic references, and have thus found their "place" in Canada, the Nisei have suffered a marked inability to

situate themselves as their parents have. Canadian and Japanese elements are simultaneously present in second generation Japanese Canadian nature lyrics, and they have developed a mode of writing which reflects this: their mode of writing exists between that of the traditional Japanese and the Western. This Nisei ambiguity of cultural influence will be echoed in their positioning with the problem of identity. In the following chapter, I will describe the problem of language for the Nisei as it pertains to the problem of identity we have looked at in the nature lyric.

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1 Japaneseness is also a word used by Kogawa to describe the possibility of a Japanese character colouring hers and other Nisei writing.

2 A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977 opens as follows:
In the summer of 1973, I met an old Japanese man in a government mental institution. Through his medical record, I found out that he was put there 32 years ago. He was arrested in 1941 and committed to the hospital for not carrying his registration card identifying him as a person of Japanese origin. On my regular visits, I tried to talk to him in Japanese, but he said, "Don't speak Japanese. They are watching us." I tried to talk to him in English, but he could not speak English. His identity had been totally destroyed.(Sakata 3)

3 Collaborating editor for A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977.

4 In his poem, Wakayama actually uses the word "west", which may be a mistaken indication of direction, as he was forced to grow up in Ontario, geographically located east of where the evacuation camps were centred in the Canadian Rockies.

Chapter Seven: The Emergence of a Poetics of "Nisei" Poetry of Identity

A significant observation Miner makes in Comparative Poetics is the following: "It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that concern with language is as symptomatic of lyric presumptions about literature as concern with representation is of dramatic presumptions"(26). Language, stressed here in Miner's discussion of the lyric because of the perceived Asian dependency on the operation of the sign in a lyric context, will prove indispensible to our discussion of Japanese Canadian poetry and the anticipated problem of language it reveals. Miner's emphasis on language proves significant to our discussion of Japanese Canadian poetry for the following reason. If the lyrically founded poetics of the Japanese focusses on language sign-objects themselves, while the Western system typically tends to ascribe import to representation, one must determine where the poetic language of the Nisei Japanese Canadians lies, particularly as this may have repercussions in the practical realm of experience of ethnic writers, capable of either suffering segregation or finding access to meaning in the language of the dominant culture.

Of note is that these second generation Canadians display the Japanese tendency toward ineffability rather than verbosity, where much is understood in the silences between words, rather than in explanation. Where the language of everyday speech is concerned, the Japanese lack of pronouns in personal addresses to specify "you" and "I" to designate the subject and the speaker

tends to decrease the importance of the individual and stress the social context in which something is said. This has been attributed to the communal agrarian nature of ancient Japanese rural economies, where much importance was attached to the community within which one existed, rather than to the particular life of an individual. Greater importance was attached to the harmony of the group, such that the highest virtue came to be "the sacrifice of the self for the sake of the sovereign, the family (especially the parents), or the community"(414). Though Japanese Canadians are quite distant from the agrarian communities which influenced Japanese linguistic practice, the lack of the individual as the primary figure in their poetry is, however, a manifestation of the stress placed on the social context from which the poetry arises.

What differentiates Japanese writing from that of other ethnic Canadian minority writers is that the majority of other non-native Canadian writers have inherited the Euro-centric poetics of mimesis. The distinction Miner makes between the Eastern and Western poetic systems, and the Japanese Canadian system which I have found subject to the influence of both, contains, at heart, the problem of language. It may be said that the voice of the Japanese Canadian poets we will study is bifurcated, in a sense, as the cultural products of mixed parentage. The problem of identity for the Japanese Canadian is linked with the problem of language, particularly because of the lyric tendency in their nature poetry of identity. Because the evocative character of lyric, as I determined earlier in this thesis on the

subject of Japanese poetics, lyric depends [illegible]uage in a particular way to convey meaning as compared to representative modes which generally characterize the dramatic tradition. Japanese Canadian poetry reflects a strong dependence on the Eastern mode of communication of the lyric through language because of its minimalist tendency to focus on the object. Unable to articulate themselves easily in either the language of the Japanese or the English, the Nisei were in danger of losing their voice between two languages, themselves between two identities, which they escape to a degree because of their tendency towards concreteness in poetry.

