Idealized Spaces, Internationalized Selves: Japanese Migration to Montreal, Canada, 1990-Present

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# ABSTRACT

**Idealized Spaces, Internationalized Selves: Japanese Migration to Montreal, Canada, 1990-Present**

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This thesis explores the intersections of race, class, gender, and mobility in the lifeworlds of Japanese migrants to Montreal, Canada in the 1990s and 2000s. Following the dramatic burst of Japan's bubble economy of the late 1980s, Japanese politicians advanced a series of large-scale changes drawing on the popularity of market deregulation and neo-liberalism. During what has become known as the post-bubble period or lost decades, successive Japanese governments rapidly dismantled Japan's postwar social contract in the name of privatization and cost-cutting. These measures unraveled the state apparatus that had sustained decades of male single breadwinner households supported by housewives in charge of home finances, household management, and childrearing. Social and political commentators examining this period have imagined a multiplicity of bleak Japans; while some critics point to employment precarity or the postponement of marriage as the primary concerns of the present, others scour the population looking for scapegoats. Against this backdrop, young Japanese people, and especially young women, have turned to alternative life-paths both inside and outside of the archipelago to temper the social and economic pressures felt at home.

Drawing on oral histories conducted with thirty Japanese people who migrated to Montreal in the 1990s and first decades of the 2000s, as well as Japanese language media sources including

widely circulated non-fiction paperbacks, television dramas, and travel writing, I argue that migration is central to Japanese youth's ability to create idealized "neo-liberal" selves. By turning their gaze abroad, these migrants seek more flexible lifestyles free from overwork and societal expectations. Yet, in Canada they continue to struggle with the social and economic realities of late capitalism, including precarious work, racism, and isolation from the host society they had hoped to fully participate in. As such, this thesis interrogates Canadian multicultural mythology and the emancipatory power of being "on-the-move" in the contemporary world. As they navigate post-bubble Japan's mounting pressures and the limits of Montreal's socioeconomic racialized landscape, the stories of Japanese lifestyle migrants exemplify the constant tension between optimism and disillusionment, and agency and oppression, that characterize the search for happiness in the contemporary world.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my father, David Tabakow,

and my uncle, Larry Withers,

who always believed in my bookworm tendencies.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Kaori, a young Japanese woman from Tohoku, Japan, arrived in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Although she had previously taken overseas trips to England, Italy, and France, each for about two weeks, she had never lived overseas before and could speak neither English nor French. When she first set foot in the city, she was placed with an Italian-Canadian host family who lived in the wealthy Bois-Franc area. While it was difficult for her to communicate with them, Kaori was grateful for the Italian suppers she was served during the ten months she lived with them. In this period, she recalled being frightened to go downtown on her own since she had trouble understanding English and French. Before long, however, she began taking language classes at a private language school near the Guy-Concordia metro station and became more immersed in the cityscape through organized excursions to Old Montreal and the downtown core.

By 2012, when I interviewed Kaori, her French and English skills had dramatically improved. Yet, in 2009, she had failed the language exam for permanent residency in Quebec by one percentage point. She expressed her concern that the regulations for residency in the province were tightening, especially in terms of language. Although she had hoped to hone her employment and language skills at university or private college, she could not afford the international student tuition fees. Her plan was to keep working as a waitress at a Korean restaurant on Saint-Denis street and ask her employer to support her residency application.

Her life in Montreal suited Kaori despite living far across the ocean from her aging father and younger brother. In Japan, during her six years in Tokyo, she had studied fashion marketing at university and worked as a salesperson and display coordinator for a Burberry store. She had enjoyed her job well enough, but found the long hours, the rigid work hierarchy, and the strictness

of her supervisor exhausting. She was surprised that, in Canada, her co-workers and boss would casually share lunches, while work ended right at 5 pm. While the pay, benefits, and security of her current job as a waitress were far inferior to her employment in Japan, she explained to me, "I'm very comfortable to be here because I don't have to work hard!"

When contemplating a future life in Montreal, she was circumspect. When her Japanese friends married to Canadians brought their children home to Japan for a visit, their parents found the separation very difficult. Since she was dating a Montreal man, Kaori noted that there was a delicate balancing act involved in choosing a life-course path: "Sometimes, I [am] thinking [that I should] go back to Japan because, in my case, my dad and my young brother, they [are] living together and… if my dad has some problems, I have to take care of them. But, at [the] same time, I want to be happy! I want to get married, and I want to have a child… This is Japanese happiness." She concluded by asserting that while it might be better for her father if she returned to Japan, she loved living in Montreal. In 2015, although she had returned to Japan on vacation, she had become a permanent resident of Quebec and was still living in Montreal.[1]

The life stories of young Japanese in Montreal, their hopes and happiness, failures and frustrations, on both sides of the Pacific, are central to this thesis. Kaori's story demonstrates the successes and struggles of young contemporary Japanese migrants to Montreal. She came to the city with little knowledge of its Francophone culture and language, and no prior contacts in the city. Despite the promises of Quebec's Francization program for new migrants and her own efforts at mastering the language through intensive study, language prevented her from successfully achieving permanent residency for five years after her initial arrival. Her employment skills and experience from Japan did not transfer to the Quebec context. She remained in a precarious service

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[1] Kaori, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 30 November 2012.

job in the city rather than profiting from her transnationalism and eventual fluent tri-lingualism. While she could have found happiness in Japan, for Kaori, migration had proffered clear benefits to selfhood: she found love, a relaxed lifestyle, and fluency in two Western languages despite being underpaid and overqualified. She emerged from her seven years in Montreal with a newly-fashioned sense of self and belonging.

Since the bursting of the economic bubble in 1990, vast changes have swept across Japan. For Japanese women like Kaori of the so-called *ushinawareta nijuunen* or Lost Decades,[2] the post-bubble period has set into motion unprecedented shifts in the meanings of self, gender, family, and labour. Through oral history interviews with thirty Japanese migrants to Montreal, and analyses of Japanese popular literature concerning selfhood and alternative life-paths, this project seeks to explore how young Japanese living abroad narrated their life choices amidst large-scale historical and economic shifts in their home country between 1990 and the present. This dissertation has three interrelated goals. First, I am interested in understanding migrants' new selfhoods created at the nexus of mobility and settledness, stability and precarity, throughout their journeys to the West and imagined transnational futures. Second, this study will examine how Japanese young people negotiated the pressures and changing life-path expectations of post-bubble Japan both within the archipelago and in the diaspora. Finally, I will turn to the geographically-grounded life-worlds of Japanese in Montreal with particular emphasis on narratives of hope and happiness, hopelessness and limitation.

Japan's transition towards market deregulation and neo-liberalism, marked, as elsewhere, by the shift to a more rationalized economy, occurred in the 1970s. After the miracle "high growth"

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[2] While the term "Lost Decade(s)" (*ushinawareta nijuunen*- literally, lost twenty years) is often used to describe the economic recession of post-bubble Japan, "Lost Generation" (*ushinawareta sedai*) refers to the youth who came of age after the bubble burst.

years of the post-war 1950s and 1960s, the volatility in global markets in the 1970s hit Japan especially hard, just as its sources of cheap labour from the countryside were being depleted. By the late 1970s, Japan had transitioned from an economy based on heavy industry to one founded in high-tech, offshore production, and the technological rationalization of domestic output. It had become a *kigyou shakai* or Enterprise Society, with resources allocated to a network of powerful large companies, and welfare handled through subsidies and protection of industries adjacent to these corporations, such as construction and agriculture.[3] With the bursting of the economic bubble in 1990, however, the post-war pact between "Japan Inc."[4] and its workers, which entailed providing middle class men with secure full-time employment in exchange for company loyalty, began to collapse.[5] In its place, particularly under Prime Ministers Hashimoto Ryutaro (1996-1998) and Koizumi Junichiro (2001-2006), emerged privatization, increased competition in the name of a globalizing economy, and restructuring which resulted in more flexible and precarious positions for Japanese young people.[6]

Concurrent with these changes were governmental and media exhortations calling for greater *jiko sekinin*, or personal responsibility, just as state-sponsored social programs and protections were falling. Print and visual media directed at young people furthered this message by relaying visions of internationalism, freedom, and glamour through lifestyles based on consumption and a strong sense of individualism. The international as an object of conspicuous consumption began to open up for mainstream Japanese with travel liberalization and greater wealth for the middle class in the 1970s. With a growing number of university-educated and white-

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[3] Tomiko Yoda, "A Roadmap to Millennial Japan," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, No. 4 (2000): 644–645.
[4] See Ibid, 31–32, for an analysis of this term and its linkage to the image of Japan as the economic world leader of the new century popular in the 1980s.
[5] Jeff Kingston, *Japan's Quiet Transformation: Social Change and Civil Society in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[6] Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

collar young people, youth became a heavily-targeted consumer demographic. In her examination of the hugely popular Discover Japan advertising campaign by Japan Rail in the 1970s, Marilyn Ivy (1995) found that young women especially were seen as key targets for the tourism market. As the advertising copy suggested, "travel (of course, via the national railways [in this case]) becomes a disciplinary apparatus, if a pleasurable one, for producing individuated Japanese [female] subjects."[7]

The age of neo-liberalism exacerbated these trends. As Gabriella Lukacs[8] shows in her work on Japanese television dramas in the 1990s and early 2000s, neo-liberalism heralded a new "affectivity" in popular culture products which created communities of shared feeling through consumerism.[9] Anne Allison suggests in her book on precarity in Japan that this regime of consumption has been gradually replacing older local community structures.[10] Indeed, Wanda Vrasti has argued that, across the industrialized world, neo-liberalism as "a set of power relations" has "extend[ed] the logic of [the] market … across the entire social field."[11] In this context, the new selves and new blueprints for gender relations of the post-bubble period can be seen as intricately entwined with global economic shifts.

This new neo-liberal self is celebrated in the popular genre of self-help literature, often piled appealingly near the front of major bookstores across the country. At a fair in a spacious bookstore in the main train hub of Fukuoka, a city on the southern island of Kyushu, Japan, the fuchsia signs embossed with a white cameo indicated that the target audience was young women.

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[7] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 41.
[8] Gabriella Lukacs, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[9] For example, in the smash hit *Long Vacation* (1996), starring Kimura Takuya and Yamaguchi Tomoko, the characters admit that they have no established life plan, but that their current mode of finding themselves during the "long vacation" of their consumer-driven youth suited them just fine.
[10] Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).
[11] Wanda Vrasti, "'Caring' Capitalism and the Duplicity of Critique," *Theory & Event* 14, no. 4 (2011).

The poster above a shelf filled with pink, purple, and multi-coloured books proclaimed, "In order to beautify your life…" In the tumultuous post-bubble era, in the midst of changing social norms, the books arranged artfully below offered young Japanese women advice on how to proceed: dress like a French woman, be confident like an American woman, travel widely, work outside the home, be a housewife, spend your money, save your money, marry younger, marry older, don't marry at all… The landscape of self-help seems to be at an impasse when it comes to providing women with a proscribed life-course path. Indeed, the imparting of life advice catered to the neo-liberal age is a cross-media phenomenon, as authors of self-help books on pregnancy planning also give lectures on Japan's national television broadcaster, NHK,[12] and affiliated women's magazines sprout up to meet the new demands of anxious female consumers.[13] From the post-war ubiquitous image of the professional housewife, the roles and paths available to women in this stack of books are many, yet present deep contradictions to their reader.

In these works, Japanese women are dually bound by the requirements of economic and socially conservative nationalism. In the Japanese context, where domestic consumption, tied almost exclusively to womanhood from the post-war, was a cornerstone of economic power, this means that women are encouraged to show their patriotism through domestic spending. This image contradicts the conservative model of the self-sacrificing mother figure, upholding the Japanese nation by prioritizing her children's needs over her own. A mother spending her own pocket money on a designer bag, for instance, could at once be praised for contributing to the Japanese economy through hyper-consumption, and decried as a corrupted mother by conservatives. Indeed, the Japanese right oscillates between demanding high economic performance which includes a duty

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[12] This is the case of Shirakawa Touko, the author of *Ninkatsu Bible* (Tokyo: Plus Alpha Shinsho, 2012).
[13] For example, the magazine *Akachan ga hoshii* [I Want a Baby] appeared in 1995 to address the worries of young Japanese women in the post-bubble period surrounding conceiving a child and pregnancy.

to consume and fetishizing the modernist fantasy of a pre-modern society where women function exclusively as mothers to large families. Further, in this rhetoric, Japan's low birth rate, often read as women's failure to fulfill their gendered duty, is cited as perhaps the preeminent problem which the country must face in the coming decades. Yet, few incentives, economic or otherwise, are offered to the growing ranks of working women to entice them to start a family. The structure of Japanese employment, so eager to accommodate the demands of global competition in the twenty-first century, appears comparatively unbendable when it comes to women's needs.[14]

And so, in self-help books, memoirs, and oral history narratives, contemporary Japanese women are seeking out alternative life-paths. Rather than imitating the post-war pattern of housewifery and part-time work or navigating the ideological constraints of being one of the many *wakingu mama* or working mothers, young people are attempting to re-configure the range of life-paths. *Jibun sagashi*, the search for a more authentic self, rings as a keynote through this literature. The search for, and creation of, alternative selfhoods in post-Fordist Japan has taken young women (and men, as their secure employment possibilities dwindle) into relatively uncharted terrain.[15] They work as *freeters* [people not in full time employment], or part-time unstable labourers, and freelancers,[16] they earn many degrees yet eschew careers, they move from the cities of the Showa

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[14] For an excellent critique of the failures of the current government's "Womenomics" policy, see: Helen Macnaughtan, "Womenomics for Japan: is the Abe Policy for Gendered Employment Viable in an Era of Precarity?" *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 13, No. 1 (2015): http://japanfocus.org/-Helen-Macnaughtan/4302/article.html.
[15] Although the percentage of Japanese in precarious employment has not increased that dramatically since the Showa period, the meaning assigned to work has. While middle aged Japanese women in the postwar period saw their part-time work as economic necessity, labour for young Japanese is being tied more and more to the idea of selfhood. In the case of working professional women, see Anne Stefanie Aronsson, *Career Women in Contemporary Japan: Pursuing Identities, Fashioning Lives* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[16] See Mary C. Brinton, *Lost in Transition: Youth, Work, and Instability in Postindustrial Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Kosugi Reiko, *Escape from Work: Freelancing Youth and the Challenge to Corporate Japan*, trans. Ross Mouer (Portland: Trans Pacific Press, 2008).

