Chapter III

Articulating the Self: Itsuka

Itsuka (1992) is a sequel to Obasan where Joy Kogawa once again continues the story of Noami Nakane. After her Obasan (i.e. aunt)'s death Noami is forced by Aunt Emily to leave the prairie town where she has worked for ten years, and move to Toronto. With this relocation, Noami's narrative becomes less focused on inward and past experiences and more on the present scenario. “While Obasan is intimate and personal, Itsuka moves into the public and political” (Barnwell 39). Itsuka traces Noami’s development as an individual who recognizes the atrocities committed by the Canadian government against the Japanese-Canadians. Through Noami’s participation in the political scenario Kogawa gives voice to Japanese Canadian experience. Marilyn Russell Rose defines Kogawa’s work as:

expressive realist fiction; in other words, as a literature [that] reflects the reality of experience as it is perceived by one... individual, who expresses it in a discourse which enables other individuals to recognize it as true. (225)

In encountering through memory the magnitude of the crimes and atrocities committed against Japanese Canadians during and after the Second World War, Noami the protagonist remains ambivalent and uncertain about Aunt Emily’s assertion that reconciliation can be attained through “mutual recognition of facts” (Kogawa ‘‘Is there a Just Cause?’’ 20).
The title *Itsuka* in itself suggests that redress is not achieved but will be achieved 'someday', the English meaning of 'itsuka.' For Kanefsky:

*Itsuka* traces the development of Noami’s political consciousness, following the story of her growing involvement in the pursuit of historical truth and her investment in the day that itsuka—someday—the time for laughter will come. (19)

When *Itsuka* opens in September 1983, Japanese Canadians are “pieces of a jigsaw puzzle... scattered across the nation; there’s no Japan town anywhere” (168). The novel’s primary emphasis consequently is the need for connection, community and collective political activity. The dispersed, Aunt Emily stresses, are the disappeared, unless they’re connected” (3). Without belief in a shared system of values and a common historical reality, there can be no community, no knowing, no identity, no self. She believes in the “power of speech” (11) to lay forth the atrocities committed against them by the Canadian Government.

*Itsuka* carries on several of the themes and characters introduced in the earlier novel and the novel begins like *Obasan* where Noami recounts her experiences of deracination and relocation. In the first few pages of *Itsuka* she once again recounts all the details given in *Obasan*. She tells how she longed for her parents. She tells about her affair which she had with a boy Hank, in Granton. She recalls her teenage years how Stephen sought refuge in music while Noami longed for his presence. They suffered racism in their new towns. She remembers that in Slocan they were
regarded as the enemy: “I was the enemy. A creature to look at in swift sideways glances” (146). She narrates in detail her experience of Obasan’s physical and mental decline and then death. She also recalls how her Uncle time and again used to say ‘itsuka’, which in a way suggests that the future always has a provenance.

Whereas *Obasan* resists closure, *Itsuka* imposes a happy ending for the Japanese-Canadians. When it appeared in 1992, *Itsuka* had to face a lot of criticism. Kogawa herself has voiced reservations about *Itsuka*. In several interviews conducted before the novel’s publication she worries that the novel will lack the richness of *Obasan*. In one of the interviews she admits:

I’ve become so political, and in many ways very one-dimensional, that I’m afraid of destroying the poetry, the richness, of realities other than political realities. (Williamson 151)

Reviewers also find the tone of the novel strongly didactic. As Linda Hutcheon observes, the novel has “a fierce desire to teach as much as possible about both the Japanese Canadian past history of repression and its recent history of redress” (181).

Rather than choosing to deconstruct an existing subjectivity or posit an essentialist, universal, unitary subject, Kogawa investigates multiple identities situated at:

the intersection of nation, gender, sexuality, class and race, as well as history, religion, caste and language. (Hutcheon 11)
Kogawa states in a 1992 film, *The Pool: Reflections of Japanese Canadian Internment*, victims should take on the imaginative exercise of being part of the victimizer. She wants both victims and victimizers to be in dialogue, in communication, in communion, and in recognition mutually of each other’s positions. This is what Kogawa has done in *Itsuka* where the Japanese Canadians are shown in dialogue with the Government.

The title of the novel suggests that reconciliation and redress are not yet achieved. The issue of redress does not represent a complete racial harmony but a gradual progression towards it where the Canadian government accepts the wrongs done to the visible minorities and promises for their safe future in Canada.

The novel in a way is a tribute to the ‘*issei*’ (first generation immigrants) who suffered the internment without ever seeking or experiencing an official apology for the wrongs committed against them. Both Obasan and Uncle represent “The dead [who] stand with their feet in doorways, asking not to be forgotten”(149). Noami recalls Nakayama Sensei explaining:

> that *issei* immigrants were people of sacrifice. They came to the new land only to perish in the culture clash. They offered their lives for the young. ‘*Itsuka*’, he’d say, your sacrifice will be known... they endured for a future that only the children will know. Their endurance is an act of faith and love. (241)

*Itsuka* falls in the category of a ‘bildungsroman’ novel as it traces the full growth of Noami, the protagonist: how from a
reluctant and silent being she finally recognizes the value of speech and its importance in life. *Obasan* ends where Noami wears Aunt Emily's coat and goes to the coulee where she and her Uncle used to make their annual visit. This in a way had suggested that Noami would now enter the realm of speech and this is what she has done in *Itsuka*. Noami is not so vocal and articulate as Aunt Emily but from a silent and seemingly indifferent being she finally acknowledges the meaning of redress and its importance in their lives.

It is in *Itsuka* that "the middle-aged Noami take[s] the first tentative steps towards freeing herself from a prison of emotional, physical and spiritual homelessness" (Keefer 35) by making efforts on her part to be involved in their community's struggle for redress.

The novel begins with Noami standing near a bus stop. It appears to her, "as if I've been in a coma for years" (1). This feeling is because Noami had remained almost isolated from her community. On the second page of the novel Noami says:

Right now I fear most the weight of judgement: the whispers, the sneers, the glances of condescension. I fear too, the cunning of the body's inner foes. I fear touch as much as the inability to touch. So, of course, I fear Father Cedric (2).