The Issei wanted their offspring, despite regard for traditional Japanese values and customs, to forgo the linguistic trappings of their native past so that they might not suffer oppression themselves. Giving birth on Canadian soil, the Issei raised their children according to Japanese customs and values, and this tradition was eventually coupled with the newly learned values and language of the English Canadians as these children went to school and expanded beyond the frontier of their home into the social sphere. Gerry Shikatani captures this bi-cultural identity of the Japanese Canadian by his incorporation of Japanese words into his poetry, seen in A Sparrow's Food: Poems 1971-1982.

Smell of Incense in My 25th Year

the sweet smoke of burning incense

is in the winter room,

sandalwood, perhaps, who knows?

ash.

my father has passed away

ashes in the oak urn

I kneel by the Hotoke-san

juzu gently wraps my hands together

repeat the Nembutsu of Jodo Shinshu

silken ash of incense stick falls only down.

I cannot recollect the feeling of Spring![1]

(62-63)

The bifurcation characteristic of the Japanese Canadian experience reflected in Nisei poetry finds its correlative in other Asian writing. In the introduction of Another Way to Dance: Asian Canadian Poetry, Cyril Dabydeen states why he has chosen the poets in his anthology, describing them as

> those who have responded to the genius and challenge of being Asian-Canadian [specifically, writing in English] while being distinctively themselves as they seek to resolve in their art what has often been called "the double experience": of being an Asian in Canada, even though one might be as far afield as a second or third generation Canadian (e.g. Kevin Irie, Gerry Shikatani, or Joy Kogawa). (11)

Even Dabydeen isolates the Nisei writers as victims struggling to articulate themselves in English, as this pertains to the notion of the "double experience". Dabydeen's thesis of the double experience may be extended not only to the language of poetic expression, but to the mode of poetic expression, I propose, in the poetics of Eastern and Western traditions present together in the poetry of the Nisei, as I will show after a discussion of the problem of language in Nisei poetry.

Fundamental to our discussion of the poetry of the Japanese Canadians is an understanding of the socio-historical milieu we discussed in chapter two from which the poetry arises. We keep in mind, however, the advice of Gerry Shikatani, who indicates that "though one might develop a notion of an absolute and exclusive genre of poetry which addresses "Japaneseness" and historical data such as the Evacuation,...this is dangerous if it assumes disproportionate authority, sacrificing the interests of poetry in the name of ethnocentrism, subjecting the literature to stereotype."(12) Trying to understand the character of Japanese Canadian poetry in Canada, whether or not it is influenced by Eastern or Western poetics, or both, or if it even exists as a separate sensibility, and without intending its subjection to a stereotype, I asked Kogawa if she feels a marked difference between Japanese Canadian writing and thinking, and Canadian writing and thinking. Exhibiting an attitude similar to Shikatani's, she answered: "I am not sure we [the Nisei] form a school of writing that is so different. You have to look at separate writers to

see a strand, and I am not sure what kind of association you can make."

My question was not in vain, though, as Kogawa prefaced the above answer by mentioning Gerry Shikatani's style, a style which, according to her, "exhibits a lot of silence and space", and this she described is "very Japanese". Some critics have described Kogawa's writing as "evocative, eloquently carved silence"(Dabydeen 10), which might inadvertently link her poetry to "a school" with the poetry of Shikatani, though Kogawa states that she does not see a strong sylistic similarity between her and Shikatani's writing, nor between her and Roy Kiyooka's writing, and duly cautioned me that they should be analyzed separately. Though I heed Kogawa's suggestion, I also argue that there is some ground for comparative analysis of the Nisei poets limited though it may be, found in their mutual problem in finding a cultural voice to articulate their experience and in the treatment of nature and the object which their poetry of ethnic concern manifests.

In the interview with Kogawa I attempted to determine where the writer felt her poetry might belong: specifically, whether she considers her writing as typically Canadian or Japanese Canadian and whether or not her poetry exhibits a similar approach to the subject and a Western type of poetics which generally characterize Canadian poetry. Stating that most of her poetry was written before her prose, her answer was that her primary identification in her writing was not an ethnic one, which we assume means that her search for understanding her own

female identity was of a more personal nature than my question presumed. This is verified by Kogawa's works, including The Splintered Moon (1967), A Choice of Dreams (1974), Jericho Road (1977), and Woman in the Woods (1985) beginning with collections, as the titles indicate, which pivot thematically upon the notion of separation, and then tending, in later collections, to gravitate towards the problem of ethnic identity. The earliest collection, The Splintered Moon, focuses much more on the individual herself, Joy Kogawa. Obasan(1981), a culturally autobiographical prose masterpiece[2] is of a much more overtly ethnic nature than her poetry. As far as her earlier writing, her poetry, went, Kogawa indicated that she was not sure where a specifically "ethnic" concern entered into it, other than in an observable "ethnic clump" in Woman in the Woods and in the direct reflection contained in A Choice of Dreams. She explained the ethnic quality of her poetry simply as a writer's attempt to write about his/her own experience, so that the blatant racism she experienced and wrote about was, as she described, "only part of her whole experience."