(1926-1989) white collar dream to the countryside, and they turn to travel, schooling, and home-building across the ocean.[17]

This project seeks to understand the intersections of post-bubble Japanese history, Japanese Montreal life-worlds, and individuals' search for happiness and selfhood under neo-liberalism.[18] I argue that the year 1990, when the Japanese economic bubble burst, is an especially relevant turning point in the history and life-course paths of contemporary Japanese. More specifically, I contend that at this moment of cultural malaise and neo-liberal deregulation, calls for personal responsibility, and popular culture products stressing the search for the self, young Japanese, especially Japanese women, turned to the foreign, and in this case, Montreal, as a potential site for the remaking of the self. Propelled by Japan's economic listlessness and growing armies of precariat workers, as well as a new individualist, consumerist, and competitive ideal self promoted by the dismantling of the Showa Era's safety nets, my project sees emigrants to Quebec, Canada as not merely fleeing to a mediatized West as many similar studies argue, but also responding to dramatic recent cultural and economic shifts in their home country.[19]

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[17] There is a vast literature on Japanese international migration. For example, see Yuiko Fujita, *Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Nobuko Adachi, ed., *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, And Uncertain Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Karen Kelsky, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[18] This expands on my Masters work. In 2012, I interviewed eighteen migrants to Montreal, Canada about their frustrations with the gendered narratives and expectations of post-bubble Japan, as well as their rationales behind choosing Montreal as their migration destination. Elizabeth Tabakow, "Flight to a 'French-Coloured' City: Gendered Paths, Imagination, and Experience in Japanese Migration to Montreal, 1998–2012 (MA original research essay, Concordia University, 2013).

[19] For example, see: Kelsky, 2001; Fujita, 2009; Youna Kim, *Transnational Migration, Media, and Identity of Asian Women: Diasporic Daughters* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

## Historiographical Currents

*The Rise of Neo-Liberalism*

In the past twenty-five years, neo-liberalism has become central to critiques of contemporary society across the humanities and social sciences. The rise of neo-liberalism began before Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan attempted to put its policies into political practice in the 1980s. Following Friedrich Hayek and Milton Freedman of the Chicago School of Economics, elites in the mid-twentieth century turned to pronouncements of the benefits of the free market and austerity in order to combat the wealth distribution made possible by the post-war Keynesian welfare state.[20] As neo-liberal policies gained traction in the 1970s, spurred on by the oil shocks of the 1970s and the resultant collapse of the Fordist system, social spending plummeted while taxes for the wealthy in developed nations were dramatically decreased.[21]

Although neo-liberalism reached Asia after it had become popularized in the West, by the 1990s, its proponents were similarly championing balanced budgets and privatization. In the East Asian context, as a issue of the journal *positions: asia critique*, posits, "A key point of connection is that these three countries [Japan; China; Korea] have mobilized (and disenfranchised) their young demographics in their transitions… toward a neo-liberal model of economic management and governance."[22] Japan's neo-liberalization, mostly guided by the perennially-in-power socially conservative and neo-liberal Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), marked a particularly jarring departure from the post-war mentality of "Japan, Inc." that saw male workers spending their entire lives with one company responsible for their welfare. In the early 1990s, government calls for personal responsibility and self-reliance stood in ironic contrast to the growing numbers of

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[20] Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*.
[21] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[22] Gabriella Lukacs, "Labor Games: Youth, Work, and Politics in East Asia," *positions: asia critique* 23, no. 3 (2015): 382.

dissatisfied precarious labourers, stay-at-home youths, and unemployed university graduates, who could no longer aspire to the often cosy and comfortable lifestyle of the Showa Era. These economic shifts in Asia as well as the Western world, have led to a reorganization of social life in a world where you yourself are deemed your only security net.

The shift to precarious, affective, and flexible labour meant a necessary reorientation for the work force. Scholars of neo-liberalism argue that rather than being merely a reconstitution of classical liberalism, neo-liberalism stretches the logic of the market across social and cultural planes.[23] Under this system of governance, social characteristics of the population were actively remade in order to align them with economic criteria and expectations.[24] The neo-liberal self, a remodeling of selfhood under neo-liberalism, was created to suit the post-Fordist economic reconfiguration of affective and flexible labour, rationalized cost-cutting, and transnational business ventures. Characteristics central to these new selves are pride in personal mobility, self-reliance, independence from family and government welfare structures, and emancipation from traditional social and economic patterns. Compared with Fordist workers who owned their labour power, neo-liberal subjects must turn their entire selves into commodities, making investments in themselves to increase their prospects of employment. All aspects of selfhood, including past histories of education and employment, as well as personalities, hobbies, and talents, are seen as raw material for the construction of a marketable subject.

In the Japanese context, Gabriella Lukacs has shown how television dramas, and especially the trendy drama and workplace drama,[25] heralded these neo-liberal selfhoods. The new focus in

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[23] Vrasti, "Caring Capitalism".

[24] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 66.

[25] Gabriella Lukacs, "Workplace Dramas and Labor Fantasies in 1990s Japan," in *Global Futures in East Asia: Youth, Nation, and the New Economy in Uncertain Times*, eds., Ann Anagnost, Andrea Arai, and Hai Ren, 222–247 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

the 1990s on lifestyle, individualism, and choice, in love and at work, was derived directly from neo-liberal policies focusing on self-reliance: "These concepts served to mobilize youth to accept new consumer and labour regimes, as well as shifting structures of exploitation."[26] In these dramas, youth were encouraged to prioritize their search for individual consumable selves over their established familial and friend networks. Anne Allison has also noticed the fraying social fabric of Japanese society in the 1990s. She argues that the connections between humans have been severed by neo-liberalism's economic rationality; caring for others, which is hard to capitalize on, has lost its value.[27]

While the field of migration studies is attuned to the transnational circuits in migrants' lives, scholars of migration have been hesitant to engage with the refashioning of migrants' subjectivities in the era of neo-liberalism. As Aihwa Ong, for one, has noted, nation-states have not lost power under globalization and cultural flows cannot be cut off from class stratification. Thus, Ong urges researchers to consider "how cultural flows and human imagination [are] conditioned and shaped within these new relations of global inequality." [28] Although research has since begun to analyze the social effects of neo-liberalism and global relationships of inequality, its transformative effects on subjecthood have too often remained on an abstract level. My research seeks to examine the fashioning of neo-liberal selves of young Japanese living overseas in Montreal. By conducting interviews and analyzing the resultant life narratives, I aim to understand how young Japanese have internalize neo-liberalism's precepts, both at home and abroad. Further, I am interested in

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[26] Lukacs, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves*, 8.
[27] Allison, *Precarious Japan*, 2013. Cho Hae-Joang describes a similar phenomenon in Korean youth in the 2000s, "As the demarcation between the negotiating subject and the negotiated commodity became blurred, individuals lose their sense of autonomy, moral dignity, and political sovereignty. There is no clear split between spiritual aspirations and the pursuit of material interests." Cho Hae-Joang, "The Spec Generation Who Can't Say 'No': Overeducated and Underemployed Youth in Contemporary South Korea," *positions: asia critique* 23, no. 3 (2015): 453.
[28] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 11.

how Japan's notably happy young people who belie the recessionary economy of their home country[29] strive to have enjoyable and meaningful lives under the constraints of neo-liberalism.

*Gendered Lives*

This study also builds on the scholarship on changing gender roles and expectations in post-bubble Japan. In the past twenty-five years, gender has become a major analytical focus within Japan studies. Previously, gender portrayals in scholarship on Japan evoked the long-suffering woman oppressed by patriarchal "feudal" Confucian structures, then on the post-war ideal of the white-collar *salaryman* (office worker) husband and stay-at-home *sengyou shufu* (professional housewife).[30] However, more recent work contends that masculinity and femininity in Japan are fluid, socially constructed categories. What Merry White has termed the third generation of thinking about Japanese gender draws attention to new identities intrinsically linked to consumption and changes in the economic and social structure of Heisei (1989-present) Japan.[31]

In an era of economic recession and social upheaval, the parameters of prescribed gender roles have changed. Scholars have documented a shift from an ideal based on work-oriented masculinity to one grounded in otaku geek culture, manicured cross-media idols, like SMAP, [32] and beautified young men. [33] As Laura Miller suggests in her book on male and female beauty

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[29] See Furuichi Noritoshi's excellent *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi* [The Happy Youths of the Country of Despair] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011) for an analysis of this phenomenon.

[30] Merry White, review of *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives of the Past, Present, and Future*, by Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda, *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 3 (1996): 389.

[31] Ibid.

[32] SMAP is an acronym for Sports and Music Assemble People, a male idol group formed in 1988 by the talent agency Johnny's Jimusho. Now in their 40s, SMAP members were a fixture in Japanese commercials (such as for male beauty products), variety shows (such as their cooking show, Bistro SMAP), dramas, and movies while still releasing best-selling singles and album until their dramatic break-up in 2017.

[33] As Sabine Fruhstuck and Anne Walthall note, "in the early twenty-first century a significant number of Japanese men no longer embody or desire to fulfill the ideal of the salaryman." Sabine Fruhstuck and Anne Walthall, eds, *Recreating Japanese Men* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 4; Susan Napier, "Where Have All the Salarymen Gone? Masculinity, Masochism, and Technomobility in *Densha Otoko*," in *Recreating Japanese Men*, 2011; or Ian Condry, "Love Revolution: Anime, Masculinity, and the Future," in *Recreating Japanese Men*, 2011;

techniques, by expressing their desire for this new beautiful man, women are rejecting the older hegemonic images of salaried, patriarchal and conformist businessmen.[34] Unlike the distinct categories of otaku geek and beautiful boy, new expressions of Japanese femininity are more varied and fluid, ranging from girls in fashion subcultures in Tokyo[35] to the rise of 'cute' idols on the net[36] and in the mass media.[37]

Changes in the labour market had a dramatic impact on gendered ideology and behaviour. With the deregulation of labour laws since 2004, Japanese companies have increasingly hired young men as non-regular rather than regular workers. Meanwhile, societal pressures on men to provide for their future wives and children continue unabated. These ideological constraints and narrowing economic options serve to frustrate young men clinging to an employment-based definition of masculinity. In 2013, when Emma Cook interviewed young men to gauge their understanding of working life and its relationship to masculinity, she found that male freeters were considered unattractive marriage partners, deemed incapable of supporting a family. And despite the fact that many male freeters have been seeking out alternative life-paths, they have internalized negative claims that cast them as poor representations of Japanese manhood.[38] Romit Dasgupta's work similarly points to the powerful hold that the image of the salaryman continues to exert in public formulations of "ideal" masculinity.[39]

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Fabienne Darling-Wolf, "SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity: Constructing the Perfect Female Fantasy in Japanese Popular Music," *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 3 (2004): 357–370; Laura Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[34] Miller, *Beauty Up*.

[35] Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2012).

[36] Gabriella Lukacs, "The Labor of Cute: Net Idols, Cute Culture, and the Digital Economy in Contemporary Japan," *positions: asia critique* 23, no. 3 (2015): 497–513.

[37] Hiroshi Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[38] Emma E. Cook, "Expectations of Failure: Maturity and Masculinity for Freeters in Contemporary Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 16, no.1 (2013): 29–43.

[39] Romit Dasgupta, *Re-Reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

In the so-called employment ice age in Japan, young women have arguably fared worse than men; in 2002, over fifty percent of all women were working in non-regular or unstable labour positions compared with fifteen percent of the male work-force.[40] Women's precarious position in the work force has to be seen in the context of post-war policies that have relegated women's work to the margins of society.[41] As Kuniko Ishiguro argues, even though "women's advance in the workplace and gender equality in economics and politics have been advocated, in reality the gender gap of employment status has not been narrowed if we look at the big picture."[42] The school system has perpetuated gender stereotypes of "passive" women and "successful" businessmen. In the early 1990s, as Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow has shown, female college students were discouraged from continuing onto higher education or reaching for more prestigious employment opportunities by both professors and male employers.[43] In another important work, Yuko Ogasawara has examined the employment of women as Office Ladies (OL), previously described as "flowers of the office" to brighten up men's days. As the author explains, women have been allowed to wield power over their male co-workers because of the rigidity of the employment hierarchy that keeps women in the clerical track without a chance for promotion.[44] Tellingly, authors identify women's agency and resistance less so in the labour market and more so in the

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[40] Kuniko Ishiguro, "Japanese Employment in Transformation: The Growing Numbers of Non-Regular Workers," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008), http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2008/Ishiguro.html.

[41] Miyako Inoue, "Neoliberal Speech Acts: The Equal Opportunity Law and Projects of the Self in a Japanese Corporate Office," in *Global Futures in East Asia: Youth, Nation, and the New Economy in Uncertain Times,*" eds., Ann Anagnost, Andrea Arai, and Hai Ren, 197–221 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[42] Ishiguro, "Japanese Employment in Transformation," Ibid.

[43] Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda, eds, *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1995).

[44] Yuko Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender, and Work in Japanese Companies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

sphere of "private" life. In *Bicycle Citizens*,[45] and *Housewives of Japan*,[46] for example, housewives' volunteer activities, social roles, and unique trajectories throughout Japanese cities are seen as sites of power outside of male dominated corporate Japan.

This project seeks to connect the gendered constraints in contemporary Japan with women's dominance in overseas migration. Since 1964, when the travel restrictions of the early post-war were removed, the number of Japanese travelling abroad has steadily increased. While Japanese travel mostly to East and Southeast Asia, long-term overseas residency is divided between North America (39 percent) and Asia (26 percent). Since 1999, more Japanese women have been living abroad than men. For short-term student migrations in particular, the proportion of women to men has climbed from forty to seventy percent in the decade between 1988 and 1998. Yamashita posits that the increasing numbers of Japanese visitors and residents overseas can be attributed to Japan's rising economic fortunes and the power of the Japanese yen.[47] Since the bubble burst, the reduction of stable employment opportunities on the archipelago have encouraged more young Japanese to opt out of the Japanese workplace, and to travel and live overseas.[48]

Research on young Japanese abroad has proliferated since the late 1990s.[49] One of the first major scholarly works on the preponderance of Japanese female migration to the West in the post-

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[45] Robin Leblanc, *Bicycle Citizens: The Political World of the Japanese Housewife* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[46] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, *Housewives of Japan: An Ethnography of Real Lives and Consumerized Domesticity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

[47] Shinji Yamashita, "Transnational Migration in East Asia: Japan in a Comparative Focus," *Senri Ethnological Reports* 77 (2008): 4

[48] Jun Nagatomo, *Migration as Transnational Leisure: The Japanese Lifestyle Migrants in Australia* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2015), xi.