Noami hints towards the redress. She says that she fears glances of Canadians as she and other Japanese-Canadians are
considered ‘Outsiders’ in Canada. She expresses her inability to associate with anyone and is apprehensive when someone wishes to associate with her. Noami introduces us to Father Cedric who like her is a hybrid and says she fears him as he is the one who would take her on to the emotional terrain which she fears to walk on. Right at the outset of, the novel Noami feels a kind of “promise in the air” (1), which in a way suggests that Noami who in Obasan was sceptical about everything has now started trusting herself and also her fellow beings. She also mentions that in order to make redress a reality the Japanese-Canadians will have to trust each other: “in the midst of all the unknown, it matters to trust” (1).

Noami compares her community members to snails who for years remained confined to their respective shells. They did not have the courage to come out in the open and question the Canadian authorities; that is why they are treated in this manner:

What frail creatures we are, yearning to know and desperate for what eludes us. We’re a planet of snails with our delicate horns, probing the windy currents of memory and meaning. (2)

The next paragraph mentions that now they have had enough, that the Isseis’ that is (the first generation immigrants’) silent bearing of the atrocities has led them nowhere and that now the Japanese-Canadians will openly demand for redress: “Clear the road in all directions, clear the lungs, the throat, clear out the pathways for breath to move through” (2). It is only when the Japanese-Canadians, just like Noami at this stage, reconcile their pasts that they can actually move forward in their lives.
The novel alternates between two voices one of the issei (first generation immigrants) who wish to maintain silence and do not demand anything, and the other of the Sansei (third generation immigrants) who are adamant in demanding an apology from the Canadian Government. Noami’s life lies between these two voices, and the novel also focuses on the need to speak out.

Noami feels the possibility of redress and her life which in Obasan had only one colour of sorrow and silence is now all set to witness and experience the shades of warmth and love and the necessity and ability to communicate: “Beneath my skin a rainbow is forming and sending from its beam a hope. I can feel it precisely”(2).

The novel traces Noami’s journey as a reluctant Noami finally enters the political scenario, overrides her fears and finally forms a relationship with Father Cedric and also acknowledges Aunt Emily’s efforts of keeping the Japanese-Canadian community together.

The novel however begins like Obasan where Noami is afraid of forming connection with other people. She refers to her own status:

I know this is aioneness. I’m lying here in this $323-a-month bachelor apartment in Chinatown Toronto, a middle-aged throwback to the reptilian era, and I’m alone alone alone. (6)

She expresses her inability to communicate:
The problem is, I can’t be direct. My heart beats erratically when I have something to say. (4)

Silence and mystery have shrouded Noami’s memories so completely that her childhood ambivalence toward the past has developed into an adult fear. She perceives history as a malevolent force which propels her, against her will, to seek out painful, half remembered events:

What demon sends me clawing through the night, calling out to my brother, my mother, my loved ones in caves, in the graves in the valley of dry bones singing songs of childhood. (80)

She fears to form a relationship with Father Cedric. She keeps on recalling her life in the ghost towns where they were confined by the Canadian government. Naomi tries her level best to live in the present but all the bitter experiences keep coming back to her. She describes the state of her mind as follows:

But then would come the moment of release. The rope would be cut and legs kick free. It’s almost like that, here at the bus stop. How long will it last this uncanny sense of certainty that is already beginning to elude me? (4-5).

Like Obasan Noami once again describes her dreams which reflect her subconscious mind. She mentions a dream she had at Granton once:

That night I dreamt of little baby fingertips in the centres of devilled eggs. I opened the fridge and there
they were, about a dozen fingernail pupils in the yellow edible eyes, staring out of a grey cookie tray. (49)

This dream in a way suggests Japanese-Canadians who are referred to in the novel as yellow, confined to their respective houses and waiting for the orders of Canadian Government. As an adult Noami is paralyzed by the same guilt and dread, tormented by the same nightmares. In her waking existence, she is plagued by illnesses which seem connected to the tension which has carried since she was young: “My abominable abdomen. Something as vast as childhood lies hidden in the belly’s wars”(119).

She is throughout her life possessed with a feeling of homelessness. When Noami first walked into Anna’s house, she felt a mixed sense of envy and sadness. Noami keeps on thinking about her home in Vancouver, she is unable to feel a sense of belonging wherever she lives, Slocan, Granton, Cecil or Toronto. Noami’s alienated sense of home echoes what Homi Bhabha calls ‘unhomely’ a post-colonial condition. The unhomely feeling harasses Noami from time to time. Toronto for Noami:

is an enormous ant colony. Far below are the constant traffic and the tiny ant people carrying their crumbs, their antennae weaving their complex signals. It’s confounding how it all works. [...] It’s all marvellous and efficient and chilling to my middle-aged Cecilized soul. (91-92)
Noami’s rejection of legitimate, shared historical reality further alienates her from her community. Disengaged from her ethnic group’s convictions, Noami ultimately experiences discomfort with the notion of community. She is incapable of connecting not only with her community but also with any other human beings. In both Obasan and Itsuka Noami experiences this same difficulty. Noami has both ambiguity and indeterminacy in her life which make her life futile and meaningless. Her homelessness is both physical and mental. Amidst such restlessness Noami retreats into silence, transforming herself into “a small white stone” (180). Her silence is however not purely self-imposed but a manifestation of learned behaviour.

Raised by Obasan, Noami is a serious-minded baby who almost never talks or smiles: “I was a silent baby and stared from the moment I was born” (8). She was completely opposite of Noami Best, a Canadian woman after whom Noami was named. Noami Best went to Japan and served the poor there, whereas Obasan showed her full sympathy with Canada and took full care of Noami and her brother Stephen. The silent suffering and dignified passivity that Noami learns from Obasan are characteristic of the issei’s behavioural and moral code. In accordance with her belief in endurance without complaint, Obasan’s natural inclination is to dismiss the injustices that their community has suffered at the hands of the Canadian Government. As Mason Harris observes:

The most obvious feature that the novels of Kogawa [...] have in common is an intense concentration on the relation between mother and daughter as the focal point
for conflicts between the values of the old and new worlds. The central problem is a failure of communication between the generations caused by the imposition, especially on females, of old-world moral constraints that suppress the truth of both personal experience and family history. (148)

In complete opposition to Obasan is Aunt Emily who remains static in both the novels. The purpose of her life is seeking redress from the Canadian Government. Noami describes Aunt Emily as follows:

Aunt Emily, my mother's younger sister, is completely non-Japanese in her exuberance. She's a militant Nisei, a second-generation, made-in-Canada woman of Japanese ancestry. (3)

Completely 'non-Japanese in her exuberance, she defies silence and passivity, rejecting the possibility of "ever becom[ing] a bridge-dweller or a fence-sitter, a person who becomes useless through inaction" (3). She publishes a magazine 'Bridge' where she tries to bridge the gap between Japanese Canadians and the Canadian Government.