The whole experience which informs the Nisei Japanese Canadian culture, as I have argued in their nature poetry, is a dichotomous blend of both Western and Eastern influences. The direct influence of two disparate cultures is apparent in Nisei poetry and is described in one Nisei's experience, Joy Kogawa's, as a feeling that "Japanese ways are part of her being", although she describes herself as a Canadian. According to her, she "was raised by old-fashioned traditional Japanese parents, and inherited lots

and lots of values that came with them." Kogawa believes she brings this to her writing, though she does not consider herself distinctly as a Japanese Canadian separated from any other culture in Canada. As Canadians, "each individual or group must overcome differences to greater or lesser extents." Kogawa does not feel separate from other groups in Canada, describing the country as a place of a lot of different kinds of people. She identifies closely with Canada, although she describes this identification as "a painful one". "Everyone has a load to bear, whether racial or whatever", and as far as these loads go, Kogawa does not consider her burden of racial discrimination as "as bad as some other loads". Kogawa's attitude towards all peoples of the Canadian mosaic seems to be founded on the philosophy that the experience of any individual is not as significant as the whole, which is in keeping with a Japanese way of thinking. Kogawa asserts: "I do feel I am a Canadian--What happened [the Evacuation of the Japanese] was a Canadian thing." She describes her experience as a Japanese Canadian as "a real part of what it is to be Canadian." Kogawa's attitude towards her own Canadian identity as one with other ethnic identities in a conglomerate of "others" is reminiscent of what Dabydeen finds in "the double experience" he believes is common to all Asian experience, that of the impression of "otherness" as opposed to an impression of being the dominant in Canadian society.

Shikatani, like Kogawa, is wary of the same pitfall of segregating Asian Canadian writing from that of the rest of Canadian literature. He proposes that a study of Japanese

Canadian writing "based intrinsically on the same data [the subject matter of ethnic concern in Japanese Canadian poetry should] be used rather as a vehicle for exploring language itself--as object."(Shikatani and Aylward 11) Believing that poetry is evidence of the deeper structure occurring beneath language and our consciousness, Shikatani says of this poetic stratum that "it is here that the collective experiences of the past dwell in the structure of the myth".(12) The poetry of the Japanese Canadians is an attempt at a sort of myth-making, a poetic means of coming to terms with one's individual experiences, and that of a collective. Because of the historical commonality of the shared Nisei experience, these poems are also reflections of a collective identity, or search for identity, for Japanese Canadians. It is in the language-objects of their poetry therefore where we will be able to see a common thread in Japanese Canadian poetry.[3]

A sense of selfhood is closely tied to language, as I ascertained in my earlier description of Issei language, and as Ronald Tanaka in his study of the Sansei American does, where he discloses that a sense of selfhood may be lost in the interstices of the Sansei adoptation of English.[4] Tanaka informs us that this loss of a sense of self in turn results in a "truncation of the language to the shape of [the Sansei] form of life, such that1) [the Sansei] form of life is different from that of the Anglo, and 2), this form of life is also unique due to its conceptual history" (Tanaka 29-30, 1979). Thus it is in this way that the interminable "circle of ethnicity" Tanaka describes in his attempt to define the Sansei identity is "simply a logical paradox growing out of the relationship between

Sansei and Euro-American language, thought and culture."(1980: 2) This paradox, as I have shown, stemming from the intersection of the two disparate cultures, surfaces in the problem of language. And this paradox is precisely what Fulvio Caccia develops in a system of identifying languages inspired by Henri Gobard's model of kinds of language.

> The first is *vernacular* language, which is of rural and maternal origin. There follows what he terms *vehicular* language, which, because of its bureaucratic and commercial character, serves as a primary agent of deterritorialization. The other two levels are *referential* language,...the language of culture, and *mythic* language, the language of religion, of the beyond.(Pivato 156)

The language of the referential and the mythic are to this study of poetry of utmost importance because of the second generation's attempt to establish for themselves a sense of identity within the Canadian mosaic. The language of the dominant may act as a destructive force on the poet, while this adoption of the referential language simultaneously provides access to meaning. Being influenced by two separate cultures, the Japanese Canadians suffer from the inability to completely articulate themselves in either their ancestors vernacular mode or the adopted Canadian vehicular mode. Kevin Irie, a Sansei Canadian poet, thematizes this in one of his poems included in the collection Another Way to Dance.