[49] For a broad look at the contemporary Japanese diaspora, see: Harumi Befu & Sylvie Guichard-Anguis. *Globalizing Japan: Ethnography of the Japanese Presence in Asia, Europe, and America* (London: Routledge, 2001); Nobuko Adachi, *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, And Uncertain Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Adachi, 2010.

bubble era was Machiko Sato's oft-cited *Farewell to Nippon* (2001).[50] First published in Japanese in 1993, her book explores the experiences of "life style migrants" to Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. The author argues that Japanese women favour Western societies not only for the economic opportunities they offer, but also the more leisurely lifestyle. Other works considering youth migration to Australia have built on Sato's framework, arguing that Australia's warm climate and comparatively flexible work environment have made it an attractive destination for Japanese women.[51] Yet other studies tell the stories of Japanese "sojourners" who have remained strongly attached to their home country or returned to Japan disillusioned by either visa troubles or confounded expectations.[52]

As scholars concur, the Western imaginary has exerted a strong and lasting pull. As Karen Kelsky has argued, Japanese women who turn to the foreign feel *akogare*, or longing, for an idealized version of the Western world. These women view themselves as the true "internationalists," moving beyond the gendered life-path possibilities available to them in Japan.[53] Yuiko Fujita's work, in turn, focuses on artistically-minded young Japanese who left Tokyo for either New York or London.[54] Although their idealization of North American and European media products acted as a powerful push factor, after arriving, few female migrants developed close relationships with Westerners. Rather, due to racism, language difficulties, or cultural differences, migrants' sense of themselves as "Japanese" became more pronounced. As Japanese migrants

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[50] Sato, *Farewell to Nippon*.
[51] Several authors have directly expanded on Sato's work on lifestyle migrants in Australia. For example, see: Nagatomo, 2015; Tetsuo Mizukami, *The Sojourner Community: Japanese Migration and Residency in Australia* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006); Takeshi Hamano, *Searching Better Lifestyle in Migration: The Case of Contemporary Japanese Migrants in Australia* (Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).
[52] Mizukami, 2006.
[53] Karen Kelsky, "Gender, Modernity, and Eroticized Internationalism," *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (1999): 229–255; Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*.
[54] Fujita, *Cultural Migrants from Japan*.

spent more time abroad in global cities, they began to re-envision a future for themselves back in Japan.

In following the journeys of migrants from Japan to the West, most scholars have explored the ways in which Japanese women fashioned a new sense of self while travelling or residing abroad, while paying scant attention to the construction of femininity emergent from Japan itself. Sawa Kurotani's study *Home Away from Home* remains an exception. Kurotani explores the lives of Japanese corporate wives in the United States, who adhere to rigid and conservative gender norms while being in the centre of economic change. [55] As Kurotani holds, Japanese corporate wives recreated Japan in the domestic sphere in the American suburbs. They interpreted their long-term stay in the United States as a "vacation" despite their increased domestic tasks and imported Japanese conceptions of femininity and home, reinforced by their constant contact with other Japanese housewives, into their American lives.

In a similar vein, my work brings together two areas of research that often have remained separate. My doctoral research is as closely attuned to the formation of gendered identities in post-modern and neo-liberal Japan as it is to women's (and men's) attempts to formulate alternative life-paths and selves, both at home and abroad. As the scholar Joan Scott

has observed, "Feminist history then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies."[56] It is these gendered scripts that figure prominently in my work.

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[55] Sawa Kurotani, *Home Away from Home: Japanese Corporate Wives in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
[56] Joan Wallach Scott, "Women's History," in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University, 1988/1999), 27.

*Critiques of Multiculturalism*

Finally, in this study, I hope to contribute to recent research which looks critically at the narratives surrounding migration to Canada. On the 150th anniversary of confederation, on July 1, 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose father Pierre Elliott Trudeau had first championed state-led multicultural policy in Canada in the 1970s, included in his official statement references to migrants past and future who have come to live in Canada: "Canada's story stretches back long before Confederation, to the first people who worked, loved, and built their lives here, and to those who came here centuries later in search of a better life for their families."[57] In Trudeau's statement, crafted with the hallmarks of Canadian exceptionalism, the focus on migration serves as an implicit critique of nativist policies currently gaining traction across the developed world. Canada, in contrast, is pitched as a country where migrants are not merely included in the national vision, but essential to it.

Yet, beneath the inclusive narrative, as progressive critics of Canada's multicultural policy have pointed out,[58] is a party line convinced that accepting migrants is a great favour that Canada does for them and the world. This, however, elides the necessity of migration for a Canadian labour market in need of low-wage workers[59] as well as histories of racist migration policy which sought to maintain the nation's whiteness at any cost.[60] Further, when Trudeau writes of migrants

[57] Justin Trudeau, "Statement by the Prime Minister on Canada Day," https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/07/01/statement-prime-minister-canada-day

[58] For instance, as Augie Fleras argues: "The foundational logic of an official multiculturalism is hegemonic and controlling. Its primary objective is to depoliticize ethnicity by making Canada safe *from* diversities and difference as well as safe for difference and diversities." *Racisms in a Multicultural Canada: Paradoxes, Politics, and Resistance* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2014), 245.

[59] Brahim Boudarbat and Gilles Grenier, "Immigration in Quebec: Labour Market Integration and Contribution to Economic Growth," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 49, no.2 (2017): 13–32.

[60] As Lloyd Wong and Shibao Guo note in a recent publication, building on past racist histories, the current points system for Canadian immigration should not be considered neutral either; "the Points System favours a form of human capital that is culturally determined (language). This requirement is a form of cultural fundamentalism and cultural racism": "Canadian Ethnic Studies in the Changing Context of Immigration: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 50, no.1 (2018): 2–3.

searching for a "better life for their families," he is ignoring two historical and contemporary realities of migration to Canada. While some hoped to settle permanently on Canadian shores and wishing for a better life here, many others saw the country as a stop-off point in a longer migration or in a circular migration back home.[61] Also, assuming that a better life would await them in Canada belies the continuing legacy of racism and settler colonialism which ensures greater surveillance and labour market discrimination against newcomers,[62] especially those who are people of colour.[63] To suggest otherwise homogenizes and whitewashes migrant experience, past and present, into an easily understandable feel-good dichotomy between their difficult past life in their home country and successful new life in Canada.

Similarly, histories of Asian migration often continue to reify the difference between home country and destination, focusing on permanent migration in the early twentieth century and rarely delving seriously into the history of where migrants came from.[64] Because of this, such scholarship can also inadvertently reproduce narratives like Prime Minister Trudeau's which render migrants from Asia as poor subjects in need of Canadian beneficence. While research on early to mid-twentieth century migrants fleeing from violence and poverty is undoubtedly vital, other stories

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[61] Many contemporary Chinese migrants, for example, spend many years in Canada, even obtaining citizenship, before returning to China. Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho & David Ley, "'Middling' Chinese Returnees or Immigrants from Canada? The Ambiguity of Return Migration and Claims to Modernity," *Asian Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2014): 36–52.

[62] In the Quebec context in particular, as Marie McAndrew cautions, contemporary migrants to Quebec are faced with worsening economic outcomes since 1990: "The economic performance indicators for the immigrant population have deteriorated, in particular among visible minorities, who take more time than before to catch up with national averages, both in terms of income and unemployment." "Quebec Immigration, Integration and Interculturalism Policy: A Critical Assessment," *Canadian Diversity* 10, no. 1 (2013): 17.

[63] Habiba Zaman, "Asian Immigrants' Vision of an Alternative Society in Australia and Canada: Impossibly Utopian or Simply Social Justice?" *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010): 9–10.

[64] More specifically, studies on Japanese persons in Canada have largely focused on early twentieth century migration, internment during World War Two, and the redress movement in the 1970s and 80s. Yukichi Niwayama, "Caught In-Between: The Life History of a Japanese Canadian Deportee," *Journal of American and Canadian Studies* 28, no. 3 (2010): 3. Hirosuke Hyodo notes in the American context, that research on Japanese migrants in the post-1965 era is almost nonexistant. "The Era of Dual Life: The Shin-Issei, the Japanese Contemporary Migrants to the U.S." *The Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 13, no. 1 (2013): http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol13/iss1/hyodo.html.

are also needed to broaden the scope of knowledge on (especially) recent Asian peoples on Canada's shores. Relatedly, much historical writing has yet to contend with the fluidity of migrant lives, resulting in a Canadian population more in flux than often captured in official statistics. For instance, working holiday visa holders in the present, like many Japanese in Montreal, only stay here for a year or two, making up the fabric of the city, yet invisible in much data. As this thesis holds, they come for work, school, and new cultural experiences, but rarely to make a better life and rarely just to Canada.

**Journeys to Montreal**

Prior to 1946, Montreal, Quebec had been home to less than 50 persons of Japanese origin.[65] In the post-war period, after interning its population of 23,000 Japanese Canadians, the government of Canada instituted a relocation and repatriation program. To prevent Nikkei from returning to their home communities in British Columbia,[66] Japanese Canadians leaving the internment and work camps were given two choices: disperse across central and eastern Canada or be repatriated to Japan.[67] As a result of this policy, by the end of the 1940s, 1,300 Nikkei had settled in Montreal,[68] a population which swelled to 5,000 in the 1970s.[69] As the Japanese economy grew exponentially in the 1970s and 1980s, Japanese nationals, with ever-greater mobility and capital, began entering Canada, arriving in the metropolis of Montreal to work or

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[65] Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM), *Repartir à zero: perspectives sur l'expérience des Canadiens d'origine japonaise au Québec/ Perspectives on the Japanese Canadian Experience in Quebec* (Montreal: Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, 1987), 16.

[66] Even by 1901, 97 percent of Japanese lived in British Columbia. Naoko Hawkins, "Becoming a Model Minority: The Depiction of Japanese Canadians in the Globe and Mail, 1946-2000," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 41 (2009): 138.

[67] Montreal Japanese Canadian History Committee, *Ganbari: Un chez-soi retrouvé/ Ganbari: Reclaiming Our Home* (Montreal: Montreal Japanese Canadian History Committee, 1998), 9.

[68] Greg Robinson, "'Deux Autres Solitudes': Historical Encounters Between Japanese Canadians and French Canadians," in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century,* eds. Greg Donaghy & Patricia E. Roy (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 149.

[69] Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal, "History," http://www.jcccm-cccjm.ca/about-the-centre/history/.

attend university. These men and women were joined in the late 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s by the "life style [*sic*] migrants" of Machiko Sato's work.[70]

While the number of Japanese nationals arriving in Canada decreased to no more than 350 per annum in the affluent bubble years of the 1980s, from 1989 to 1992, 500 Japanese per year were choosing to settle in Canada. This subsequently increased from 1992 to 1996, when the number of Japanese migrants rose to about 1000 per year.[71] According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between 1990 and 2012, the number of Japanese nationals living on Canadian soil almost tripled, from 21,846 to 61,854 residents.[72] This influx was composed of Japanese temporary residents, mostly working holiday or student visa-holders, as well as business and academic workers, or *chuuzaiin*, employees transferred temporarily to Canada. By 2011, according to Statistics Canada, there were 3,135 Japanese nationals living in the Montreal metropolitan area.[73] This recent wave of migrants, called the "*shin-issei*" or new first generation, in the American context by Hirosuke Hyodo, dominates contemporary international migration from Japan.[74] Within this contemporary current of Japanese migrants, there is a significant gender gap; it is Japanese women who overwhelmingly choose to migrate West, especially as students and workers in their 20s and 30s.[75] Indeed, between 2003 and 2009, for example, 75 percent of

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[70] Machiko Sato, *Farewell to Nippon: Japanese Life style Migrants in Australia* (Melboune: Trans Pacific Press, 2001).

[71] Yukari Hayakawa, "Access to Professions: The Experience of Japanese Immigrants in Canada" (MA thesis, Ryerson University, 2007).

[72] Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas," accessed April 2021. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000368753.pdf.

[73] Statistics Canada, NHS Focus on Geography Series-Montréal CMA (Ottawa, 2011), http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/FOG.cfm?lang=E&level=3&GeoCode=462.

[74] Hirosuke Hyodo, "The Era of Dual Life: The Shin-Issei, the Japanese Contemporary Migrants to the U.S." *The Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 13, no. 1 (2013): http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol13/iss1/hyodo.html.

[75] Yamashita, "Transnational Migration in East Asia."

Japanese nationals who obtained permanent residency status in the United States were female, as were 70 percent of Japanese students studying there in the 1990s.[76][77]

Despite the dreams of many Japanese migrants to Montreal, the city itself is perhaps not the ideal locale to seek upward mobility. North America, like Japan, has been influenced by neo-liberal reforms and resultant economic inequalities since the 1990s. In fact, the United States (40.4 percent),[78] Canada (35 percent),[79] and Japan (34 percent)[80] have seen similar increases in the number of contingent workers from the 1990s. Although Quebec's neo-liberalization has proceeded more haltingly than in the rest of Canada, researchers point to the increasing privatization of health care,[81] rising tuition fees in university,[82] and decentralization of cultural policies[83] as signs of the neo-liberal turn in the province. According to a report by the Boston Consulting Group, in the past fifteen years, Montreal's GDP growth has slowed to 37 percent versus 59 percent on average for Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, the other five large Canadian cities studied.[84] Further, its demographic growth has been half of the other cities, while its unemployment rate was 8.5 percent compared to the 6.3 percent average of the

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[76] Hyodo, "The Era of Dual Life".

[77] Similarly, out of the small sample of eighteen Japanese Montrealers interviewed for my MA paper, there were 14 women and 4 men, with 16 young people in their 20s and 30s, and 13 students at language schools or universities in the city. Tabakow, "Flight to a French-Coloured City".

[78] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Earnings,and Benefits*, GAO-15-168R (Washington, 2015), http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/669899.pdf.

[79] Statistics Canada, *The Impact of Precarious Employment on Financial Security in Retirement* (Ottawa, 2005), http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-511-x/2006001/ch/5203531-eng.htm.

[80] Research Institute of Economy, Trade, and Industry, *Why Has the Fraction of Contingent Workers Increased? A Case Study of Japan* (Tokyo, 2011), http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/11e021.pdf.

[81] Cory Blad, "The Emerging Role of Culture in Neoliberal State-Building," in *Neoliberalism and National Culture: State-Building and Legitimacy in Canada and Quebec* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 211–246.

[82] Eric Pineault, "Quebec's Red Spring: An Essay on Ideology and Social Conflict at the End of Neoliberalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 90 (2012): 29–56.

[83] Monica Gattinger and Diane Saint-Pierre, "The 'Neoliberal Turn,' in Provincial Cultural Policy and Administration in Quebec and Ontario: The Emergence of 'Quasi-Neoliberal' Approaches," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 35 (2010): 279–302.

[84] Sophie Cousineau, "Montreal's economy lagging, study shows," *The Globe & Mail*, February 25, 2014, accessed September 2015, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/montreals-economy-lagging-study-shows/article17073747/.