After the death of Obasan Aunt Emily convinces Noami to leave the prairies and to come and live with her in Toronto. She is the one who pulls Noami into the redress struggle:

The year that Obasan dies, 1975, I look in the mirror and see an old-maid orphan, a barren speck of dust. Aunt Emily's bi-monthly phone call is the kite string,
the long-distance umbilical cord, that keeps me
connected to a mothering earth. (77)

In the examination of the discursive strategies employed in
the fiction of women of colour, Robert Holton argues that the sense
of abuse and outrage expressed by the overt, or outspoken,
narrative voice reflects the writer's attempt to impress these facts
and this point of view in an undeniable way 'on her readers' (217).
True to Holton's model, Aunt Emily functions as a "jarring
witness' whose primary objective is to make 'the experience of
Japanese-Canadians...'] available and comprehensible outside the
confines of that group''(193). Holton further mentions that, given
an extreme enough degree of marginality and alienation, this
experience must be legitimated even for members of the
marginalized group itself whose interpretative categories may be
overwhelmed by the communities of the dominant social and
interpretative community (Holton 193). It is Aunt Emily's role to
dismantle the politics of negativity that separated Japanese
Canadians from history. It is therefore Aunt Emily's task to
convince Noami of the veracity and relevance of her own
testimony. According to Heather Zwicker:

It is not by avoiding the struggles that inhere in a
place, but rather by taking part in them, that a
meaningful home is created: the safest community is
that which is struggled for, chosen, and hence unstable
by definition; is not based on 'sameness', and there is
no perfect fit .(qtd in Vautier 144)

Aunt Emily lays emphasis on connectivity:
If you aren’t joined to those you love, your heart shrivels up and blows away in the dust. Whole countries get disappeared that way. It could happen to Canada [...] Read the signs. Our roots aren’t meshed. A country needs the structures of connectedness. (4)

She further asserts:

We’re pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, [...] scattered across the country. The scars, the marks of our separation, remain. But the picture grows clearer, our wholeness starts to form, when even a few of us, in our brokenness come together. (161)

She goes to visit the isseis, the first generation immigrants’ who are now old and some of whom are now in nursing homes. She says what matters in one’s life is “Connections” (121).

Betty Sasaki observes Emily’s frequent use of the collective pronoun ‘we’ rather than ‘I’. Aunt Emily transforms the pain of her personal experiences into political indignation for her community and due to this feeling she wishes that each and every member of the Japanese Canadian community should participate in the redress; that is why Emily wants to involve her nephew Stephen, now a renowned musician, in the forefront.

He however rejects Emily’s wish; his thinking about the redress is totally different:

‘Oppression, now that’s an abused word.’ Stephen hunches forward leaning on his forearms. ‘you’ve got it all wrong. We’re not oppressed. There comes a time
when you’ve got to stand up and recognize that things have changed. Redress? Come on! The way everyone loves to play the victim. My God! Think what Japanese Canadian redress sounds like to the rest of the world. Can’t you hear the false note in it?’ He shakes his finger at us. ‘you’re all suffering from a North American pathology. Do something useful, why don’t you. Something for others.’(185)

Stephen only agrees to “put the story to music if you want. Don’t expect anything else from me”(186). Aunt Emily is very upset with Stephen’s answer and says: “He may well write a ballad, but the tune will be wrong. A story without love is words without song” (186).

Aunt Emily’s faith in her vision is unwavering and she constantly struggles to make redress a success. Convinced that ambiguity breeds indifference, while absolute knowledge fosters change, Aunt Emily contends: “Our story is about how our stories disappear” (239). However in Itsuka she seeks not only to defend the truth of her community’s stories but also to demonstrate their connection to other tales of oppression. “[All our] tales of suffering according to Aunt Emily, ‘should be [our] bond’” (197). She struggles not only to vindicate the rights of her own community then, but also for the betterment of human condition in general. For her any injustice done to any human being is a collective issue. Aunt Emily’s discourse and political efforts are not limited to her own specific reality:
Aunt Emily doesn’t say a word but I know what she’s thinking. The lie is alone in the world. It was there in Nazi Germany. It’s in South Africa. In Latin America. In every country in the world. (222)

In her recognition of mutuality inherent in all suffering and in her call for a collaborative politics, Aunt Emily rejects the postmodern belief in contingency and fragmentation, which denies a common, or shared, sense of reality. As Gerald Graff observes:

The valuing of commonality, univocality, truth, and meaning is not necessarily tied to a single, ‘centrist’ sense of experience but [is] part of a more universal heritage.(417)

Itsuka documents how in order to effect significant social change it is not just the “Japanese community that must speak with one voice” (209), all Canadians “need to be linked arm in arm with our roots... firmly interlinked”(171). In order to legitimate their historical truth and alter the government’s perception of their community, Japanese-Canadians must confront the politics of multiculturalism that, as Janice Kulyuk Keefer argues, has “abetted rather than eradicated the racism that Kogawa presents as an institutionalized aspect of Canadian life” (96).

Kogawa voices her opinion through an anonymous woman who talks in a meeting:

“Of course it’s a great country. That’s why we’re committed to it. This country, my country, your country, is one country where the great wide
technicolour dream can come true. We can stamp out racism and show the world how it’s done. Not by homogenization. We know that a homogenized mindset is ecologically unsound. But by real plurality. And I’m not talking about ethnic folk dancing. I’m talking about access to power. I’m talking about distinctness and mutuality, collaborative politics at every level. Not tolerance of difference, but celebration....” (191)

Aunt Emily tells Noami how even the members of the clergy misbehaved with them:

I accuse the church of fomenting racism directly from the pulpits and at the communion rails. [...] I accuse the church today of still having no word of apology to offer us, and I’m telling you I have sought that word through letters and phone calls, but I am told the archbishop would not wish to see ‘that woman’. (63)

Aunt Emily compares Canada with Japan and wants that Canadians should also follow their values:

We’ve had a cultural lobotomy, she says, and have lost the ancient ways. There’s a button in the brain that signals when to die and there’s a universal law – if you honour your mother and fathers, the button stays; on hold it makes sense, doesn’t it? She asks ‘Look at Japan. Centuries of parent pandering and they’re the longest living people in the world.’ (116)
Noami and Aunt Emily go to Japan on a commemorative pilgrimage. Noami experiences a sort of spiritual calmness in this place. She finds a comparison between the people of Canada and Japan. The "'Niseis' [second generation immigrants in Hawaii] are as unbent as freestanding trees. Unlike the crippled bonsai in Canada, they've retained community here" (85). She observes in Hawaii:

There's an odd sense of having flown backwards into Lilliputian dream world. Images from infancy come filtering through the channels of memory — a gently angled head denoting playfulness to a small child, the instant-as-thought hands and the ready offer to carry things. There's an attention to detail. Emotional detail.