Flight: An Immigrant's Memory

How much descends
with a sight, a sound?

The pigeons that flew
in and out of your childhood

now settle on telephone wires
above you.

The clucking of hens
in Kensington Market

captures your past
in one light cage

small enough
to be carried by hand.

You've made the long
migration through words

to finally arrive, at home
with English,

a species of language
that flocks the world over,

a dominant breed.

But looking at streets
in downtown Toronto,

where feathers of frost
are pressed to March windows,

and soot discolours
the last April snow,

part of you lofts
at the thought of the Old World,

then circles

and circles

with no place to land.

(Dabydeen 47)

English, a species of language which does not equip the above ethnic writer with any place to land, is indicative of the dominant language and the inability of the ethnic writer to articulate him or herself within it, to find his identity. This segregation of the ethnic writer is also seen, in another way, in the incorporation of the "other" language in predominately English language verse. Ethnic language emblems are incorporated in Shikatani's, as well as in Roy Kiyooka's, poetry, in their inclusion of Japanese words, for example, in the latter's poems "Kumo/Cloud/s and Sundry Pieces". A common, through not overwhelming, sentiment in ethnic identity poetry of the Nisei is the separation between cultures. This gulf swallows the poet in the void of inarticulate passage between the two cultures' languages, ultimately leading these second generation Canadians to search for a mythic identity of place, particularly in their nature poetry.[5]

In this vein, Tanaka has attempted to define a global or "public" ethnic poetics for Sansei Americans, but has not entirely succeeded due to the personal nature of his critical writing. However, when he actually writes poetry on the metaphysics and poetics of Sansei in "Shido, Or The Way of Poetry", he succeeds to a greater degree because of the evocative nature of the writing, a kind of writing in the Eastern mode which does not seek to delineate the subject specifically and isolate its issuance as Tanaka had earlier attempted, but rather captures the tenor of Japanese

American experience. Here is his passage which discusses the problem of language for these immigrants:

> one day when the poet was a young girl, she came to her father in a state of depression. 'my mind is not my own,' she complained. 'and what is your mind?' her father smiled. 'that's the problem,' she answered, 'i feel it is not what i've been taught to think it is. it belongs to them just as this language belongs to them.' 'true,true,' sighed her father as he sat upon a rock. 'but still,' she continued, 'i feel there is something behind all these words--something that is not theirs--something that is real.' 'yes,' he nodded, 'there is.' 'what is it, father?' she asked expectantly. 'it is called the void,' he said. 'then i have no self!' she cried aloud. but her father no longer paid any attention to her, for he began to rub his stomach with his hands, murmuring--'i wonder what my mother felt when she was carrying me in poston. anger? despair? elation? ah, if only i knew!' and the young girl watched in wonder as his stomach grew and grew. (11: 1982)

The void referred to by Tanaka in the excerpt above may be likened to the void of a Japanese Buddhist nature, which leads to enlightenment,[6] and which may signify in this case the troubled but eventually enlightened position of the young girl poet upon her recognition of herself as an offspring of Japanese descent. Like the poet in the above passage struggling to find herself, I will later show how Joy Kogawa also captures the essence of this problem of identity, interrelated with the problem of finding one's own language, particularly in her collection of poetry, A Choice of Dreams.

Leaving the problem of language for now to investigate the search for ethnic identity of the Japanese Canadians in their nature lyric, I now wish to determine the character of the Nisei

poetics, which lies again between two disparate cultures. Nisei Canadian poetry is unique in that it displays characteristics of both Eastern and Western poetics. In the poetry of Japanese Canadians, particularly that of Joy Kogawa, one can see a distinct sensibility evident in the mythic creation of their poetry, expressed at times in the "language" not of their ancestors, that of the concrete object, but of the Western world, the intellectual, and of their unique native Canadian experience. Let us look at the theme and poetics of the following poem by Joy Kogawa.