Anglophone locations.[85] For visible minorities, the economic situation is even more dire. As sociologist Jean-Francois Godin found in a ten-year longitudinal study between 1990 and 2000, wage and occupational mobility remain stagnant for migrants from East Asia, like young Japanese.[86]

And yet, as a "global city", Montreal, Quebec, represents an intriguing liminal space. As a special issue of the journal *Anthropologica* holds, Montreal is both French and English, both North American and European.[87] It is "a city of in-betweens…shaped by a double legacy, European and American," Annick Germain writes. As such, it is a city uniquely positioned to capture the imaginaries of would-be Japanese migrants.[88] In the North American and European contexts, several authors have examined how Japanese migrants envision their destinations. As Yuiko Fujita posits, Western mass media and Japan's historically uneasy relationship with the Western world, precipitated by the "opening up" of Japan by American gunboat diplomacy in the nineteenth century, helped form a Western imaginary for young Japanese.[89] Zeroing in on women's imaginings of the West, Karen Kelsky explores how it has been viewed as an escape from traditional gender roles.[90] Indeed, migrants to Montreal, Canada, similarly to those choosing other European or North American locales, often cling to an idealized, imagined space outside Japan as the far-flung site of future dreams.

Montreal is also a nodal point in the broad transnational networks of Japanese migration in the post-bubble period. The importance of place, in our global age, lies partly in its connections

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Jean-Francois Godin, "Immigrant Economic Integration: A Prospective Analysis over Ten Years of Settlement," *International Migration* 46, No. 2 (2008): 135–165.
[87] Martha Radice, "Montréalology: An Introduction," *Anthropologica* 55 (2013): 17.
[88] Annick Germain, "The Montréal School: Urban Social Mix in a Reflexive City," *Anthropologica* 55 (2013): 29.
[89] Fujita, "The Imagined West in Japan," in *Cultural Migrants from Japan*, 19–71.
[90] Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*.

with the world beyond, as geographer Doreen Massey has argued.[91] Following her formulation, "a global sense of the local, a global sense of place" should be elaborated upon with an eye to both the local context of the city and the global contemporary experiences of mass migration. As Aihwa Ong has noted, "the nomadic subject and the social conditions that enable his flexibility" are central fixtures in late capital.[92] Japanese in Montreal, especially sojourners, see themselves as flexible subjects on a transnational tour, with stops which include cities like Paris, Vancouver, and Mumbai. These young people, such as international students and working holiday visa holders, often view their time in the city as an investment in their own cultural, personal, and ultimately economic development. As Jennifer Jihye Chun and Ju Hui Judy Han have explained in the Korean context, "The idea of living elsewhere, whether through study or work abroad, is typically privileged as a way to develop a 'global perspective' and seen as beneficial for personal growth and career development."[93] A progressive history of the Montreal of migrants, then, would not only focus on Quebec, but also connect with the stories and social realities of migrants' transnationality. In this study, both the geographically grounded lives of Japanese in Montreal, and their ongoing transnational ventures will come to the fore. As Massey has suggested, "the local is always already a product in part of 'global' forces, where global in this context refers…to the geographical beyond, the world beyond the place itself."[94] This thesis, then, sees Montreal both as a liminal space of longing for Japanese, and as one destination among many in contemporary youths' global self-actualizing travels.

Who are the young mobile Japanese we will meet in this thesis? Between Fall 2015 and Summer 2016, I interviewed thirty Japanese living in Montreal on short and long term visas about

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[91] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 12.
[92] Ong, *Flexible Citizens*, 3.
[93] Chun and Han, "Language Travels," 565.
[94] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 156.

their lives in Japan, the movements which have carried them back and forth across the Pacific, and their home-building efforts in Canada. While they by no means represent a random sample, I attempted to make connections with people through varying channels- universities, language schools, language exchanges, *hoshuko*,[95] and the Japanese Montreal internet community for jobs and volunteer opportunities- in order to obtain a range of life stories and circumstances.

In terms of geography, five of the thirty came from Tokyo, Japan's largest and most populous metropolitan area. Yet, if any patterns can be drawn concerning the geographic spread of my interviewees, it would be the variability. While one interview partner came from Hokkaido, the northernmost prefecture, two came from Okinawa, Japan's tropical island prefecture. From Japan's second and third largest cities, Yokohama, slightly south of Tokyo, and Osaka to the west, I met with two interview partners. Fukuoka City in Fukuoka prefecture, in northern Kyushu, which has a similar population size to Montreal, was also the hometown of two Japanese Montrealers. Further, the hometowns of my interview partners were usually not the only place in Japan that they had lived before arriving in Montreal. Chapter 2 and 3 will offer perspectives on the importance of these domestic migrations to later international mobility.

Unlike their diverse geographic origins, gender emerged as a unifying feature of recent Japanese migrants to Montreal: out of thirty interviews I conducted, only five were with men. As Mayumi Ono noted in her study of Japanese male sojourners in Thailand, studies of Japanese youth migration often focus on gender with regards to female rather than male mobility. Male Japanese migrants have been less studied despite their numbers in Southeast Asia because, in the contemporary period, they often been "corporate-led expatriates, who stay in their country of

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[95] Weekend Japanese language and math school for Nikkei children. For a thesis on Montreal's hoshuko specifically, see Reiko Yoshida, "Political Economy, Transnationalism, and Identity: Students at the Montreal Hoshuko" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2001).

residence temporarily and then go back to Japan."[96] For example, in Karen Kelsky's *Women on the Verge* (2001), she argues that Japanese women's migration to the United States is motivated by their desire for the West, often represented in the form of idealizing white western men while critiquing Japanese men.[97] Youna Kim's study also sees gender as key to East Asian women's migration West.[98]

Statistically, Japanese women are more likely to study and work abroad on student and working holiday visas in the Western world; for instance, in the 1990s, 70 percent of Japanese students in the United States were female.[99] In an introductory study I conducted in 2012 with Japanese migrants to Montreal, many interview partners explained to me that it was much easier for young women to leave Japan than young men;[100] in the already harsh job market and so-called employment ice age, men felt more pressure to follow the expected course and attempt to land a job immediately after graduating from high school or university. Women, who already had been working in large numbers as part-timers or contract workers,[101] had less to lose by going overseas for self-exploration.

**Mobilities**

This dissertation revolves around the concept of mobility. Specifically, it concerns the flows of young Japanese to and from Montreal, as well as the pathways to neo-liberal selfhood and transnational networks, which they have built while overseas. Often the first movement of migrants is within their home country; the Japanese migrants I interviewed frequently had moved from a

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[96] Ono, "Descending from Japan," 252.
[97] Kelsky, *Women on the Verge.*
[98] Kim, *Diasporic Daughters*.
[99] Hyodo, "The Era of Dual Life," 2013.
[100] Tabakow, "Flight to a 'French-Coloured' City.
[101] Ishiguro, "Japanese Employment in Transformation".

rural area to a larger city, either the national capital or a regional center, before living overseas. Many of my young interview partners had also travelled as tourists or short-term international students to other locations in the Western world before arriving in Montreal. While in Montreal, Japanese continue to identify with Japan, staying connected with friends, family, and news from the archipelago. Transnational networks and almost yearly flights back to Japan were prominently mentioned in most of my oral histories, from my Masters project and the current dissertation.[102] This mobility also can extend right back to life in Japan; return migration from Montreal, either planned or unplanned, is not uncommon.

As we will see in the following chapters, this thesis is attuned to a key contradiction in the life-paths of Japanese in Canada. Mobility is embraced as a central technology of the self, as a way to experience adventure, the foreign, and hopefully achieve upward social mobility.[103] Yet, in neo-liberal Montreal, young Japanese often find themselves with a paucity of economic options, especially when lacking fluency in English and French. Many work in low-paid jobs in the service industry, catering to other Japanese rather than studying at expensive language schools or finding fulfilling employment. Young women's rhetoric of freedom from Japanese social norms of womanhood that see marriage and childbirth as all-encompassing aspects of female identity is also contradicted; some see an escape from the dire labour market in Canada in the embrace of the same *sengyou shufu* (professional housewife) roles as their mothers, yet across the ocean. For those returning to Japan, dreams of social mobility do not always materialize as rigid work hierarchies valorize seniority while punishing those who choose an alternative track, such as an overseas sojourn. As Ann Anagnost has written, neo-liberalism's "vision of never-ending self-development would seem to capitalize on the energies and resilience of youth, while refusing to acknowledge

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[102] Tabakow, "Flight to a French-Coloured City".
[103] Such as learning French and English, gaining work experience in a global market, etc.

the gradual erosion of life and spirit by the stresses of constantly having to remake oneself."[104]

This project focuses not only on the trials of mobility and self-making under neo-liberalism, but also on the possibilities inherent therein. Indeed, a question central to this thesis has been alluded to by Furuichi Noritoshi in his bestseller, *Zetsubou no Kuni no Koufuku na Wakamonotachi* [Happy Youth of the Country of Despair]. Despite the economic and social ills that plague recessionary Japan, on multiple measures, youth are happier now than youth of earlier generations, or, for this matter, contemporary Japanese of other ages.[105] Like Furuichi, I am interested in how Japanese youth, in this case in a diasporic context, come to conceptualize their lives and selfhoods under neo-liberalism. Generally, academic and popular discourse suggests that it is a dismal era to be a young Japanese anywhere in the world, with Japan's decreasing global power and a neo-liberalization which is rapidly turning the archipelago into a *kakusa shakai*,[106] a country of haves and have-nots. But what do youth themselves make of neo-liberalism's technologies of selfhood, flexible labour regimes, and vaunted mobility? How do mobile young Japanese, in Montreal as elsewhere, imagine their path to self-actualization and happiness in their pasts, presents, and futures? How are the contradictions of hopeful future and precarious present resolved? Simply, how do Japanese migrants to Montreal strive for happiness and fulfillment in a fundamentally unequal and precarious economic context?

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[104] Ann Anagnost, "Introduction," in *Global Futures in East Asia: Youth, Nation, and the New Economy in Uncertain Times*, eds., Ann Anagnost, Andrea Arai, and Hai Ren (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 14–15.

[105] Furuichi, *Zetsubou no Kuni*.

[106] Literally, "society with [income] gaps [inequality]."

**Methodology & Sources**

In this project, I analyze the life narratives of contemporary Japanese young people who are negotiating their identity both in Japan and the diaspora from a historical perspective. To this end, I will turn to Japanese mass market publications concerning youth, selfhood, and migration, and thirty life-story narratives to be conducted with Japanese migrants who arrived in Montreal in the post-bubble period. The Japanese mass market publications[107] central to this dissertation fall into three general categories: books dealing with the changing life courses and expectations of youth (and often women) in the post-bubble period; self-help or life-advice books on alternative life-paths under neo-liberalism; and travel literature.

The first group of sources are mass market works which narrate the changing contradictory life-course expectations for Japanese women and youth since 1990. After 1991, Japan's decline became a common point of discussion in popular nonfiction, replacing the previous discourse of Japanese ethno-cultural superiority. For cultural commentators on all sides of the political spectrum, the bursting of the economic bubble and the resulting socio-cultural and economic changes became a major pre-occupation. For instance, in the mid-1990s, conservative publishers, PHP[108] and Bungeishunjyuu[109] began printing mass market paperbacks (*shinsho* in Japanese) which dealt with the social and economic issues of the day. The publications emerging from these right-wing sources overwhelmingly hold youth responsible for the problems of Japan's post-bubble era.

Offering a different perspective, social commentators of all stripes also highlight the difficulties faced by youth in 1990s and 2000s Japan in their many mass market publications. Some

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[107] I collected many of these sources in the summers of 2015 and 2016 during research trips to Tokyo, Fukuoka, and Oita, Japan.

[108] PHP, "Enkaku [History]," https://www.php.co.jp/company/history.php.

[109] Bungeishunjyuu, "Shoushi [Short History]," http://www.bunshun.co.jp/company/profile.html.

of these books deal with economic precarity and challenges in the job market, while others tackle more psychological or social phenomena. Other works still focus on the difficulties experienced by young Japanese of either gender, suggesting that the rise of neo-liberalism has wrought serious shifts in the lives of youth, ranging from consumer behaviour and economic prospects to dating and marriage trends. By analyzing the rhetoric of these sources, I hope to elucidate the dialogue of contradictions and pressures that surrounds young Japanese.

The second chapter considers the alternative life-paths that youth have constructed in the post-bubble period. The sources for this chapter fall largely into the genre of self-help. In Japan, life-advice has been an immensely popular genre since the beginning of mass market publishing. Indeed, in the Meiji era (1868-1912), one of the first books to reach over 1 million readers was a translation of Samuel Smiles' 1859 work, *Self-Help*.[110] In the early postwar period as well, as John Dower explains in *Embracing Defeat*, the first major bestseller was a form of self-help for a newly-occupied people: a short English conversation guide from 1945 which remained the country's bestselling book of all time until 1981.[111] As these examples attest, self-help as a genre in Japan has long been tied to the accruing of (Western-based) cultural capital.

In my thesis, I will explore two categories of self-help or life advice books suggesting alternative life-paths both within the archipelago and beyond its borders. The first set of sources looks to the so-called "non-career" path of freelancing or being a *freeter* as the key to unlocking and creating your own happy neo-liberal self in the contemporary era. These books see opting out of the white-collar corporate track as a choice best suited to young people's creativity and individuality. A second cluster of self-help books suggests that emancipation can be found in rural

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[110] Perhaps not incidentally, this book was reprinted with a modern translation in 2013 by PHP. Samuel Smiles, *Jijyoron* [Self-Help], trans. Nakamura Masanao and Kanaya Shunichiro (Tokyo: PHP, 2013).
[111] John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*
(New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 187–188.

migration, specifically to the naturally beautiful countryside where depopulation has made home ownership inexpensive. Here, authors turn to entrepreneurial ventures, such as engaging in the web-based economy or making use of local strengths, like fresh regional produce. A final category consists of works promoting travel and overseas as escape routes from the restrictions of post-bubble Japan. The rhetoric of these sources mirrors the paths taken by my interview partners when they moved to Montreal, Quebec.

The final group of sources collected include overseas lifestyle books and travel guides to Canada, Quebec, and Montreal. Travel guides in Japan became popular as the population's wealth increased through the high growth period, leading to an "overseas travel boom" in the bubble period. Drawing on this intensified interest, many companies, such as Shoubunsha which was already investing in map-making from the 1960s, began publishing travel books in the 1980s.[112] Similarly, the bestselling Rurubu travel series[113] printed their first overseas guide, to Hong Kong, in 1987.[114] By the 1990s, individualized trips, where each traveler plans their own trip according to their personal preferences, dominated travel publishing.[115] As one of Shoubunsha's subsidiaries, Co-Trip, explains on its website, overseas travel should be seen as a reward for all your own hard work: "Our series of travel books will guide you on your personal journey, even overseas. We'll introduce travel-loving ladies to all the necessary information, hand-picked just for you!"[116] These sources will be utilized to trace the networks of desire and consumption connecting young Japanese to their future homes far across the ocean.