(80)

Noami feels a sort of connection with Japan as she says: "This is the country of my ancestors, where tenderness and toughness co-exist in the same instant and sensitivity is an institution" (80). All these traits are best exemplified in the behaviour of the issei who silently tolerate all the atrocities of the Canadian Government.

Noami goes to the orphanage where her mother and grandmother sought shelter after the Nagasaki nuclear attack, and the hill where they were buried when they died of their injuries. For the first time since early childhood Noami experiences her mother's presence near her:
There is in life, I have learned, a speech that will not be hidden, a word that will be heard. This day in Japan, I hear Mother in the sounds of footsteps, in the swishing of the broom outside, in the light laugh of a little boy. I sense her in the touch of my hand as I lean against the wall and in the sudden twirl of a cool breeze in the stifling hall and in one perfectly round stone on the stand where the visitors' book lies.(83)

Noami's religious faith offers her a redemptive vision of her mother, one that promises that her mother is still a living presence to her daughter. Noami acquires a conviction that her accumulated losses, of mother, father, aunt and uncle are no longer as unbearable and unmournable as they have been throughout the course of her life:

Perhaps it's the weight of centuries of belief that descends upon me in the late morning mist. I kneel by the maple tree and know. We're, all of us, dead and alive. We the dead and we the living are here among the trees, the coloured snails, the moss, the singing insects. We're everywhere here in the sound of distant traffic, in the long-haired grass, in the filtered sunlit haze. In this short visit, on this hot muggy day, within this one hour at Mama's grave, I meet the one I need to meet.

(83)

In a new image of herself Noami is all set to heal her personal self. In Japan all of them are alike and people accept them with open arms. Noami for the first time realizes that it is not only
assimilation which matters. A very important thing in one’s life is the ‘sense of belongingness’ which the Japanese-Canadians feel for Canada as they had adopted Canada as their true home and gradually we see that Noami no longer rejects Aunt Emily’s position; on the contrary she begins to adopt it. As Noami “watches others try to claim and contain [redress], ‘she becomes more involved, more of Aunt Emily’s advocate and ally’” (Davidson 52).

In Hawaii Noami once again goes into her subconscious through a dream:

It’s early morning, the third day of our week in Aunt Emily’s Nisei paradise. I’m sinking down and down through the slipstream of sleep, down through the rolling weight of ocean rhythms, to where the deep-sea dream sweeper is sweeping dreams. (86)

She dreams of two women and a man. The two women stay behind and Noami leaves the room, which in a way suggests that these two women are Noami’s mother and grandmother who went to Japan, were not allowed by Canadian authorities to come back to Canada, who finally died because of the nuclear bomb which was dropped in Nagasaki. Naomi in the dream experiences:

What I know is that I am without a body, but I am not, I am not without consciousness. There’s a quality of knowing that is completely unchanged as I slide down the stream of deeper disappearing, and during some pre-dawn of speech I’m aware of music, of song. I am Song itself. (87)
This in a way suggests that Noami has recognized the power of speech and will now value its importance in her own life. In the dream Noami is:

Suffused with heat and a heart-pounding certainty. There is no death. There is no disappearance, no finality in the drift downstream. Annihilation is not possible. Individual consciousness cannot be extinguished. (87)

Noami realizes that no matter how hard you try to forget your past it is something which cannot be destroyed and she suddenly shouts "...Mama..." (87). After this she once again starts dreaming:

I see Mother's face, her eyes gently oblique, and I know without a stammer of a doubt that she is present, a conscious being as real and palpably alive as I am. Father is alive, uncle and obasan. They live not just as memory, but as thought itself, within every fragmentary wave of remembering. (87)

Noami thinks about the dream and realizes that:

The dream was the final signpost in my steadfast journey towards Mother [...] I sought her and only her, tumbling downstream, back and back till I reached her grave and I sought her in a dream beyond the grave, in the stream that circles for ever and in the song that does not vanish. Love, it seems to me, must be at the end of the journey without end. (88)
Noami realizes that love should govern all human life and also its end. Noami thinks about Uncle's death; she says with his burying all the buried truths which were not known to her are laid forth:

For me, this year, a certain circular spinning stops. A cocoon disintegrates. The knowledge of death follows the knowledge of death and gnaws its way through my shell. This is the time of unraveling the tales of distant, lonelier dyings. It's the year I learn that my Mother and Grandmother were in Nagasaki when the atom bomb fell. (58)

It is through the letter of her mother which Nakayama Sensei reads out to Noami and Stephen that they get to know that their mother had died in Japan and that she had asked the elders: "Do not tell the children" (59). Noami's unanswered question, why mother did not return from Japan, finally finds its answer and "All the questions, the longing, the memories that have vaporized over the silent years, condense in the air" (59). Noami realizes that their Uncle's visit to the coulee was actually an act of mourning for her grandmother and mother she continues her visits but still longs for her mother: "There, in the vast stillness, I seek her face. I walk through the walls of my mind and call her name" (60). From this moment Noami acknowledges the efforts of Aunt Emily: "Aunt Emily's stories are pebbles skipping over my quiet sea. Each one of her stones helps to build the ground on which I seek to stand" (61). This in a way suggests that now Noami, unlike in Obasan, recognizes Aunt Emily's efforts:
Over the years I have learned to understand some of Aunt Emily's sources of anger. And back in Granton and Cecil, in the years following Uncle's death, I was discovering my own capacity for that unpleasant emotion. (63)

With a lot of reluctance Noami is transformed from distrust and suspicion to faith and conviction, is inspired by an awareness of mutuality learned from Aunt Emily. Her initial scepticism toward everything results in a loss of meaningfulness and in the consequent inability to commit to anything in life. Noami is ultimately drawn into the political, not through her own understanding of the past but when she hears the experiences of others. Noami learns that in shedding one's cocoon, connections are made. When sitting in a meeting Noami thinks of Min who was imprisoned as he tried to run from a camp in order to meet his family:

I think of Min cut off from his family, his family cut off from the community, the community cut off from the whole country.[...] Min the young criminal from Powell street, whose one crime was to try to go home. (235)

By sharing her community's worldview, participating in its pursuit of justice, and accepting her responsibility as a historical agent, Noami overcomes the feeling of isolation and loneliness that constitute much of her early life. Her new sense of meaningfulness affects not only her public life but also her personal life. "The
erotic and political plots of Itsuka,’ as Keffer asserts, ‘are made to intertwine’ (42).