Where there's a Wall

Where there's a wall
there's a way
around, over, or through
there's a gate
maybe a ladder
a door
a sentinel who
sometimes sleeps
there are secret passwords
you can overhear
there are methods of torture
for extracting clues
to maps of underground pathways
there are zeppelins
helicopters, rockets, bombs
battering rams
armies with trumpets
whose all at once blast
shatters the foundations

where there's a wall
there are words
to whisper by a loose brick
wailing prayers to utter
special codes to tap

birds to carry messages
taped to their feet
there are letters to be written
novels even

on this side of the wall
I am standing at the top
lost in clouds
I hear every sound you make
but cannot see you

I incline in the wrong direction
a voice cries faint as in a dream
from the belly
of the wall

(Six Poems no. 5)

The poem above hints at the difficulty yet possiblity of finding words to describe experience on the "other" side of a wall, metaphorically speaking, an obstacle of human erection which excludes the speaking voice, but which must be defeated by the power and perserverence of the speaker. This poem, published after those of Jericho Road and A Choice of Dreams, re-addresses the theme of finding the necessary words to describe a private and public experience, the latter public experience being that of a racially segregated Japanese Canadian. It is significant that this poem is not strictly concrete in the sense that other Japanese poetry is. Though it tends thematically towards the problem of the Japanese Canadian voice or identity, it resembles the poetry of a more Western nature because of its repetition of ideas and its overt development of an abstract idea.

Joy Kogawa's latest published collection of poetry entitled Woman in the Woods, shows an increasing tendency for this poet's works towards a more Western descriptive, "narrative" mode of communication, quite unlike that of her earlier poetry concerning ethnic identity and the struggle of the Japanese Canadian. Narrative, as I have used it here, refers a distinction which I draw from Miner's thesis on the dramatic representative mode as opposed to the lyrical "radically present" mode. A narrative mode which entails the understanding of an event with respect to chronological ordering, a progression which implies a mental processing of experience, is opposed to that of the lyric mode, wherein the radically present object would not be communicated as an event mediated from within a human frame of reference though it may be understood as such. As an illustration of Kogawa's "Western-like" tendency to incline away from objective "Japanese" presentation, we can use the two poems below from Kogawa's group of six on the subject of the Japanese Canadian Evacuation experience contained in Woman In The Woods. Notice the propensity of definite and indefinite articles, something we did not find in our earlier examples of Japanese poetry, in these two of the group of six under the collective heading "Road Building By Pick Axe".

The Highway

Driving down the
highway from Revelstoke--
the road built by
forced labour--all the
Nisei having no

choice etcetera etcetera
and mentioning this in
passing to this Englishman
who says when he
came to Canada from
England he wanted to
go to Vancouver too but
the quota for professors
was full so he was
forced to go to Toronto.

(65)

Found Poem

Uazusu Shoji
who was twice wounded
while fighting with the Princess Pats
in World War I
had purchased nineteen acres of land
under the Soldiers Settlement Act
and established a chicken farm.

His nineteen acres
a two-storied house
four chicken houses
an electric incubator
and 2,500 fowl
were sold for $1,492.59.

After certain deductions
for taxes and sundries were made
Mr. Shoji received a cheque
for $39.32.

(65)

Both these poems exhibit a definite divergence from other poetry with ethnic content written earlier by Kogawa. Kogawa's sentences, found in these poems of ethnic identity, are getting

longer as in a linking narrative fashion, showing a slight indication of development from the metaphoric towards a metonymic pole, from a pole of association to that of contiguity. A Western/Canadian influence is also present in the poet's description of her intellectual and emotional positioning seen in the detailing of an event as it pertains to herself the speaker, which is more characteristic of a Western mode rather than an Eastern mode. Kogawa's poetic positioning ultimately denotes the dual presence of Eastern and Western poetics mirrored in her attitude of the placement towards her personal identity, that is, one which shows a Canadian/Western influence coupled with her Japanese heritage. Here, the narrative mode of full sentence structure, complete with some adjectival description, indicates a poetics unlike that of typical pre-modern and even some modern Japanese poetry. The use of shock-value in the pecuniary idea, wryly understated in a much intellectualized image, indicates how this poetry of Kogawa's is more exemplary of that of experimental writers' works in late modern or contemporary Japanese poetry, or that utilizing Western forms of writing, such as fuller description in free verse and deliberate positioning of the speaker within the external world. Kogawa's later poetry does not present concrete phenomena entirely objectively, juxtaposed to communicate the poet's emotion as Japanese poetry tends to do.

Despite the cynical intellectual positioning of the poet within the poems of "Road Building by Pick-Axe", however, Kogawa has maintained a degree of evocativeness. That is, though she has clearly outlined a specific event in terms of who, what, where, and

when, the poem acts on the reader's power of association to beg the question "why?". These are poems which still create a distinct atmosphere associated with, yet separate from, the word-objects themselves. The atmosphere manifest here still has the colouring of Eastern lyrical "radical presence", in this case suggestive of the poet's personal suffering, yet also of the destiny of human interaction.