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[112] Shoubunsha, "Shoubunsha no rekishi," http://www.mapple.co.jp/corporate/company/history.html.
[113] In 2010, Rurubu won a Guinness Book of World Records award for "longest running book series- travel guides" for their 3791 publications since August 1984. Rurubu, "Soukan 30nen history," http://www.rurubu.com/book/recomm/30th/.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Shoubunsha, Ibid.
[116] Co-Trip, "Kaigai," http://co-trip.jp/book/?tabId=2#breadcrumb.

Joining the textual sources of this dissertation are the life-stories of young Japanese migrants in Montreal, oral histories which I conducted, mostly in Japanese, in 2015 and 2016. In this project, I seek to understand how Japanese at home and in the diaspora narrate their paths to happiness under neo-liberalism. While critics of oral history point to the possibility of interviewees fabricating memories, misremembering details, and changing the content of interviews over time as weaknesses of the methodology, I follow eminent oral historian Alessandro Portelli who encourages researchers to embrace oral history's "special attention to subjectivity."[117] As Valerie Raleigh Yow's contends in *Recording Oral History*, the oral history interview not only records the who, what, and where of the past, but it can also reveal "the meaning of lived experience." How individuals make sense of, organize, and narrate their past, present, and future selves is a strength of interviewing that places participants' words at the forefront of scholarship. By asking Japanese about their experiences of migration and home-building, "the full complexity" of their life-worlds can be illuminated.[118]

The thirty oral histories which I collected are centered on the themes of mobility and spatiality, reflecting my interview partners' own transnational paths. Rather than utilizing a life-course interview approach, this thematic focus allows me to narrow in on key moments of self and home-building: movements within and outside of Japan, negotiations of settlement and everyday life in Montreal, and enduring connections to the archipelago. At the same time, the interview guide was flexible enough that my interviewees had agency in the telling of their own transnational life story; I aimed to make the interview space a collaborative one where I "shared authority" with my interview partners and followed them as they periodically adjusted the flow and direction of

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[117] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), ix.
[118] Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMita Press, 2005), 23.

the conversation.[119] As Portelli reminds us, in an ideal situation, "oral history does not begin with one abstract person observing another, reified one, but with two persons meeting on a ground of equality to bring together their different types of knowledge and achieve a new synthesis from which both will be changed."[120] In this way, I aspired to work together with my participants to create a narrative constructed within a particular time, space, mood, and interpretation of the interview questions of the day.

To further elucidate the spatial stories of Japanese Montrealers, I followed each interview with a brief mapping exercise that asked them to 1) indicate every city they have lived in on a map of Japan, 2) indicate every city they have lived in on a map of the world, and 3) indicate their past and present homes, shopping destinations, schools and workplaces, and hang-out locales on a map of Montreal. In his classic study, *Maps of Meaning*, Peter Jackson argues that maps "codify" knowledge and experience and symbolically represent it.[121] As Becky Cooper writes in her book, *Mapping Manhattan*, maps are subjective, and can tell the stories of each of their mapmakers. To get an "honest" and nuanced vision of place, "instead of striving for one giant complete map… out of the mosaic of [many mapped] personal visions, the place [will] emerge."[122] Following this, I hope that through multiple maps personalized by each interview partner, a multifaceted vision of Montreal geography, as seen through the lens of Japanese contemporary migrants, can emerge. Rather than merely allowing for diverse understandings of place, however, mapping exercises also have the potential to provide a window into migrant subjectivities. In *Mapping Memories*, Liz Miller sees mapping methods as a way into a person's past and present, and to find new deeper

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[119] See Michael Frisch's notion of shared authority as well as Steven High's recent reformulation: Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); High, "Sharing Authority: An Introduction." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43 (2009): 12–34.
[120] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli,* xii.
[121] Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 186.
[122] Becky Cooper, *Mapping Manhattan: A Love (and Sometimes Hate) Story in Maps by 75 New Yorkers* (New York: Abrams, 2013).

relationships between the person and the place.[123] In my project, maps thus allow interviewees to articulate their home-building practices in the city in a non-verbal way and provide insight into the work and leisure activities which they consider important representations of themselves. In this way, the maps serve as an alternative site of narration of selfhood and spatiality in Montreal.

Finally, this dissertation has also been inspired by ethnographies of Japanese and Japanese-Canadians which have beautifully elucidated the positionality of the researcher. These works contend that the subjectivity of the researcher is an important point to make explicit in the research itself for our identities as well are not static, but, rather, can be shaped throughout interactions with participants. Dorinne K. Kondo, for instance, discusses how her own identities of Japanese and American, researcher and daughter/friend/visitor, collided, fragmented, and were remade while researching a family factory in Tokyo in the 1980s. As she wrote, "in one position, my goal had to be the pursuit of knowledge…In another independence and mastery of one's own fate were out of the question; rather, being a daughter meant duties, responsibilities and interdependence."[124]

More recently, Kirsten Emiko McAllister has written poignantly of her identity crisis as a Japanese-Canadian Sansei in a community of elders in New Denver, where she studied an on-site memorial to internment.[125] In New Denver, she felt a profound discomfort with her own multiple subjectivities – academic researcher, project worker, younger community member – which was heightened by the suspicion she felt from residents and even, at times, from her own mentor. Yet, this sense of disjointed identity allowed her to release previous assumptions about the memorial site that she was studying and embrace a new worldview, that of the elders, which would transform

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[123] Liz Miller, Michele Luchs, and Gracia Dyer Jalea, *Mapping Memories: Participatory Media, Place-Based Stories and Refugee Youth* (Quebec: Marquis, 2011).
[124] Dorinne K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 14.
[125] Kirsten Emiko McAllister*, Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

her academic writing. McAllister's honest portrayal of her ethnographic crisis and her inclusion of her own evocative research notes reminded me to question my own position in this work and strive to be present with my participants, whether they were explaining their conceptions of mobility or their understanding of the insular world of Japanese Montreal.

Unlike Kondo and McAllister, Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, like myself, could not claim membership in the community of Japanese housewives who she studied. Yet, her discussion of positionality in this context was no less powerful. Embarking on her book project to follow the introspective journey of her friend Mariko who was deciding whether she wanted to remain a housewife, Goldstein-Gidoni intersperses the email exchange between her and her friend, conceiving of the project as a collaboration. She explains how she needed to come to terms with her own emotions as a woman and a mother studying Japanese housewives and discard "presuppositions" about separations between Western and Japanese women, professional women and housewives, and most specifically, between herself and her "anthropological subjects" who were, at once, very much part of her personal life.[126]

Although I have not included my own notes or private correspondences as sources in this dissertation as McAllister and Goldstein-Gidoni did so effectively, my conclusion attempts to situate myself within this research project while detailing my own personal journey, the reverse of the mobilities I have long been studying, which led me from my hometown of Montreal to my current home in Fukuoka City, Japan.

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[126] Goldstein-Gidoni, *Housewives of Japan*, 22.

**Dissertation Structure**

This thesis is structured into three sections, with two chapters per part. In Part 1, *Intellectual & Popular Currents of Heisei Japan*, important Japanese intellectual and popular currents of the Heisei period (1989-2019) are elucidated in order to provide context to migrant decisions to move back and forth from their homeland. Here, the themes of youth, gender, labour, and migration, which I will return to throughout this dissertation, are foregrounded. Chapter one seeks to define the intellectual landscape surrounding youth and women's labour force participation in neo-liberal Japan, seen as the dominant "push" factor of migration. Chapter two complicates this image by arguing that overseas short-or-long-term migration is only one of several alternative life-paths in contemporary Japan for disgruntled young people. In this way, Part 1 aims to understand migration to Montreal from a Japanese perspective.

In Part 2, *Transnational Mobility & Imaginations*, I focus on Japanese migrants' remarkable transnational mobility with the aim of destabilizing the hegemony of Canadian rhetoric on immigration which views Canada as the ideal forever home for immigrants. Here, the pathways of transnational movement and the transnational futures imagined by my interview partners are highlighted as counterpoints to stable notions of homeland and destination. Chapter three looks at the mobile lives led by Japanese youth before coming to Montreal and their transnational hopes for the future. Chapter four considers how Canada is consumed by young Japanese. As I suggest, analysing Japanese popular discourse about Canada reveals that, in many ways, it is imagined as an empty placeholder to play out their search for self. Thus, Part 2 sees Japanese migration to Montreal as individual attempts to actualize transnational dreams often unconnected to a precise locale- a far cry from the escape from a troubled homeland anthem of Canadian self-images.

In Part 3, *Global Lives in a Francophone City*, Japanese migrants' lives in Montreal are brought to the forefront through an in-depth examination of migrant self-making and the trying world of part-time low-wage labour. Here, the limited geographies of work, school, and the social are elaborated upon to better understand why many young Japanese choose to return to Japan rather than build their lives in the multicultural francophone city. Chapter five explores self-making in the social world of Japanese in Montreal with a focus on migrant mental maps of the city which illuminate the insularity of the community. A deeper look at one migrant's story also outlines how feminist and neo-liberal currents converge in how Japanese see themselves in Montreal. Chapter six explores two employment pathways for migrants in the city: working in the low-wage and unstable Japan-economy where "Japaneseness" is bought and sold or sidestepping paid work as a housewife. This Part suggests that while transnational mobility opens up the imaginary and potential experiences of Japanese youth, their available choices continue to be limited by unequal economic and social structures.

## CHAPTER 1: LABOUR & YOUTH IN THE POST-BUBBLE PERIOD

*Introduction*

In Spring 2016, it would have been difficult to miss psychologist Kayama Rika's trans-media presence in Japan. Besides reading her many *shinsho*, non-fiction publications which analyze social and economic issues, Japanese people could watch a show called "Kayama Rika Clinic" online,[1] listen to her radio show on NHK Radio 1 on Fridays whose title translates to Kayama Rika's "Beauty Serum for the Heart,"[2] read her serialized writings in magazines and newspapers across the country (such as the *Hokkaido Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, and *Shuukan Post*),[3] attend her lectures on *freeters*'[4] psychology, and how to combat stress in your life.[5] In much of her work, Kayama sees an enduring link between mental health and the state of the labour economy. In her best-seller *Fuan na Jidai no Seishin Byouri* (2011), she argues that the Japanese obsession with labour and GDP growth has encouraged the development of a clinically depressed population and society.[6] Since the bubble burst, youth have borne the brunt of the recession trauma. To best mitigate these effects, Kayama insists that Japan removes itself from the larger rat race of global capital; rather than pursuing economic growth above all else, she suggests a form of

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[1] Kayama Rika, *Fuan na jidai no seishin byouri: Watashi wo, Nihon wo akiramenai tame ni* [The Anxious Era's Mental Illness: Not Giving Up on Myself or Japan] (Tokyo: Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, 2011).

[2] Kayama Rika, "Kayama Rika Clinic," http://ch.nicovideo.jp/kayama.

[3] Kayama Rika, "Kayama Rika no Kokoro no Biyoueki," http://www.nhk.or.jp/r1-night/kokoro/

[4] As we will see later in this chapter, freeters are a key part of the current labour crisis in Japan. As David H. Slater explains, "*freeter* is a term that refers to almost anyone who is out of the once held ideal of permanent and full-time, that is, "regular" in all of its normative connotations." Slater, "The Making of Japan's New Working Class: 'Freeters' and the Progression from Middle School to the Labor Market," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 1, no.1 (2010), http://japanfocus.org/-david_h_-slater/3279.

[5] Kayama Rika, "Stress ni Makezuni Genki ni Kurasu," http://www.sbrain.co.jp/theme/T-18781.htm

[6] Kayama Rika, "Kayama Rika Clinic," http://ch.nicovideo.jp/kayama.

economics prioritizing humanity over development. Thus, selfhood and economics could finally be untangled to create a more humanistic approach to nationhood. Kayama's writing illustrates a central contradiction in many *shinsho*; the ideas laid out appear to have revolutionary aims – sidestepping the world economy sounds like it could be a call to dismantle Japanese capitalism – yet remain in the realm of metaphor, inaccessible for individuals to act on. In this way, Japanese readers of popular literature are steeped in the dark future that the authors predict, but not trusted with solutions which they can personally begin to enact.

In this first chapter, I turn to the paradoxes and pressures of post-1990 Japan which shaped the migrations of thirty Japanese migrants to Montreal I interviewed in 2015 and 2016. Here, I examine the limitations on Japanese young people's imaginations and hopes which appear in Japan's media-rich environment. In English-language scholarship about Japan, while youth problems, neo-liberal reforms, and social and economic precarity have become prominent themes, there has been little research on how Japanese-language mass-market non-fiction and long form journalism analyze these same problems in their national discourse. In fact, my narrators' complaints about Japan were building on discussions reflected in published works examining national contemporary social critiques. The themes which emerge from these books and enter public discourse function as limits on the construction of selfhood; in other words, Japanese popular literature produces certain ways of talking about the self and its possibilities which reverberate in the words of my interview partners in Montreal. There are two advantages to exploring the popular discourse on structural limitations and life-course choices since the 1990s. First, it can provide insight into how the subjectivities of Japanese youth are alternatively shaped and constrained. Further, such an analysis can illuminate the contours and stakes of the lived experience of the Japanese immigrants whom I interviewed. In other words, by examining

Japanese language mass publishing, I hope to better comprehend the narratives of constraint and possibility through which contemporary Japanese filter their own identities and life stories.

In order to demonstrate how these central issues of the Heisei (1989-2019) period are conceived of in Japan, I look to Japanese non-fiction mass market paperbacks, or *shinsho*, of the last fifteen years. *Shinsho*, which are slim and inexpensive, deal with contemporary social and economic problems, but do not have an exact equivalent in the North American market.[7] These ubiquitous paperbacks are the genre of Japanese publishing that most often produce million sellers; buzz words, such as *kakusa shakai* or income gap society, which emerge from their pages, have turned into conventional wisdom, and finally moved into the realm of politics. *Shinsho* are often released by Japan's major magazine and newspaper publishers and feature reports and analyses from these news outlets in a longer form. Like Kayama Rika, their authors also carry their brand across multiple media platforms as television personalities, on radio shows, and as columnists in major newspapers across the country.

In my examination of *shinsho* and their image of post-bubble Japan, I draw on Umberto Eco's theory of readership as well as Richard Johnson's understanding of cultural circuits. Looking specifically at texts, Eco argues that an ideal reader is embodied in the production of a piece. "Reading," he wrote, "is concerned with […] the recognition of the reader's response as a possibility built into the textual strategy."[8] In creating a textual world governed by a certain logic, such as neo-liberalism or patriarchy, Eco suggests that readers can be led, but not necessarily limited to, interpretations that reinforce the logic of the system being produced. As readers interpret the author's evidence, or signs, and confirm the writer's original intent, they play an active

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[7] They fall somewhere between non-fiction books and feature magazine writing.
[8] Umberto Eco, "The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Reader," *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 14, no. 1 (1981): 35.

role in the production of the text's meaning. In *shinsho*, then, a key question becomes, who are the ideal readers created by popular Japanese contemporary non-fiction writings?