Kogawa does not view Noami as totally imprisoned by her past. Even while she cannot become actively politicised like Aunt Emily, she realises that in order to find her identity as a Canadian she must not escape into an idealised past as Uncle and Obasan did; Noami has to perform the task of reconciling the old world with the new. By exposing the hypocrisy inherent in the efforts to promote ethno-cultural unity, Kogawa suggests that only the illusion of significant and meaningful multiculturalism exists in Canada. The success of the movement for redress, Kogawa reveals, is dependent on building a valid and visible multicultural society. Consequently, Japanese-Canadians must act as ‘bridges’, ‘hyphens’ and ‘diplomats’ (85), forming a single front with all Canadians by sharing the meaning of suffering and asserting a common experience of a significant external reality. In doing so, the Japanese-Canadians can attack the shallow relativism expounded by Canada’s various ministers of multiculturalism personified in the novel by Dr. Stinson, ‘consultant to Ottawa’s Multicultural Directorate’ (149), who dismiss minority history as an articulation of personal thinking and who evades the issue that it is now time the Japanese Canadian story was better known by responding with. “Yes Indeed...But from what point of view?... What point of view?” (152). While exploring the fight for redress, Itsuka also follows the growth of Noami’s relationship with Aunt Emily. Aunt Emily remains the primary impetus behind Noami’s transformation from ambiguity, silence and passivity to truth, anger, action and finally
empowerment. She also becomes Noami’s principal source of nurture, providing her with a tie to her land that is Canada.

In the novel Noami struggles to find an identity which includes both Japanese and Canadian heritage. Aunt Emily compels Noami to shift form prairie to Toronto to participate in the redress. She wants to involve Noami in redress: “‘Life,’ Aunt Emily keeps telling me, ‘is meant to be a hands on experience. You’ve got to act. Do things. You’ve got to act. Do things. You’ve got to be involved, kid’”(12).

Like *Obasan* the narrative of *Itsuka* also proceeds in a flashback but unlike *Obasan*, where most of the action unfolds in flashbacks, in *Itsuka* there is only one long flashback and then the action proceeds in the present. Noami’s flashback once again hovers on the most repetitive question of her life. Why did my mother not return? She once again goes down into the realm of her past: though she is now comfortably living in Toronto, she still thinks about their relocation years:

Sitting as I do these days with father Cedric and Aunt Emily in Bridge Magazine’s air-conditioned Toronto office, I don’t often think of Granton, but when I do I think of the heat and the bluebottle flies [...] in dreams, I rage upon them with my hands, squeezing them with my fingernail, pushing so hard that I cut right into their bodies, but they’re utterly indestructible. (29)

She recalls how as a child she longed for her parents and wanted to go back to her previous home:
And I remember, as a child in Slocan, how I ached, how I longed to go home. I begged Obasan and Uncle to take us back. (13)

Whenever she thinks of any happy time it is in Vancouver where the entire family lived together. But Noami has also understood the fact that they cannot return to their houses:

Somehow I know we will never return to the house where Happiness lived. Once upon a time, there was a peach tree, singing, storytelling. Now the huffing wolf stands over the ruins. (18)

She remembers Granton as a land of churches where Noami was taught about religion: “Granton is a town of churches. More churches than trees” (23). Noami attends Bible school where the sermons of Pastor Jim have a deep impact on her mind; as she says: “I’m an easy believer” (25). Pastor Jim’s sermons on any kind of physical relationship always haunt Noami and it is due to this that she fears any kind of relationship with anyone. Noami does not wish to be associated with Granton:

I can’t see myself as part of Granton at all. I’m a transplant. Not a genuine prairie rose. I’m part city slicker, part traitor. Even if I stood still for a hundred years on Main street, there’d be no Granton roots under my feet. (43)

Noami longs for Stephen who has kept no ties with her and Obasan. Whenever she thinks of Stephen she thinks of the days in Granton, as in the present she has no connection with him:
Stephen is there. He is still in the field with Uncle, hoving the beets. He moves in his lopsided way down the row, the long unending sugar beet row, humming his tunes. I can hear him.(251)

In an interview with Sally Ito about Itsuka Kogawa connects the notion of presence in absence with a quotation from theologian Rosemary Ruther that later became, the epigraph of The Rain Ascends, the third novel written by Joy Kogawa. “Each of us must discover the secret key to divine abandonment that god has abandoned divine power into the human condition utterly and completely, so that we may not abandon each other”(15). Noami gets involved in the redress movement largely because of her romance with Father Cedric. Filling the void left by her family and closing the familial rifts left open in Obasan, stands Cedric. In a move that displaces and then replaces absence, it is not her mother who has been lost, but Noami and only temporally:

The fact of flesh is new in my life. A simple fact, as commonplace as pebbles on a beach. But I’m a pebble that was lost. Now I’ve been found. I’m held in a hand that’s as warm as song.(208)

Noami realizes Cedric’s importance: “Cedric’s presence in my life is what makes me see the lights in the night” (209). She makes Cedric a Saviour who rescues her from utter despair to hope; as she says:

I only know that I have walked a narrow and barren path all my dusty long life. And that I sit now in the
shelter of a kindly tree. When I look up into the branches, there are pathways of leaves. And singing. (208)

Noami thinks about their relationship in terms of fairy tales where her apprehensions are also described in terms of stories:

I feel like Alice in Wonderland when I think of Father Cedric — Alice following a white rabbit as it disappears down into the pupils of his dark eyes. Down at the bottom of the tunnel is Cedric-land, a place of mystery. (45)