The term "radical presence" used by Miner with reference to Japanese poetry may still be generally applied to Japanese Canadian poetry. Regardless of the tendency some Japanese Canadian poetry shows towards lengthier and slightly more introspective or self-reflective poetry, showing the increased presence of an individual mind, Nisei poetry tends to retain faith in the reader's power of receiving the message of the emotion of the poet through the juxtapostioning of concrete objects. A timeless sense is present in their poetry as they tend to confer high status upon the concrete object and to specific events, similar to the Japanese, so that ultimately single events illustrate the poet's emotion, the subject of the poem. Witness this in "Afternoon, 23 Ross Street" by Shikatani:

afternoon sun
full
through window.
front room
all light.

two carved birds
in smooth
wood--

one, Yugoslavian/
one, Cree.

calendar of bonsai scenes.
sweet damp scent. grounds
lush
scarlet.
golden.

Butsu-dan, and this sun.
photographs of Grandfather,
Father,
Takeshi, eternal brother:
you taste mandarins
offered
on small dish.

profuse flowers: white, yellow, purple/
and plentiful green
hold the air
clear:

pine branches
linger in vase, since Christmas.[7]

(A Sparrow's Food 12)

In this display of concrete objects, we are reminded of the way Kogawa described the "Japaneseness" of Shikatani's writing, as "full of space and silence". In the above poem, one can see the operation of the object in an unmediated exchange between the reader and the poet. Though Kogawa's style is not exactly like that of Shikatani's, the strong emphasis she places on the evocative nature of concrete objects, and the faith she places in the reader interpreting her silences in her poetry, is present in her writing as well, as we observed in "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation"

and in her poem, like Shikatani's, titled with a date, "May 3, 1981", which reads as follows:

> watching the flapping
> green ferry flag on the
> way to Victoria, the
> white dogwood flower
> centered by a yellow dot
>
> a small yellow dot
> in a B.C. ferry boat
>
> today a headline
> in the Vancouver Daily Province:
> Western Canada Hatred
> Due to Racism
>
> ah my British
> British Columbia my
> first brief home

(West Coast Review 16:1, 9)

Though there is a sense of the "personal" in Kogawa's poem, present in the positioning of the speaker with the words "watching" and "ah my", the poem largely presents the "facts" without the speaker's interjection or overt interpretation in the poem, and the scene is largely presented by snatches like mental pictures rather than presented as a chronologically coherent story. The "radically present" concrete objects of these Nisei poets are like the periphrastic postcard poetry Roy Kiyooka uses to circumscribe his poem "Izumo Oyashiro", of which a part reads

> Dear M
> let these postcards tell you where we are

let them fill our silences...

(West Coast Review 16:1,18)

I have argued for the presence of both Japanese and North-American approaches to poetry in the artistic creations of Nisei poets. While it is difficult to attribute specifically any one feature of the poetry to precisely one form of poetics or another, it is significant and worthwhile to recognize that the poetry of Japanese Canadians contains both these elements. Concrete objects are presented and juxtaposed in a mimimalist fashion to elucidate the poet's emotion, and intellectual attitudes are described to a degree in Nisei poetry. In other words, inner feeling is presented by external objects, and while external reality is sometimes used as a backdrop for intellectual positioning, it is by no means strictly limited to this latter mode.

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1 Hotoke-san: deceased person risen to status of Buddha
Juzu: Buddhist rosary beads
Nembutsu: recitation of faith (Namo-Amida-Butsu)
Jodo-Shinshu: largest sect of Japanese Buddhism, founded by Honen Shinran

2 Concerning the experience of the authoress as a Nisei child growing up under persecution of the War Measures Act,

3 Looking at the problem of finding one's place in Canadian society for the second and third generation Japanese immigrant, one notes that there have been cases put forward by Japanese immigrants towards a promotion of ethnic identity. Ronald Tanaka, an American Sansei scholar, develops a poetics of third generation Japanese Americans and acknowledges the need to discover a language and find a voice for the Japanese immigrant, creating a myth and identity for Japanese North Americans. His articles, published in The Journal of Ethnic Studies, work towards this. "On The Metaphysical Foundations of a Sansei Poetics: Ethnicity and Social Science", "The Circle of Ethnicity, Part I and II", and "Shido, Or The Way of Poetry" all describe the unique experience of the Japanese immigrant and the need for self-expression and self-identity. Tanaka is an advocate of a shared spiritual past, of the belief that there is a certain distinct Sansei metaphysics and Sansei poetry. What Tanaka proposes for the third generation American Japanese may be equally applied to

contemporary Nisei Canadians, including the following idea: that "if one were to suppose that Sansei culture was the manifestation of a unique form of life, then one could, it seems, go on to argue for the necessity of a Sansei poetics..."(22: 1979).