This discussion of *shinsho* will also draw on the notion of "cultural circuits" from Cultural Studies research. In his 1980s treatise, Richard Johnson re-inserts the private sphere into analyses which previously focused almost exclusively on the text itself. His circuit moves from the private (individual choices about consumption) to the public sphere, where dominant cultural forms are produced and read in a certain way, and then returns to the private where lived "concrete, particular" experiences of a cultural product are prioritized.[9] As Johnson argued, rather than the text being the sole object of study, he sees the "social life of subjective forms at each moment in their circulation, including their textual embodiments."[10] In Stuart Hall's later model of the circuit of culture, each node, including "identity" (understood as "lived cultures and social relations) and "[textual] representation," is seen as intimately interconnected.[11] Here we might ask not merely how *shinsho* represent their readers, but how readers – such as young Japanese migrants – consume *shinsho* and how the discourses in the books are interpreted and embodied within their own lived experiences.

Oral historians have fruitfully expanded on Johnson's cultural circuit, drawing on the astute observation that "subjectivity or expressions of the self are bound up with public representations".[12] In other words, interviewees inevitably harken back to and engage with the larger public discourses in their more private stories while public representations simultaneously interact with and integrate individual experiences. While this chapter will mostly be concerned with the *shinsho* texts themselves and their creation of a bleak contemporary landscape, how young

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[9] Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986): 47.
[10] Ibid, 62.
[11] Annabelle M. Leve, "The Circuit of Culture as a Generative Tool in Contemporary Analysis: Examining the Construction of an Educational Community" (paper presented at the International Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education 2012, University of Sydney, Australia, December 2-December 6 2012) https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/the-circuit-of-culture-as-a-generative-tool-of-contemporary-analy.
[12] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), 68.

Japanese engage with these ideas is never far behind. Indeed, the oral history work later in this dissertation examines many of the same ideas and worldviews raised in *shinsho* yet shifts the focus to how young Japanese migrants understand their selfhood formation in relation to the current economic and social changes in their home country.

In this chapter, I suggest that two major domestic anxieties have emerged at the forefront of Japanese discourse: labour and youth. I aim to examine how *shinsho* pitch a dark future for Japan which serves to limit the hopes and imaginaries of its reading public. Readers are not offered solutions which they can use to change their lives for the better, but rather vague and large-scale suggestions for circumventing Japan's present woes. The message conveyed by these works, then, is one of a society in disarray, filled with despair and little hope for the future. In the pages of *shinsho*, change remains an intellectual exercise and young people are reduced to the objects of discourse, not subjects with their own agency. Thus, Japanese young people face not only the material constraints of the post-bubble, but what I describe as the discursive constraints of popular social rhetoric that replaces hopeful imagination with pathology. In the case of recent *shinsho*, I argue that the imagined selfhoods and possibilities of the audience are restricted by the discourse of crisis; moving to Montreal then, provides an opportunity not merely to live far from the archipelago, but also to imagine otherwise. By presenting and analyzing the arguments in these popular paperbacks, I hope to highlight similarities between the national debates of neo-liberal Japan and the life-paths and rhetoric of my interview partners whose experiences lie at the heart of this dissertation.

*Labour*

Since the collapse of the bubble in the early 1990s, labour has come to be seen as the central site of the country's past and future problems, and thus, has emerged as a prominent theme in *shinsho.* More specifically, mass market books published in the last ten years have zeroed in on three interrelated trends in the Japanese labour force: the rise of precarious work; the increasing overwork of both regular and non-regular employees; and the importance of labour and economics to Japanese selfhood under neo-liberalism. The mass market books which I will introduce take labour as their theme and starting point for national-level social criticism. This draws on the centrality of economics to Japan's post-war national rebranding away from military and colonial nationalism. Integral to Japan as a key player in international politics is its standing as an economically strong nation. In this way, nationhood, economics, and citizenship are intrinsically linked in Japanese popular discourse. In the post-bubble period, *shinsho* speak directly to the population about the causes and consequences of economic decline, providing background and critique to the promises of politicians and the poorly contextualized tabloid news. Economic-focused *shinsho*, in particular, attempt to synthesize and present the new expectations for a Japan where precarious labour is the norm while also coining fresh ways of talking about the nation and its citizens.

Japan's economy has been undergoing so-called rationalizing measures and industrial decline since the 1970s. Yet, only after the bubble burst – the precipitous drop in the Japanese asset market in the early 1990s, leading to mass underemployment – did neo-liberal reform fundamentally transform the fixed forms of labour which had sustained the Japanese middle class since the post-war. In the 1990s, Japan was faced with a recession which sharply contradicted the economic rhetoric of "Japan as Number One" of the boom years of the 1980s.[13] The resulting neo-

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[13] Ezra S. Vogel, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

liberal turn in post-bubble Japan was implemented at the behest of the United States which saw Japan as a rival and levied its power to influence Japanese structural reforms towards Reaganomics. [14] This neo-liberalization is characterized by the privatization of previously government-owned entities and the deregulation of the economy through the loosening of regulations, including the dismantling of the protections that formed the foundation of the lifetime employment system for everyone except senior management. [15] These changes have led to an increase in the number of precarious workers, unprotected by the security and benefits of full-time regular workers in Japan, while all Japanese increasingly feel pressure to overwork, thus sacrificing their work-life balance for an economy without a safety net. [16]

*Seishain*, often translated as "regular" worker, is a common Japanese term which carries the ideological weight of post-war Japanese prosperity. "Full-time regular worker" does not capture the nuance of the *seishain*, which might be more productively thought of as "proper" or "normal worker," the white-collar salaryman who carried Japan to greatness after the Second World War. By definition, then, those who fall outside of this category, the rising masses of precarious workers in the form of freeters, part-timers, and contract labourers, are deemed abnormal. [17] However, in post-bubble Japan, where the number of these unstable workers has

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[14] Koji Morioka, "Causes and Consequences of the Japanese Depression of the 1990s," *International Journal of Political Economy* 29, no. 1 (1999): 8–25.

[15] Mark Driscoll, "Hyperneoliberalism: Youth, Labor, and Militant Mice in Japan," *positions: asia critique* 23, no. 3 (2015): 547–551.

[16] Kuniko Ishiguro, "Japanese Employment in Transformation: The Growing Numbers of Non-Regular Workers," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008), http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2008/Ishiguro.html; Matthew Penney, "Exploited and Mobilized: Poverty and Work in Contemporary Manga," *Mechademia* 6 (2011): 52.

[17] Anne Allison, "Precarity and Hope: Social Connectedness in Postcapitalist Japan," in *Japan: The Precarious Future,* Frank Baldwin and Anne Allison, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 44.

reached 38 percent, double the percentage of two decades ago, precarity is no longer an exceptional circumstance.[18]

One way in which *shinsho* have approached labour problems in Japan is by introducing new concepts to the Japanese audience to help them visualize the severity of the rise of the precariat. In 2006's *Working Poor*,[19] economist Kadokura Takashi brings the American conceptualization of "working poor" into the discussions of precarity. In his work, the working poor are defined as the 5.5 million Japanese who are gainfully employed yet can never properly support themselves on their salaries of less than 2 million yen a year (approximately $20,000 Canadian dollars). He begins his *shinsho* with a "quiz" on the working poor, and challenges readers who achieved a weak score to be more critical of the state of their country. He rhetorically asks, "As for readers who unfortunately got all the answers incorrect, are you not someone with privilege whose fate has differed so much from that of the working poor?"[20] Overall, the author argues that the rapid increase in the number of working poor in Japan between 1990 and 2005 should be a cause of great concern for all Japanese, including those who are full-time workers. After all, as Kadokura insists, "There are many examples of hard-working former regular workers who, in their company's restructuring, all of a sudden became members of the working poor."[21]

Similarly, in *Kougakureki Working Poor* (2007), Mizuki Shoudou extends the concept of the working poor to include highly educated Japanese, beginning his work with a short vignette about a 33 year-old PhD holder working as an adjunct at a university. [22]  As a non full-time faculty

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[18] Machiko Osawa and Jeff Kingston, "Risk and Consequences: The Changing Japanese Employment Paradigm," in *Japan: The Precarious Future,* Frank Baldwin and Anne Allison, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 58.

[19] Kadokura Takashi, *Working Poor: Ikura hataraite mo mukuwarenai jidai ga kuru* [Working Poor: The Era of Working Hard Yet Being Uncompensated Has Arrived] (Tokyo: Takarajima Shinsho, 2006).

[20] Kadokura, *Working Poor*, 9.

[21] Kadokura, *Working Poor*, 218.

[22] Mizuki Shoudou, *Kougakureki Working Poor: "Freeter seisan koujyou" to shite no daigakuin* [The Highly Educated Working Poor: Graduate Schools as Freeter Production Factories] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2007).

member, she makes only 150 thousand yen a month (~1500 CAD/month) and is forced to also work at a *conbini* (convenience store) in order to pay for her rent, heat and lighting, food, and teaching materials.[23] Yet, as he shows, this is not an exceptional story. Of late, PhD holders in Japan have been largely unable to land tenure-track jobs in universities of late. Indeed, close to 50 percent are not working in regular employment as *seishain* at all.[24]

Another angle from which *shinsho* have approached the labour upheaval in post-bubble Japan is by turning to overwork. Although at first glance, overwork seems like the opposite of precarious work, which is often imagined as a paucity of working hours, several mass market publications demonstrate their deep interconnectedness. The concept of *karoushi*, or death by overwork, entered Japanese discourse in the booming 1980s as a way to criticize the dark side of seemingly limitless growth. In *Hatarakisugi no Jidai* (2005), for the leftist publishing house Iwanami, Morioka Kouji turns to the rise of *karoushi* since the 1980s.[25] As the author explains, overwork exploded in late 1980s Japan, with one in four men working more than sixty hours a week in 1988.[26]

Morioka demonstrates how little the situation has improved by juxtaposing the stories of respondents to the first *karoushi* help line in Osaka in 1988 to those of letters writers to newspapers in the 2000s, when talk about *karoushi* was reaching crisis proportions, leading to a questioning of post-war growth and its understanding of success. Compared to the 1980s, letter writers' situations became more diverse in the post-bubble years; in other words, those suffering from overwork do not only include male *seishain* and their family members writing in on their behalf, but also non-regular female workers. For instance, a housewife in Yokohama wrote about working

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[23] Mizuki, *Kougakureki Working Poor*, 3.
[24] Mizuki, *Kougakureki Working Poor*, 4.
[25] Morioka Kouji, *Hatarakisugi no jidai* [The Era of Overwork] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 2007).
[26] Morioka, *Hatarakisugi no jidai*, 11.

from 11:00 pm to 6:00 am at a 24-hour supermarket every day, including weekends and holidays, before going home to prepare breakfast and a bento box lunch for her family, getting the children to school, and cleaning the home with only a few hours of sleep in the afternoon.[27] Thus, in this example, precarious labour and overwork are not mutually exclusive.

In *Hatarakisugiru Wakamonotachi* (2007), Abe Masahiro similarly argues that changes to Japan's healthcare network under neo-liberalism have placed care-workers in a difficult situation. Specifically, he critiques restructuring policies which limit the number of staff in care facilities yet encourage young workers to give more and more of themselves in the individualized care of patients. This, he insists, is a recipe for young workers to burn themselves out. He finds that because care-workers' selfhoods are tied to their meaningful labour, even if they are working only part-time or for a low salary, they will be inclined to overwork.[28]

Abe's discussion of the neo-liberalization of care-work shows how *shinsho* frame the problem of labour. Authors of mass market publications see the shifts in labour and the economy from the high growth period to the present as increasingly detrimental for the population. Although it seems counterintuitive, post-industrial workers have come to see labour, especially the low-wage affective labour in the service industries, as a key site for the search for and creation of selfhood. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in their work, *Multitude*, immaterial and affective labour, like the care-work performed by Abe's research participants, is key to the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of production. While the Japanese economy, and indeed those of other Global North nations, used to be dominated by the domestic production of tangible goods, such as cars, appliances, and electronics, it has increasingly shifted to one focused on providing services.

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[27] Morioka, *Hatarakisugi no jidai*, 8.

[28] Abe Masahiro, *Hatarakisugiru wakamonotachi: Jibun sagashi no hate ni* [Overworking Youth: The Result of Searching for Self] (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 2007).

Although these service industries may sell material products, which may or may not be made in Japan, they also provide consumers with an affective service, Abe describes above. Previously, Fordist material production involved the creation of the means to have a social life, like the car that brings you to a house adorned with furniture for people to relax on as they converse. "Immaterial production, by contrast," according to Hardt and Negri, "tends to create not the means of social life but social life itself." [29] When friends go to a new restaurant, the products they consume are not only the food and drink, but the social experience of dining as well. Hardt and Negri conclude that affective and immaterial labour ultimately involve "the production of subjectivity, the creation and reproduction of new subjectivities in society." [30]

In the Japanese context, neo-liberal shifts in the market have led to decreasing rewards for self-sacrifice through labour. Previously, for middle-and-upper class men, the dedication to work was often rewarded with lifetime employment, a family wage which allowed the man to be the sole breadwinner, and a sense of oneself as part of a larger national community "catching up to" the West through consumption and labour.

In Abe's study, he hypothesized that the centrality of labour to selfhood would extend beyond youth in creative industries.[31] By interviewing male and female care-workers of varying ages, the author concluded that the search for self through remunerated work was a concept as applicable to the middle-aged housewives who worked part-time as care-workers in the health care system as to the youth who worked full-time alongside them. Abe did find an important caveat to this, however. When men enter their 30s, the creation of the self through care-work loses its lustre;

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[29] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2005),146.
[30] Ibid, 66.
[31] See Miura Atsushi, *Karyuu shakai: Arata na kaisou shuudan no shutsugen* [Downstream Society: The Appearance of a New Class Grouping] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2005) later in this chapter.

the low wages, which hamper their marriageability and consequently, their ability to start a family, make them feel unsatisfied with their profession.[32]  In this way, selfhood and labour are found to be intertwined, yet with a deleterious effect on low-waged men hoping to marry.