For Noami Cedric is mysterious as he is a priest but he is unlike Pastor Jim who was very strict and condemned physical relationships. Their love-making scene is also described in terms of a fairy tale where Noami thinks herself to be Cindrellla and the forest becomes the Garden of Eden and she thinks of Father Cedric a fairy godmother. It is also a moment of textual negotiation, Kogawa tells us, “Where the beginning of an altogether new story touches a turning point in the old” (138). Through Noami Kogawa wants to rewrite Noami’s old life as a safe old dead-end-tale, “her body a foot binding governed layers of rules and propriety” (138). Kogawa herself mentions: “In ‘Itsuka’ I’m going to struggle with Noami’s sexuality, just as I struggle with my own. Whether I’ll be able to do that successfully, in my life or in this book, I do not know” (Kogawa qtd in Vautier 144). Father Cedric takes Noami to a path which she fears to walk on. Cedric stands in for her dead father, satisfies the longing Noami feels for her mother, and makes up for the rift between Noami and her brother.
As now Noami has overcome her fear of forming a physical relationship with Cedric, so now she will actively take up her other fears and now will openly question the Canadian authorities. Cedric is also totally involved in redress. He believes: “Without justice, love is a mockery” (170). It is only with Cedric that Noami enters the redress. She believes:

Some people are seeing this event as evidence of the reawakening of a buried community. A coming of age. I’m thinking that whether we ever attain redress or not, whether government ever does or does not make a formal acknowledgement of the injustices, we are at least making a statement today ourselves. The politicians may remain unimpressed and continue to see us as ghosts rattling chains, a militant unrepresentative nuisance, an echo from a distant past. But this gathering is alive. We have come from out of the shadow of government past and the community that once was. And in the light above the shadow, the balance scale rests. Justice sits on the side of the oppressed. (265)

For Smaro Kamboureli, “Noami is a product of the kind of pedagogy that aspires to reconciliation for the sake of the presumed comfort that comes with imposing a telos on things” (220). From Kogawa’s perspective, forgiveness and reconciliation do not impose telos on a process, not permit a false sense of consolation that represses racial memory, as time and again Kogawa through Aunt Emily lays emphasis on connectivity. Kogawa mentions:
Many feminists would say that the imagery of inadequacy and brokenness are inappropriate ones for women and do not assist us to the kind of transforming strength which is now needed. It is true that doubt and ambivalence can sometimes so immobilize us that in the end we serve to maintain oppressors in their positions of power. But healthy doubt is also that which prevents us from succumbing to the demonic power of an unthinking trust. ("Is there a just Cause?"20)

The Japanese-Canadian community is divided into two groups, where one is Nikki Kagami’s Toronto League and the other is National Association of Japanese Canadians. The latter part of the novel describes the struggle of Japanese-Canadians for redress and also of true representation of the Japanese-Canadians. Nikki rejects the idea of compensation and says that her group represents the isseis (the first generation immigrants).

Nikki holds press conferences throughout the summer and fall, declaring that the silent majority of Japanese Canadians, particularly the elderly issei, reject the greed of the young militant radical League. (201)

The latter part of Itsuka constitutes a sustained critique of that fraction of the redress movement that worked in opposition to the NAJC by exploiting the ‘issei’ (first generation immigrants) values of co-operation and silence, using them to elicit feelings of guilt for their support for the compensation package. The tactics used by the politically legitimized group against the issei, as Noami observes, have a distorting, negative impact:
Some of the strongest, the most politically conscious, are bowed down by a sense of shame. Their deepest belief in harmony has been completely distorted. (241)

Drawing on the Japanese cultural beliefs in social harmony, the leaders use a pernicious rhetorical strategy in order to shut down potential sites and modes of enabling some sense of such harmony. According to Julie McGonegal:

This rhetorical strategy becomes more pernicious still when it establishes an uncritical equivalence between Japanese and Canadian values of harmony, tolerance and the pursuit of collective good in order to establish a false contradiction between these values and the project of redress. (McGonegal 58)

Such a strategy is at work for example, when Nikki maintains that ‘people [i.e. Japanese Canadians] want to be cooperative’ and ‘want forgiveness’, that ‘the idea of individual compensation is the real sell-out’ not only for this reason, but also because “Canada has always put the group ahead of the individual. We’re not Americans” (217). In this way the Japanese Canadians who are asking for compensation are once again described as being threatening for Canada. This idea is further propagated by Dr Stinson’s claim that “your [Japanese Canadian] community doesn’t need any money. If you were sincerely interested in justice, you’d concern yourselves with the genuinely disadvantaged” (221). This kind of statement seeks to displace the responsibility for Japanese Canadian’s success or failure within the Canadian nation squarely on their own shoulders. Noami herself admits that “Dr Stinson’s claim is hard to
dispute. Japanese Canadians are not needy. We’re middle-class, law-abiding citizens. A model minority”(177). Aunt Emily tries her level best to tell Nikki Kagami about the redress from their point of view. Aunt Emily tries to raise her voice: “She’s an ancient warrior, still carrying the shield of faith and the sword of our truth” (213).

However, with Aunt Emily’s pressure and Cedric’s involvement, Noami also gets involved in redress. Her initial response to the redress effort is that “it is rather inconsequential if you think what’s going on in the world” (102). When Noami attends meetings with Aunt Emily she feels as if the place is a hall of flightlessness. I imagine most of the people are like Obasan and Uncle and me, folks left behind by the Stephens who have flown far away. We who remain are penguins with folded wings, formal and flat-footed. (131)

The narrative traces in a mere fifty to sixty pages, Noami’s movement from suspicion and distrust of redress to an affirmation of it. She says in the beginning: “I’m not a true believer in redress. I’m not a true believer in anything much” (154). In the next few pages she recants this statement and says: “We all know we are a people who were wronged. It’s time to stand up. It’s time”(203).

The refusal of the Canadian Government to acknowledge responsibility for the atrocities committed against the Japanese-Canadians will demystify the myth of multiculturalism and will
enable a libratory future for the minorities in Canada. She accepts Aunt Emily’s idea that

The lie is alive in the world. It was there in Nazi Germany. It’s in South Africa. In Latin America. In every country in the world. This is why redress matters. Because there are many people intent on defending the oppressor’s rights no matter what the truth and they are in places of power. (222)

In Itsuka redress is about taking over the production of truth from those “intent on defending the oppressor’s rights no matter what the truth ‘who’ are in places of power” (222). The struggle for redress is not, of course about money, but about social justice. Nikki Kagami and Dr Stinson argue that internment was a reasonable action for Canada to have taken in the context of World War II, and Aunt Emily and Noami condemn it as unjust.