4 Ronald Tanaka, discussing the possibility of a metaphysics and poetics of Sansei immigrants, argues that "the English language is a denial of Japanese personhood, if one determines personhood for the Japanese to exist as part of a sense of selfhood."(27: 1979).

5 What Blodgett proposes in the use of these various levels of discourse for "other" ethnic writing may be applied here to our study of Japanese Canadian writing: that "[h]ere, then, [in the various levels of discourse] would reside the value of ethnic writing for the study of Canadian literature, for the necessities of the referential are held in suspension by the deceptions of the vehicular and the illusions of the mythic"(Blodgett 20).

6 A "void" is also described by Miner in An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry as the end of Zen Buddhist enlightenment, that "there is order to even the most apparently disordered nature, and the Phenomenal yields to the Void when enlightenment comes"(130), and directs the reader towards a useful study by Sir Charles Eliot, Japanese Buddhism (London, 1959) for further reference.

7 Butsu-dan: household Buddhist altar

Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusion

Beginning with a brief precis on the socio-historical factors which define the Japanese Canadian, this thesis has described a number of historical events in which the Japanese came to know a kind of personal identity which eventually shapes the poetry of Japanese Canadians. I positioned the Nisei with respect to Canadian, Japanese, and Issei Japanese with a purpose to see how this group interacted with and absorbed Canadian and Japanese influences as compared to the Issei's positioning, specifically with regards to each of these group's respective poetics of identity. The passage of influence of two diverse cultures, that of the East and the West, proves fertile ground for the study of Japanese Canadian poetry which lies at the intersection of the two. The movement of Nisei poetry over linguistic and cultural boundaries is a rich subject for comparative study because of the subject at the centre of direct interface of the two cultures, the poet.

The poetics of Western and Eastern literature are radically different, as Miner proposes, based on the general notions of representation and affective-expressive modes respectively. The dichotomy between these two mode can be seen in the action of the metonymic, the representative, and the metaphoric, the associative, axes of meaning. The lyric-based poetry of the Japanese tends not to be as explicit as the poetry of Western cultures, such that the reader is moved by the emotion he or she perceives in the juxtapositioning of concrete phenomena, and nature, as presented in the phenomenal objects of lyric poetry, is portrayed as an interactive force with man's identity.

The prominence of the nature lyric in the works of the Nisei poets illustrates, in a sense, how the Nisei evade the inability to articulate themselves in the voice of the dominant culture. Much of the vocabulary of the concrete words and imagery preferred in their evocative poetry does not escape the grasp or sensibility of the second generation Japanese poets. That is, referring to the kinds of language which Pivato and Blodgett elaborate in their discussions of ethnic writing, if the vehicular is at once a treat to the ethnic writer because it immediately segregates the voice of the non-native speaker, it is also simultaneously the promise of access to meaning, and access to Canadian culture, as the non-native speaker learns to articulate him or herself in this language. The language of the dominant culture does not prove stifling for Nisei poets in a very practical way as much of their poetic language belongs to the realm of the concrete. Abstract notions which other ethnic poets may find escape their articulation is a problem which arises from these group's perceived inadequacy with the dominant's language. Inability with language does not plague the Nisei poets to the same extent, as they, like the Japanese, eschew the presentation of universal abstractions in favour of juxtaposing concrete phenomena to re-create emotion in their poetry. The Nisei poets thus do not suffer greatly the illusions of the mythic because they can intuit, as any reader, not only a Japanese reader, is able to a certain extent, the phenomenal object and the emotion of the poet's experience, and through this the tenor of their cultural identity, in the choice of concrete objects presented objectively.