The *shinsho* dealing with labour lay out the meanings and parameters of work in Japan in the 2000s. The image which emerges, however, is that a declining society with little hope on its horizon. First and foremost, it is a labour landscape for the active generation which is dominated by the dichotomy of the haves and have-nots: the rising numbers of flexible precarious workers and working poor, and the remaining vestiges of Japan Inc.'s overworked full-time salarymen and part-timers. The possibilities articulated for post-bubble young and middle-aged persons, like my interview partners, are fewer than the limitations which appear in the form of emotional unrest, unstable work, and a burdened future welfare apparatus. Simultaneously, *shinsho* embody a fundamental and unsettling contradiction; they provide the discursive terrain for understanding decline while also reinforcing decline as the new norm. Considering Eco's theory of readership, these Japanese mass market publications are creating their readers – the young Japanese who populate this thesis – as subjects without hope. As Kayama wrote, the woes of the country can translate into mental health issues for individual Japanese whose economic nationalism has yet to be replaced by another meaningful schema. [33] Additionally, the rising numbers of working poor, according to Kadokura, will have a harmful effect on everyone in Japanese society,[34] including full-time workers who overwork to avoid losing their jobs.[35] These results, as Abe found, are just a handful of the negative consequences of the economic system in the post-bubble period. [36]

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[32] Abe, *Hatarakisugiru wakamonotachi*, 153–168.
[33] And vice-versa. She is careful to note that Japanese people's depression can also cause economic depression. Kayama, *Fuan na Jidai*, 183–183.
[34] Kadokura, *Working Poor*, 9.
[35] Kadokura, *Working Poor*, 115.
[36] The workplace, as Abe argues, has come to replace other locales for self-development to young people's detriment. *Hatarakisugiru wakamonotachi*, 196.

The few solutions proposed in these books are large-scale and structural: an economy focused on humanity rather than endless growth;[37] the reduction of the consumption tax and the raising of the minimum wage;[38] the creation of intersectional resistance practices;[39] and diverse paths to self-improvement[40] which can overcome the newly stratified and overworked society. Generally, these suggestions work better in the realm of metaphor than as policy proposals. Where do these analyses leave Japanese, especially youth who are the most likely to be working in precarious forms of labour?

*Youth*

Since the bubble burst, Japanese youth have been faced with an inhospitable job market, combined with the rapid aging of Japanese society. Although the famed school-to-work transition used to guarantee jobs for young graduates based on their high schools' connections with companies or university rankings, from the early 1990s, there have simply not been enough full-time regular jobs to go around for graduates.[41] The trend towards precarious labour in *arubaito* (part-time) or *haken* (dispatch) companies is even more pronounced for students from low-income high schools without the resources to shelter them from the hostile job market, resulting in a cycle of poverty.[42] On the social plane as well, some youth experiencing strong feelings of alienation

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[37] Kayama, *Fuan na jidai*, 192–193.
[38] Kadokura, *Working Poor*, 195.
[39] Abe sees a way through the impasse if young overworked care-workers are able to unionize alongside housewives and others working only to supplement a more stable wage. However, given these groups' diverse interests, he acknowledges how difficult it may be to find common ground. Abe, *Hatarakisugiru wakamonotachi*, 170–171.
[40] Abe, *Hatarakisugiru wakamonotachi*, 195–197.
[41] Mary C. Brinton, *Lost in Transition: Youth, Work, and Instability in Postindustrial Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[42] David H. Slater, "The Making of Japan's New Working Class: 'Freeters' and the Progression from Middle School to the Labor Market," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 1, no.1 (2010), http://japanfocus.org/-david_h_-slater/3279.

under late capitalism are turning inside themselves as *hikikomori* (shut-ins) and NEETs (person not in employment, education, or training).[43]

Simultaneously, the numerically dominant and more politically active older population are not voting for measures which would ease the impact of neo-liberalism on younger generations.[44] Instead, they vote in favour of shoring up pensions and regressive rather than progressive taxes. Indeed, the combination of the often decried *shoushika* (falling birthrate) [45] and *koureika* (aging of society) are said to be producing a dire future for Japan; although economic uncertainty has increased the age of first marriage and decreased the likelihood of marriage and childbirth since the 1990s,[46] between the 1960s and 2000s, life expectancy from age 65 grew substantially, from 12 to 18 years for men, and from 14 to 23 years for women.[47] Thus, a smaller pool of younger workers now supports a larger elderly population with implications for economic growth as well as the maintenance of the country's social security systems, such as pensions and health care.[48]

In order to boost the flagging economy and aging society, high domestic consumption is often vaunted as a potential way forward for the nation. Youth emerge as the central objects in the debates surrounding consumption, especially for the Japanese right wing who both abhor lavish spending and idolize an imagined agrarian past, while demanding active consumers to sustain the economy. The new dominance of neo-liberal philosophy also has complicated these arguments by

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[43] See, for example, Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).
[44] Yasuo Takao, "Aging and Political Participation in Japan: The Dankai Generation in a Political Swing," *Asian Survey* 49, no.5 (2009): 866.
[45] Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, "Handbook of Health and Welfare Statistics 2014," http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html. Japan's birthrate fell to 1.43, far below the replacement level in 2013.
[46] Naohiro Ogawa, "Population Aging and Policy Options for a Sustainable Future: The Case of Japan," *Genus* 61, no. 3/4 (2005): 372.
[47] Ogawa, "Population Aging," 373–374.
[48] Robert L. Clark, Naohiro Ogawa, Sang-Hyop Lee and Rikiya Matsukura, "Older Workers and National Productivity in Japan," *Population and Development Review* 34 (2008): 258.

prioritizing selfhoods based in marketability and consumer choices.[49] Japanese marketing experts

writing in the *shinsho* genre have capitalized on these socio-cultural changes since the bubble burst

by positioning new consumer categories of youth as saviors of Japan's economy.

As Marilyn Ivy pointed out in 1993, the move from a mass to post-modern differentiated

culture in Japan has led to a worrisome confluence of identity and consumption. [50] Late capitalism

results not in a "flexible individuality" or "a liberation of desire and subjectivity" as was often

argued in the 1980s, but rather a complete marketization of the selves of young Japanese. Overall,

more choice, as is evident in contemporary Japan's consumer paradise, does not lead to the

emancipation of personal subjectivity, but rather more focus on capital and spending: "even though

consumers are 'fragmented,' consumption as a general norm has not declined."[51] Indeed, as youth

identities and consumer choices continue to become further intertwined, while youth economic

outcomes remain bleak, the varied and vast consumption landscape becomes contemporary

Japan's main offering to young people. Thus, again, *shinsho*'s posited solution to post-bubble

problems is riddled with contradictions; diversified youth consumption is heralded as a potential

economic boon, yet at the same time, is representative of the growing inequalities and

marketization of the population which is producing the uncertain future in the first place. In this

section, I argue that popular non-fiction is largely tackling the crisis of youth from two angles –

the growing generational inequalities and the rise of consumer-based youth identities in Japan

since 1990.

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[49] See Gabriella Lukacs' work on how television dramas in the 1990s disseminated these new neo-liberal subjectivities. Gabriella Lukacs, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[50] Here, Ivy is referring to the fracturing of the postwar mass culture into various subcultures, often based on aesthetics. As people come to bind themselves firmly to a particular subculture, their spending habits come to dictate their identity, or what they understand to be themselves.

[51] Marilyn Ivy, "Formations of Mass Culture," in *Postwar Japan as History,* ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 255.

One way in which mass market nonfiction books have approached the problem of youth in contemporary Japan is by talking about a generation gap between younger and older Japanese. In *Naze nihon ha wakamono ni reikoku na no ka?* (2013),[52] Yamada Masahiro argues that Japan provides little support to its youth, but generously supports its middle-aged and elderly population even though "young people's economic position has been weakening."[53] Further, because government policies are not addressing the growing economic problems of youth, parents have been stepping in by allowing youth to live with them and/or paying their higher education fees. Yamada is the author of 1999's hit book, *Parasite single no jidai,*[54] about wealthy young unmarried Japanese living at home. Since the late 1990s, the salaries of youth living at home have been consistently lower than those living alone or with a partner. In short, instead of finding "parasites" paying no expenses to their parents while living lavish lifestyles, they discovered a growing underclass of low wage workers living with their families.[55]

The generation gap of wealth, and policymakers' unwillingness to equalize the playing field, are central to Yamada's arguments. He posits that three problems will emerge from Japan's lack of policy support for youth. First, many people now living at home, especially those who are in their 30s and 40s, will flounder when their parents are no longer there to support them. Second, there is a growing disparity between youth whose parents support them and those whose lack of parental support disadvantages them. As he writes, "the gap between young people is widening"[56] and becoming naturalized in Japan. Finally, he predicts that, in thirty years, Japan will become a

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[52] Yamada Masahiro, *Naze Nihon wa wakamono ni reikoku na no ka?* [Why is Japan so Cold to its Young People?] (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 2013).
[53] Yamada, *Naze Nihon ha wakamono ni reikoku na no ka,* 10.
[54] Yamada Masahiro, *Parasite single no jidai* [The Age of Parasite Singles] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 1999).
[55] Yamada, *Naze Nihon ha wakamono ni reikoku na no ka,* 16.
[56] Yamada, *Naze Nihon ha wakamono ni reikoku na no ka,* 24.

differentiated class-based society with a decisive split between married full-time workers and part-timers with incomes that preclude a proper and independent life.

Furuichi Noritoshi agrees that the generation gap will produce large-scale problems for the society in thirty or forty years. In his book, *Zetsubou no kuni: Koufuku na wakamonotachi* (2011/2015),[57] he argues that Japanese young people are satisfied with their lives – more satisfied, in fact, than youth in the past or other generations in the present. Yet, Furuichi admits, in the future, current problems, such as the rise of precarious labour for young people, will worsen; when the social and financial net of parents disappear, youth will have to somehow pay for future families and elder care without being employed in full-time regular work.[58]

He and Yamada also find common ground when writing about Japan's current policy direction, which focuses on protecting the elderly rather than youth. As Furuichi explains, social security resources are still being largely directed to an older affluent generation while leaving youth to fend for themselves. More specifically, compared to the gains made by older generations on their tax and social security payments, he calculates that current grandchildren (under 20 years old) will end up paying one hundred million yen (one million Canadian dollars) extra into pensions and health care.[59] As Furuichi wryly notes, "No matter how you look at it, that sum is more than just pocket money!"[60]

The increasing gap and incongruence between generations in Japan is affecting youth's hopes and dreams as well as their wallets. In Joe Shigeyuki's book, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de*

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[57] Furuichi Noritoshi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi* [Happy Youth of the Country of Despair] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011). This is not actually a *shinsho*, but it did become an extremely popular work of non-fiction in the last ten years in Japan, going through 15 printings between 2011 and 2015.
[58] Furuichi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi*, 244–246.
[59] Furuichi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi*, 228–230.
[60] Furuichi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi*, 230.

*yameru no ka?* (2006),[61] the author points to a generation gap in life-course expectations in contemporary labour and policy. In particular, he blames the "Showa Worldview"[62] for creating tensions between parents, who long for their child to have a stable job with the promise of lifetime employment characteristic of their youth, and contemporary young people, who are entering the job market. In the parents' generation, before the bubble burst, the most desirable hire was an always-compliant new recruit given little responsibility. But, now, companies are scaling back the number of full-timers and outsourcing non-essential tasks to contract and dispatch workers, and hiring a select few based on company fit and specialization.[63] Largely because of familial and social ideological pressure, in 2005, the number of young job seekers who wanted a job with seniority-based promotions and pay was the highest it had been in ten years, at 42 percent.[64] Despite these claims, in 2000, 36.5 percent of new graduates who started a full-time regular job quit within three years.[65] Young people, Joe holds, need to disentangle themselves from the hopes and dreams of past generations and make decisions based on the way the contemporary job market and economy is structured.

The other angle through which *shinsho* discuss the "youth problem" is by arguing that young people's niche consumption is the solution to Japan's economic quagmire. One such writer is Harada Yohei, who argues in *Yanki keizai* (2014) that youth who identify as *yanki*[66] in the 2000s

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[61] Joe Shigeyuki, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de yameru no ka?* [Why do young people quit their jobs after 3 years?] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2006).

[62] Joe, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de yameru no ka?*, 16. This coined term refers to the Showa Era (1926-1989) and particularly to Japan's experience from the immediate postwar to the bursting of the bubble.

[63] Joe, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de yameru no ka?*, 33–34.

[64] Joe, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de yameru no ka?*, 26.

[65] Joe, *Wakamono ha naze 3 nen de yameru no ka?*, 28.

[66] "Yanki," a consumer class which emerged in the late 1970s, became exemplified by a motorcycle gang aesthetic of baggy pants and permed hair as in the manga series *Bebop High School* (1983-2003). In the 2000s, however, the anti-social and criminal behaviour associated with past yanki did not represent the new generation, leading marketers to christen them as "mild." Harada Yohei, *Yanki Keizai: Shouhi no Shuyaku, Shinhoshuzou no Shoutai* [The Yanki Economy: The True Identity of Japan's Main Consumers, the New Conservative Class] (Tokyo: Gentosha Shinsho, 2014).

are stellar consumers, even if their purchases are more subtle than anti-social *yankis* past who would spend on status pieces like sports cars.[67] According to Harada, recent *yanki* have become more "mild"; in other words, contemporary *yanki* shun anti-social behaviour and criminality[68] while keeping *yanki* style indicators and prioritizing a small network of friends from their hometown.[69] To Harada, while youth in Tokyo are more likely to spend on ephemeral moments, such as going to cafes and restaurants after work,[70] young *yanki* are still buying physical items, like gaudily-coloured mini-vans and heavy tarred cigarettes at suburban shopping malls.[71] In Harada's view, *yanki*, rather than high-class youth in urban centers, are more likely to sustain Japan's economy long term. Yet, this solution, as with others suggested in *shinsho*, is paradoxical. While Harada sees *yanki* as key to a brighter future for Japan, he sidesteps the economic inequalities simultaneously produced by the same forces which expanded the lower middle classes that *yanki* emerge from. In other words, while *yanki*'s spending habits are seen as the way through the economic impasse, he does not critique the neo-liberal reforms which led to the rise of the *yanki* and serve to keep them in their lower middle class bracket.