Aunt Emily is all set for compensation package and even Noami feels the same:

As I sit in our meetings, I feel two engines, love and anger, one in front and one behind, pushing and pulling the train as it chugs up a steep hill. There is love for the community and anger towards anything that would deny its rebirth. (201)

Noami wants that the Japanese-Canadian community should unite and should speak overtly about the wrongs done to them:

Although, as we all know, we must speak with one voice, there is more than one view. From within the
turmoil, it’s commitment that’s being formed. We’re no longer on the sidelines watching others. Japanese-Canadians are in the spotlight’s glare. (202)

The government also sides with Nikki Kagami as they do not risk to apologize to the “Japanese-Canadians, and say that the Japanese-Canadians are a divided community” (203). But Noami says:

Government’s intention is that we should harmonize in perfect government-approved song. But no matter how ardently the choirmaster flails his arms, we sing out of tune. It’s a cacophonous choir, howling its way through the redress blues. I expect that at any moment the curtain will thud at our feet. But some people, having discovered their voices, will no longer be still. (202)

Gradually, Noami’s community identity as well as her ethnic identity gets clearer with her increasingly closer connection to the redress movement. As Nikki Kagami tries to control the media and Aunt Emily tries to raise her voice, Noami feels:

Redress [would] itself become the star, a movement bursting in all directions. The sparks would leap and glow, leap and ignite the people, ‘my people’ across the country. (166)

Stuart Hall says that before the redress movement, Japanese Canadians “were positioned as the unspoken and invisible ‘other’ of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses” (‘New Ethnicities’ 441). In order to change their fate as a colonized
people, the Japanese-Canadians rally together as a community of resistance to the "fixed ideas of settled identity and culturally authorized definition" (Said 'Representing the Colonized' 225). The fight for reparation is not only about money, but also about equality, dignity and reclaiming identity. "It was only when subaltern figures like women, orientals, blacks and other 'natives' made enough noise that they were paid attention to, and asked in so to speak" (Said 'Representing the Colonized' 210).

The one thing that unites this group is a passionate belief that Japanese-Canadians everywhere should have a voice in redress. and that can only happen, they say, if they have a strong grassroots national organization. The more Noami interacts with her ethnic group the greater her ethnic identification becomes. When she hears that Nikki Kagami's group will be dissolved, Noami feels very happy. Gradually Noami's community as well as her ethnic identity gets clearer with her stronger and stronger connection to the redress movement:

I feel I should know every stranger here by name – all these ojisans and obasans, isseis, niseis, sanseis, threaded together through history, language, geography and the will... every single fact is one I know and do not know. (155)

These changes reflect Noami's healthier ethnic identity and greater harmony within herself toward her ethnic community. The commitment to the redress movement enables Noami to affiliate with her ethnic community.
Amidst all this Aunt Emily suffers from gastrointestinal infection and is hospitalized. She is very upset with Nikki and Dr Stinson who do not value the redress and divide the community. She says: “Bit by bit we’re being eaten up – as a community, as a country – because others define us [...] with their movies, their realities, their news. We can hardly know ourselves” (239). Aunt Emily, while lying on the bed, keeps on repeating: “But all shall be well” (266). Noami remembers that this line is actually a part of a quote which was written on the altar cloth at church. “But all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” (266). This quote in a way suggests that for Japanese-Canadians everything will be well, they will be recognized as Canadian citizens and the manner of this will also be well.

Aunt Emily recovers from her illness and she is discharged from the hospital and all of them collectively pray. Noami thinks:

Aunt Emily prays for redress and for the power of reconciliation to be released — a power, she says, that is greater than the atom bomb. Like ‘the importunate widow’ of the biblical tale, she will ask for redress to the end of her days. (268)

They collectively pray for the “issei” (first generation immigrants) who died due to the wrongs done by the Canadian Government against their race:

Aunt Emily says a world of saints is with us – her parents, her sister, Uncle, Obasan, Min’s devoted mother. She names friends who were with her in the
forties, some who died in the camps, some who died in
the midst of this latest struggle, old people, young
ones, peoples in the prime of life.(269)

Noami also feels the presence of the dead: “The dead as alive
and somehow, in some actual way, living in the element of thought”
(269). Noami recalls how her earlier prayers were only mechanical
“these days I am full of longing – longing for Aunt Emily to be
well – longing for the community’s healing” (270). Noami can once
again feel the presence of her mother:

but in this brief hour comes my mother, my silent
mother, in this flowing dot of breath. She breaks
through to whisper, yes, she’s here. It’s just that it’s a
little hard to be heard, she says, because we’re so deaf
in this world, so unable to hear those who still love us
[...] They are at the juxtaposition of sound and thought.
All we need to do is listen. They have so very much to
say [...] Mostly the message is love and warning, love
and telling us which path to follow. (270)

We see that there is a transition in Noami’s behaviour from where
in Obasan and also in the first few pages of Itsuka she is sceptical
about love. There she lacks the ability to trust or to love someone,
but now she understands the importance of love in human life.

In the last chapter of the novel Noami contemplates on her
dreams and also the importance of one’s history in life. She
understands that one can be at peace with one’s own self when one
reconciles oneself with the past. She longs for Canada as her own nation, her own native place:

Dreams dreams dreams.

It begins in earliest infancy, this journey through the world's many borderlands. [...] to be without history is to be unlived crystal, unused flesh, is to live the life of the unborn.

What I've wakened to in this new autumn day is hunger. My hands are hungry. And somewhere beneath my ribs I'm hungry for this square inch of space we are inhabiting today. (271)

On 22nd September 1988 Noami and Aunt Emily gather with other members of their community in the House of Commons to hear the Government's formal apology and to witness the signing of the redress agreement. The moment of apology is described in language of overflow. The transforming capacity of language is registered in her description of the Prime Minister's speech which according to Noami is a "ritual thing that humans do, the washing of stains through the speaking of words" (274). The apology seems to contain a power which lies in its potential to demystify. According to J.L. Austin what apologies do is reveal a formerly repressed truth. After all, it is the apology that acknowledges a formerly unacknowledged version of events that are otherwise ignored. Apologies are acts of revelation; as Nicholas Tavuchis say they are transformative. They transform because they take hold, in a positive or liberating way, of the production of truth.

114
The scene of apology was spatially configured, the P.M. of Canada became the star actor on a national stage, while Japanese-Canadians were consigned to the role of spectators and guests in the expedience with which an occasion that should have been about recognition of racial difference was converted into an event for promoting the nationalist multicultural ideology of harmony and unity.