In their tendency to favour evocative silence, the lack of words and the reader's focus on the objects presented in Japanese Canadian poetry support the belief that the Nisei succeed in articulating this unknown land in understanding silence. As the Japanese Canadian sensibility is to focus attention on the external, words in their poetry of ethnic identity become emblems not only of a poet's own mental constitution but may expand into that of a public realm, a social significance. The burden of inarticulate passages borne by other ethnic groups is paradoxically absent in the voids, in the silences and signs, of Nisei poetry of identity. Blodgett has described the language of the referential as that of the "other" evading articulation in the language of "the here".[1] The tendency of the Japanese Canadians to write in the immediate external world bridges the disparate cultures of Canada and Japan because the Nisei can write of objects in their Canadian experience, and mediate this communication through a poetics nearer that of the Japanese.

This communication of an immigrant's Canadian experience through the poetic faith of the Japanese tradition is accomplished through the faith the poet has in the understanding of the reader of poetic objects themselves, which are simple signs. The Western tendency to describe an object from the poet's perspective causes a one-step removal from the object and exhibits less faith in the reader's recognition of the sign; the sign tends to be less "present," less charged with poetic import as objects which could have been presented without much intervention on the poet's behalf. The "words of language are already signs signifying something else"

(Howe 212), indicating the distance caused by the intervention of the poet's intellect in description of events. I would argue that a relative paucity of words, such as one witnesses in Japanese and often in Japanese Canadian poetry as well, does not guide the reader onto specific paths of understanding, nor does this paucity necessarily limit the poet's ability to articulate his or her identity. The presentation of concrete objects in poetic configurations allows for much freedom on behalf of both the reader and the poet to experience emotion derived from the experience of the text. Japanese Canadian poets do not altogether evade articulation in the language of "the here" because they have found "the here" in the object, which is culturally inconstant, and may be bound in many configurations, but is nonetheless constantly in "the here".

Symbolism was deemed capable of actualizing inarticulate experience in some apprehensible sensory form, having adopted this same technique as the Eastern forms which characterize Japanese poetics, traditional and modern, and to a degree, Japanese Canadian poetics. The poetry of Japanese Canadians lies within this phenomenal tradition because of its tendency to concentrate on the object, and through the space and silence of its sensory form, articulate experience for the reader. While Japanese Canadian poetry has shown the influence of Western poetics, particularly in the poems of self-discovery not associated with an ethnic problem of identity, which tend to contain more intellectualized descriptions, Nisei poetry also seems to follow in the tradition of Japanese poetry with its emphasis on phenomenal objects. The nature poetry produced by Japanese Canadians, which

is so often used to communicate the problem of ethnic identity for the Nisei, discloses the operation of natural objects in a human dimension, for example, in creating myth, creating human reality be giving it symbolic form. Perhaps the Japanese Canadian struggle for identity is best observed in this attempt to discover or gain a collective myth in the objects surrounding them on Canadian soil.

In its concern with collective consciousness, traditional and pre-modern Japanese poetry emphasizes external 'objective' events but does not largely give over to introspection, self-analysis, and self-reflection. Japanese Canadian poetry is similar to that of modern Japan in that it is slightly more self-reflexive, than earlier Japanese poetry would be, in its authors' attempts to secure ethnic self-identity. But Japanese Canadian poetry, while doing so, does not follow the course offered by much of Western poetry, which is one of intellectual observation of the individual self. Japanese Canadian poetry discloses human attitudes largely through the concrete events it describes objectively, which are related back to the subject. One concludes that as the Nisei poets position themselves with respect to the dominant culture in Canada, they do so while maintaining a certain distinguishable quality in their writing. This distinguishable quality is one which emphasizes the object and this emphasis, in turn, leads to the formation of a poetics which evidences a reliance on the reader's associative powers, through which the evocative beauty of the poems emerges. Japanese Canadian poetics are not polarized on the Eastern as they also display a Western influence in the

introspection they limit themselves to, but most poetry of the Nisei which thematizes the problem of ethnic identity is largely non-discursive and employs silence as a means of communication.

With the Nisei emphasis on the phenomenal world one can see a link to the Japanese love of nature, which is reflected in the "identity" poetry of the Japanese Canadians. It is hoped that the Japanese Canadian identity will emerge through this tendency towards a culturally linked perception of the world. The degree of poetic portrayals of objects as they appear to human senses leads one to think that a mythical sense of being will be achieved through writing of this nature, leading this group of Asian immigrants to a sense of distinctness. In this age of distinct societies in Canada, it is hoped that the promulgation of a distinctness of this nature will not be to the detriment of the ethnic group, or lead to the ethno-centrism Shikatani warns one against, but rather to a sensitivity towards a unique perception of the world as reflected in some of the poetry of the Nisei writers.

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1 Blodgett in "Ethnic Writing in Canadian Literature as Paratext"(19)

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