

## VI. Christmas 1983 Toronto

Just mom and me  
sitting on the floor  
wrapping last minute presents  
and thinking about dad.

"No oshogatsu this year," she says.  
There hasn't been  
an oshogatsu  
in the last four years.

No one left  
to come and visit anyway.

Her first New Year  
was in logging camp  
just after she had arrived.  
Father  
encouraged her to go  
to his boss's cabin.  
Plenty of ogochiso to eat.  
Takehara no oba  
was not amused.  
She scolded mother into  
staying at home from then on.  
The proper thing to do.

When  
dad took me along on his rounds  
to his friends' houses,  
I felt sorry for ma, alone and bored,  
so I begged her to come along.  
She shook no and told me  
someone has to be home  
to greet the guests.

Still in time,  
when guests  
became no longer expected,  
she stayed at home,  
bored while father drank  
to ghosts at our food laden  
table.

Just mom and me  
sitting on the floor  
wrapping last minute presents  
and sharing the same fear.

Bill & Yuri,

Happy holidays and all the  
best in '89 from the Great  
White North.

1988 was a wonderful year!  
Redress was the number one high-  
light, of course! But other things  
happened.

I began work on an album in  
your fair city! So far, the work  
has required my total concentration &  
time, but it sounds pretty good!

The poem to the left is an  
excerpt from a long poem that is  
being considered for publication by  
2 publishers. Keep your fingers  
crossed.

My only regret is that I didn't  
see you enough. I miss our  
conversations together & your  
warm hospitality.

I hope to remedy that in 1989.  
All the best to you & yours!

Jerry  
Watanabe



## III. 1930 - Japan

The kimono grows  
wet in the humidity  
and tears. The sea rages  
on. Marry me handsome  
stranger of my land. Your black

sharp eyes know my joy,  
my fears, my plight. But this other:  
this gaijin from  
Ca-na-da seeks the nape of  
my neck - the sleek expanse of

beauty - for himself.  
Help me. I will do as my  
father wishes me  
to do. To go to the land  
of white devils.

Japan drains

from me.



## IV. 1984 Toronto

She lies asleep.  
Dreaming I'm sure of girlhood,  
of bright keen eyes.

She lies  
unaware of the tubes, the  
machines of medical madness

that keep her colour  
from fading from this godless  
and anemic age.



## V. 1932 Vancouver

White devils! The ships  
leave for Kowloon, Singapore,  
Yokohama. But  
the Manila Maru docks  
in this land of mountains and

devils. Yet he is  
not here to meet me. A cousin.  
A stranger. I  
must put my faith in him. To  
take me through this lair of demons

to the verdant  
forests of his home. The shrouds  
of mountain mist seem  
like my home but the foreign  
tongues, the hideous faces

tell me it is not.

The land is wild, deep and ever  
expanding. Trees

fall into sinew into  
stream into rock into air

into twine into  
lake into unfathomable  
depths. The lumberjacks  
sing some old Japanese song.  
We live in a chicken shack.

Scrub the walls; scrape the  
floors. Never clean, never clean.  
Sing the Nembutsu.

He's drunk every night. Strange how  
I want him now. But he is



not my husband when  
the whiskey stings with the  
horror of rape. He works  
all day. Eats. Plays cards with  
Jikemura. Drunk every

night. Home. Home. Okasan.  
Otosan. Never to  
see them again. Never.



## VI. 1933 On the Skeena River

Jikemura has  
spent \$100,000  
on women, drink  
and song. Shameful.

My child. Oh  
what a terrible time for

a child. No milk. Am  
I barren? Feed him the rice  
water. All I have.  
The starch looks milky. What an  
ugly time to have a child.



## VII. 1920 Japan

The drowned child seems to  
have pearl eyes. She is no longer  
my sister. Dark  
figures murmur and cry in  
shadows. Another ghost roams

the hallways of Genyo.  
Okasan, what does death  
mean? To go home.

It  
is an ugly time but the  
riverrun washes on. The

pain drifts away and  
once again the arms of  
sisters and mother  
and father and handsome brothers  
wrap me in warmth and comfort.



## VIII. 1944 Japan

Death is meaningless;  
but when I give thought to the  
moment of cold death,  
I sorrow in the loss of  
warm family memories.

Father is dead.



## IX. 1945 Minto

The land cuts the spirit  
like barbed wire. It is  
my prison. No bars  
just the haunted endless wild.  
My husband lies broken in

a Kamloops hospital  
and I in pain lie in  
Vancouver. Even  
the sisters of mercy hate  
me. I'm lost. My son alone.

Torn away from them.  
Let us dance to the light of  
the moon and wondrous

imagination:

My sick wife, are you  
looking at the autumn moon?  
Even though I am  
broken and away from you,  
I gaze the same azure sky.

The glow of a night  
field reflects in the eyes of  
an abandoned boy.



X. 1983 New York

Manhattan skyline.  
The lady in black in the  
back of a classic  
yellow cab. Legs bare, brown and  
akimbo. She looks cool like

green jade - with China  
red lips full and moist. God I  
want her. But my soul  
drains of passion within the  
mournful shadows of 6th

Ave. when mother  
plaintively calls for my help.  
She has fallen -

succumbed to age.



## XI. 1946 Alberta

The land is hard, flat  
barren. Brown seeps into brown  
and wheat and sugar  
beet grow stunted in escaping  
sunlight  
    until winter grips

with death and a  
cruel eye. I dare not dream.  
For if I dream I  
will feel hope and there can be  
no hope in such a dust mouthed,

ice veined hell. I dare  
not dream.



## XII. 1951 Toronto

Child of the sun born  
in a time of plenty. Meals  
of ikura and  
rice, steak and tofu grace the  
table daily. Temple bells

and flowers deep with  
colour. Calendars of  
kimono'd ladies  
with kiku and sakura.  
Powell Street's furoba and

gambling dens all gone  
to mysterious Chinatown  
enclaves. For the  
children education. The  
vote just two years old. Life is

good. Teruo, sing  
as I sing. "Kamesan.  
Kamesan-yo." Our

voices are as one.



## XIII. 1980 Japan

The insanity  
of disease. The killer  
diabetes rapes the  
senses one by one. She is  
blind. She is lame. Father ages

beyond his years; his  
mind wanders with worry.  
Faceless relatives  
paw the wallets of the rich  
Canadian gaijin.

Home.

I must go home. Gaman.  
My mother cries.

Genyo  
burned to the ground in  
a careless, irreverent  
moment. Voices and lanterns

are now still.



## Glossary

Obon: summer festival to commemorate the dead

Genyo: name of the estate

Gaijin: epithet for foreigner

Manilla Maru: name of ship

Nembutsu: song of Amida Buddha

Okasan: mother

Otosan: father

Ikura: salmon egg

Tofu: bean curd

Kiku: chrysanthemums

Sakura: cherry blossoms

Furoba: public baths

Kamesan: Mr. Turtle (a children's song)

Gaman: persevere