Japanese-Canadians were represented through the handful of subjects in the guest gallery above the politicians, but the official discourse was managed by the translation of ‘Canadian of Japanese ancestry’ from surviving ‘victim’ to exemplary ‘citizen.’ In this “moment of closure, the narrative of Japanese-Canadians was rewritten by the larger political system as a national story of resolution” (Miki 197).

The official document closes Itsuka just like Obasan, that is as a text that does not affirm the ideology of multiculturalism but that in some important ways resists it. Itsuka contains an article that claims that on behalf of Canadians, the “Canadian Government recognize [s] with great respect, the fortitude and determination of Japanese-Canadians who, despite great stress and hardship, retain their commitment and loyalty to Canada and contribute so richly to the development of the Canadian nation.”

The acknowledgement that closes the novel has none of the ambiguity of the Memorandum at the end of Obasan. Preceded by celebration, it straightforward voices the Japanese-Canadian victory over historical erasure. The novel closes triumphantly. Historiographer Hayden White argues that “the demand for closure
in the historical story is a demand... for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama” (56). The novel in a way makes a clear distinction between characters.

Neither the redress struggle nor the text of *Itsuka* constitutes the redress actually achieved. Kogawa’s novel elicits the fact that racism which lies at the core in Canadian society will not be erased so easily, even though it refers to national apology, as well as redress generally as “a promise fulfilled a vision realized”(275). Despite the language of plenitude, completion, and closure that characterizes the novel’s final pages, Kogawa ultimately suggests that redress does not close the past and the present but rather opens up the future. As Roy Miki points out: “For a collective struggle supplemented by the impossibility of full ethical engagement the future is always around the corner; there is no victory, but only victories that are also warnings”(199).

*Itsuka’s* closure shows that in the end everything is seen, heard, voiced: there are no silences to mark a gap by a silent narrator. *Itsuka* pays some attention to the problems of racist national policies, but national citizenship is the origin and apex of political struggle. The goal of Aunt Emily is Canadian citizenship and that is what the Prime Minister does offer. Noami sees the moment as a vision realized, and the healing rises up to us, the healing falls about use, over the countryside, here and there, today and tomorrow, touching the upturned faces
filled with the waiting and longing of all the wordless years. (275)

The recognition of Japanese-Canadians by the Prime Minister as Canadian citizens charts a movement of the Japanese-Canadians from the margins to the centre of the nation. In Aunt Emily's words, "Japanese-Canadians are east west bridges. We span the gap. It's our fate and our calling to be hyphens — to be diplomats" (78). As bridges they can span the gap. As diplomats Emily and Noami facilitate assimilation into the multicultural nation. The relationship between Cedric, a hybrid, and Noami, a repatriated enemy alien, gives the novel a perfect ending.

Noami conceives the redress "victory less as a warning and more as a beacon of sorts, referring to the official apology as a distant sun, a star, an asterisk in space to guide us through nights that yet must come" (274). She believes that a new form of speaking forecloses new kinds of worlds; the official apology to Japanese-Canadians represents what Butler refers to as "the kind of speaking that takes place on the border of the unsayable" (41). For what Itsuka ultimately suggests is that the achievement of redress does not represent someday but a kind of forgiveness and reconciliation. Kogawa confirms this much in an interview in which she was asked how the concept of forgiveness in Itsuka can be instituted in the political realm. She responded thus: "What is healing for a community is more than just a solution of a political kind. What heals is a process of empowerment" (qtd in McGonegal 52). 'Someday' may then be a series of moments, moments that reinvigorate time itself by bringing into view the possibility of a
future that enables new forms of utterances, other kinds of relationships.

*Itsuka* leaves Canadian identity intact and shows the process of claiming it. It recognizes, in Stuart Hall’s phrase, “identity is always an open, complex, unfinished game-always under construction” (52). Noami’s final coherence is connected to the reconciliation of her seemingly divided identity. With the success of redress, Noami acknowledges her Japanese-Canadian heritage. Noami feels like calling “the ghosts back again to share this day that none of us can believe is happening” (278). Having witnessed the positive outcome of her efforts, Noami is no longer the sceptical, “doubtful of almost everything. On the contrary she is finally able to pray a believer’s cloudless prayer” (276). She returns to an ordinary or pre-symbolic state: “I laugh, I am whole: I am as complete as when I was a very young child” (276). Noami wants to call all her relatives back to earth:

I want to call all the ghosts back again to share this day that none of us can believe is happening. (278)

In the end Noami however wishes:

that Canadians [must] commit themselves to the creation of a society that ensures quality and justice for all ... (278)

The novel closes recalling the state where *Obasan* had begun:

Sixteen years ago I stood with my uncle on the granton coulees in the coolness of a night like this, looking
down at the ocean of grass, and he said, as he always did, umi no yo. It’s like the sea. (278-79)

Noami experiences the calmness which Uncle used to experience in this place. She thinks about her relatives how they had full faith in a happy time which lies ahead in the life of Japanese-Canadians: “And I’m thinking of uncle’s words and the words of an old man in Slocan. ‘There is a time for crying,’ they said. ‘But itsuka, someday, the time for laughter will come’” (279).

In the last paragraph of the novel Itsuka finally hears the speech which was laid in the amniotic deep in Obasan:

There is a silence that cannot speak.

There is a silence that will not speak.

Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend to its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task. The word is stone. (Epigraph of Obasan)

The last paragraph of Itsuka makes Noami’s quest and journey complete where she understands the value of speech and its importance in life:

I can hear the waves from childhood rippling outwards towards other children who wait for their lives. I can hear the voices, faint as the far away song of a distant, almost inaudible, wind. It’s the sound of the underground stream. It speaks through memory, through dream, through our hands, our words, our arms, our
trusting. I can hear the sound of the voice that frees, a light, steady, endless breath. I can hear the breath of life.

As Ackerman notes what matters to Noami in the end “is the cosmic quest, the capacity for faith and meaning” (222). In Itsuka Noami can clearly hear the voice that comes from the amniotic deep, that is from her mother. Noami’s mother had asked their relatives to maintain silence on the question of her disappearance as she did not want her children to know the fate of their mother. In Itsuka Noami understands her mother’s stance; she can finally hear the sound of the sea and voices of her childhood in her re-integrated self. Noami finds greater acceptance of self, culture and ethnicity as she has reclaimed and reintegrated her fragmented identity and has reconnected with her ethnic community.
References