In his work, Miura Atsushi also values youth consumption as an economic boon for Japan. Simultaneously, however, he also acknowledges the potentially harmful social, cultural, and economic changes which underlie the shifts in young people's spending since the bubble burst. In Miura's first book (2005) in the *Karyuu shakai* series, he outlines the creation of a new class in Japanese society: the "downstream class."[72] In the present, instead of aiming for an upper middle class life, a group of young and middle aged people have lost the desire to participate actively in

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[67] Harada, *Yanki Keizai,* 29.
[68] Harada, *Yanki Keizai*, 16.
[69] Harada, *Yanki Keizai*, 22.
[70] Harada, *Yanki Keizai*, 31.
[71] Harada, *Yanki Keizai*, 30.
[72] This begins, for Miura, with the *Dankai junior* generation, born in the early 1970s, for whom there would no longer be the expectation that salary and standard of living would improve yearly.

society, many choosing to remain unmarried, play video games or watch television all day, and live according to personal preferences rather than societal standards.[73] Yet, "downstream does not simply mean that this group does not have its strengths. Rather, it refers to a general feeble desire to engage with others, demonstrated by weak communication and lifestyle abilities as well as little interest in working, learning, or consuming."[74]

The particularities of downstream consumption are central to Miura's work. In the first volume of his series, he separates men and women into categories based on habits of consumption, which he further refines in volume three, *Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai* (2011).[75] In volume three, he argues that young women are now following consumption patterns which used to be restricted to older men, such as spending on tours of temples and shrines ("*bunka* [culture] type" woman),[76] or on hiking gear for extreme sports ("outdoor type" woman).[77] This represents a shift towards the diversification of young women's interests away from the common denominators of fashion, overseas travel, gourmet food, and romance which dominated women's spending patterns in the high growth and bubble periods.[78]

Miura directly links the shift towards the interests of a downstream class and the diversified consumption of young people to the increasing class inequalities exacerbated by neo-liberalism. As he writes in the age of the *kakusa shakai* [income gap society], the vaunted Japanese middle class is shrinking while the upper and lower classes are expanding.[79] Additionally, these class boundaries are hardening, and more and more Japanese think that the widening income gap is

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[73] Miura Atsushi, *Karyuu shakai: Arata na kaisou shuudan no shutsugen* [Downstream Society: The Appearance of a New Class Grouping] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2005), 3–4.
[74] Miura, *Karyuu shakai: Arata na kaisou*, 6.
[75] Miura Atsushi, *Karyuu shakai dai 3 shou: Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai* [Downstream Society 3: The Age of Old Geezer-Type Women] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2011).
[76] Miura, *Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai*, 44.
[77] Miura, *Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai*, 59.
[78] Miura, *Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai*, 10–11.
[79] Miura, *Karyuu shakai*, 5.

inevitable.[80] To combat this, his conclusion focuses on large-scale structural solutions to stall the dichotomizing of the haves and have nots in Japan's future; he suggests, for instance, waving the entrance fees at prestigious institutions like Tokyo University[81] and investing in online university courses for easier access for youth in underfunded rural areas.[82]

Although Miura is a marketing expert by training, he acknowledges that the same forces which created diversified choice are disadvantaging many in the Japanese population. Despite this admission, the dark future in these *shinsho* is little abated by the contradictory and abstract suggestions offered in their pages. For one thing, even if the posited solutions attracted the attention of those in power, as youth social security measures, they are unlikely to be adopted. Social aid is still largely being directed at the older voting public rather than at young people, despite the growing generational disparity of wealth. As Yamada wrote, "even in recent years, [the government] has forced private companies to extend the working age to 65; yet, at the same time, there is no indication that [they] will force companies to hire young people."[83] When you consider this together with Japan's large national debt being bequeathed to contemporary youth, Furuichi notes, people liken it to a grandfather fraudulently using his grandchild's credit card for his own purchases.[84]

The books described above link contemporary youth in Japan with two major phenomena: a growing generation gap in terms of worldview and economic prosperity and diversified consumption. As with the economic *shinsho*, the popular non-fiction in this section predict a dark future for Japan, only dimly improved by the possibility of niche youth consumption stimulating

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[80] Miura, *Karyuu shakai*, 266.
[81] Miura, *Karyuu shakai*, 269–270.
[82] Miura, *Karyuu shakai*, 271–272.
[83] Yamada, *Naze Nihon ha wakamono ni reikoku na no ka,* 15–16.
[84] Furuichi*, Zetsubou no kuni*, 14.

the economy while income disparities continue to rise. For young people, like my interview partners, who came of age after the bubble burst, the persistence of the "Showa worldview" as Joe put it, has created an almost insurmountable gap between dream life and economic possibility, and increased conflict between generations. Indeed, generational friction was mentioned by several interviewees, as a central push factor which led them to Canada.

Further, as Miura explained, *shinsho* which argue for diversified consumption as the future of Japan circumvent a related consequence of neo-liberalism: the growing classism of Japanese society. Also, while in the short-term the conflation of consumption and identity can seem fun and appealing, especially for youth, without the sustained steady income to fulfill these material desires, one is often left chasing for the next trend without the means to buy into it. As critical theorist and geographer David Harvey wrote in his *Brief History of Neoliberalism*: "Unfortunately, [consumer] culture, however spectacular, glamorous, and beguiling, perpetually plays with desires without ever conferring satisfactions beyond the limited identity of the shopping mall."[85]

However, *shinsho* and other mass market works, do not broach this effect of consumer culture on Japanese youth as individuals, focusing instead on how their consumption could improve the finances of the nation. Thus, perhaps part of the problems implicit in these books for younger Japanese is that they are the constant object of the analysis in question, but never the subject. Many *shinsho* presented above seem to be explaining the plight of Japan's future, the Japan which these young people will inherit, to a population that has already received their seniority-based bonuses and full pensions.[86] In order for the young migrants in my study to create stories in which they are the subject and not the object, they turn to alternative life-paths, such as

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[85] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170.
[86] With the notable exception of *Zetsubou no kuni* with 26-year-old Furuichi Noritoshi as its author.

moving overseas, which are not dominant in the mainstream non-fiction worldview. It is to these life-course choices that chapter two will turn to.

*Conclusion*

This chapter has argued that the rhetoric in Japanese mass market publications constricts the imaginative possibilities for young people. Rather than viewing neo-liberal reforms or generational frictions alone as push factors for the Japanese who sojourned in Montreal, I argue that the societal discourse surrounding these issues leads to feelings of a lack of agency or a social stifling which triggers youth to look outside of the ideals of the "Showa Worldview" for a new life-course. Similarly, as these reforms seeped into cultural products, the importance of the individual throughout the 1990s and 2000s, finding your own *jibun rashisa* [you-ness] become paramount when faced with the declining social structures of the post-war period. The next chapter turns to three life-path alternatives central to contemporary young people's dreams for the future. In examining these alternatives, it is my hope that the journey overseas be further contextualized in a Japanese context before joining my interview partners on their mobile adventures in the rest of the dissertation.

**CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVE LIFE-PATHS**

*Introduction*

      The pressures facing young people in Japan left a mark on Keiko,[1] one of my interview partners, who was raised in Gunma prefecture. Looking at her own culture with a critical eye, she mused about the uncomfortable position women held in Japanese society: "For Japanese women who become moms, for women with children, for example, you may feel you have to quit your job and it can be very difficult for you to work at a full-time job again. This makes me feel that Japan is not a very good society!" As a young person, Keiko had examined the options available to her in Japan and chose instead to seek out alternatives. In her twenties, hoping to explore new languages and lifestyles, she studied abroad for three months in Lyon, France. In 1999, she applied for a working holiday visa and came to Canada for a year, settling in Montreal. Working at a Premiere Moisson bakery in Montreal, she met her now-husband, a Montrealer, who eventually moved with her to Japan in the mid-2000s. Unlike the urban centres of Kawasaki and Yokohama in Kanagawa prefecture where Keiko had previously secured full-time work as an office assistant, she and her husband returned to rural Gunma to raise their family. In our interview, she described the prefecture as being famous for *onsen* (hot springs) and Japanese traditional *daruma* dolls. Additionally, as she noted, "it's a good thing to be surrounded by so much nature!" In 2011, amid the upheaval of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Keiko and her family moved back to Montreal, where I met with her in 2016. Still, despite relocating to Canada, she admitted that Gunma was likely to draw her back someday: "[it's] the place I was born and raised [and] it would be easy for me to live [there again in the future]."

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[1] Keiko, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 4 March 2016.

Many young Japanese have been attracted to rural migration in recent years. In 2015, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLITT) found that about 29 percent of would-be young migrants to rural areas hoped to combine their primary career with farming, and focus on having a "slow life."[2] In planning a migration to rural areas, some aimed to take over a family business or saw economic opportunity in nearby cities,[3] but, overall, lifestyle factors were key: the most common pull factor across age groups was the abundance of nature (84.3 percent), followed by lowered costs of living (82.1 percent) and having a "slow life" with more free time (81.3 percent).[4] The stated lifestyle considerations arguably demonstrate a push back against the culture of overwork and social pressure. While young people's journeys to the West have been the subject of much scholarly work, domestic alternatives to mainstream Japanese life-paths have rarely received the same critical analysis.

Despite the seeming discrepancies between searching for a new life overseas and building a home in rural Japan, for Keiko, these choices had more in common than they appear. As this chapter suggests, rural migration, and travelling overseas often have the same function for young people attempting to create satisfying life-paths for themselves beyond the competitive world of corporate Japan in the 2000s. In other words, emigration is only one solution to the dire future pitched to young people. This chapter, then, turns to three alternative life-paths available to youth in Japan as depicted in a variety of media that they consume. Here, I will look at movies, television dramas, self-help books, and *shinsho* directed at young people seeking to imagine their lives otherwise in the post-bubble period. First, I focus on two options for Japanese hoping to stay in

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[2] Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLITT), "Building Up the Country and the Regions in a Society Amidst Serious Population Decline*," White Paper on Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism in Japan 2015* (Tokyo: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2015), 38.
[3] Ibid, 32-33.
[4] Ibid, 33.

the archipelago, but circumvent the pressures facing the ubiquitous corporate warrior: having a "rural orientation" or choosing to migrate from a metropolitan center to rural areas, and the so-called "non-career" path of freelancing. Second, I look to sources which encourage young Japanese to dream outside of their home country's boundaries, promising happiness and fulfilled selfhoods through travel and immigration. By considering these alternative life-paths, I hope to place the stories of Japanese who arrived in Montreal between 1990 and the early 2010s within larger mediated messages directed at Japanese youth which helped them look beyond both their country's borders and outside of the corporate track.

*Rural Migration*

The first alternative life-path choice I will explore is migration to rural areas, also known as maintaining a rural "orientation". Scholars, business writers, and cultural commentators have noted that a defining characteristic of Japanese youth in the 1990s and 2000s is their rejection of migration to the capital, Tokyo. As Harada Yohei notes in his examination of *yanki* youth subcultures, rather than longing for leaving their hometowns for Tokyo (a desire that remained mostly unfulfilled) as was the experience of underprivileged youth in the Showa era, contemporary young people "absolutely want to stay in their hometowns."[5] This lack of interest in Tokyo and attachment to rural and suburban life is so markedly different from youth cultures a generation earlier that Harada calls today's *yankis*, "the new conservative class."[6]

Tokyo's status as the quintessential Japanese city and destination for young people has a long historical lineage. Since the Edo period, Tokyo (latter-day Edo) has been the centre of Japan's

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[5] Harada Yohei, *Yanki keizai: Shouhi no shuyaku, shinhoshuzou no shoutai* [The Yanki Economy: The True Identity of Japan's Main Consumers, the New Conservative Class] (Tokyo: Gentosha Shinsho, 2014), 26.
[6] Ibid.

urbanization, with its population reaching 1 million by 1720. After the imperial family relocated

to Tokyo in the Meiji era, it continued to expand, despite a catastrophic earthquake in 1923 and

Allied bombings during World War Two which together destroyed much of the city.[7] In the

postwar era, population movement remained largely geared towards Tokyo, which became the

main headquarters of Japan's economic growth. Between 1950 and 1960, the population grew

exponentially from 6.3 million to 9.7 million. By the 1980s, in response to Tokyo's ascension to a

World City and financial powerhouse, land prices soared, making the city's real estate the most

expensive in the world.[8] Even now, Tokyo's metropolitan population is estimated to be 13.491

million, or 11 percent of Japan's total population, although geographically, it only represents 0.6

percent of Japan's land mass.[9]

The rejection of Tokyo represents a new life-path choice for youth originating from outside

of the metropolis (like many of Harada's *yankis*) as well as young urbanites who idealize rural

areas. Representing this trend, a 2014 Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo [Aoyama Happy Research

Institute] online survey of approximately 3000 people found that while 31 percent hoped to move

to an urban area in the future, 43.5 percent chose rural migration.[10] Between 2005 and 2014, the

Japanese Cabinet Office also reported an increasing desire to live in the countryside across all age

groups. In both 2005 and 2014, those in their 20s expressed the strongest rural orientation.[11]

Similarly, a 2012 Nihon Keizai Shimbun [Nihon Keizai Newspaper] online survey aimed at 20-

and-30-year-olds found that 47.3 percent of youths wanted to live in the countryside. Of those

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[7] Pradyumna Prasad Karan, *Japan in the 21st Century: Environment, Economy, and Society* (Lexington: The Press of University of Kentucky, 2005), 263.
[8] Ibid, 264.
[9] Tokyo Metropolitan Government, "Population of Tokyo," accessed August 2016, http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/ABOUT/HISTORY/history03.htm.
[10] The balance could not say one way or another. Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo [Aoyama Happy Research Institute], "Shourai, anata ha idou shitai desu ka?" [In the future, do you want to move?], accessed September 2016, http://www.asahigroup-holdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/201408/00515/.
[11] MLITT, "Building Up the Country," 28.

expressing interest in rural migration, almost 80 percent idealized a country home with a garden, 83.7 percent would be happy to avoid the commuting rush, and 69 percent dreamed of a lifestyle surrounded by nature. One Tokyoite in her early 30s told the newspaper that she wanted to live in the country to find a "more full private life and no overtime."[12] Youth-directed media has recently capitalized on these trends and desires by presenting rural migration as an attractive and viable life choice for twenty-first century young people. The following section will look to *shinsho* and films which, despite their divergent perspectives and points of departure, all urge youth to view the countryside as a site for the remaking of their lives.

*Satoyama Shihonshugi* (2015), a *shinsho* based on an NHK Hiroshima programme on the same subject, pioneers rural migration as a viable and desirable life choice for young people hoping to escape "money capitalism."[13] In its eighteenth printing in 2013 with over 400 000 copies sold, the book proposes a new way of life while denouncing globalization and the detrimental effects of contemporary capitalism on the everyday lives of workers. The opening vignette aptly presents the problem of Japanese capitalism, or the current "common sense economy," and the solution of migrating to the countryside and discovering a new way of living, working, and interacting with others.[14]

The book's protagonist works in Tokyo for an unnamed firm in vicious competition with an overseas company. The overseas firm is producing the same product more cheaply through lowered labour costs and the Japanese shareholders are crying for cost-saving measures. The protagonist is working himself to the bone, caught in the cycle of never-ending capital

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[12] "Hansuu ga 'inaka de kurashitai,' 500 nin chousa (wakamono, chihou he)" [Half Want to Live in the Countryside: A 500-Person Study of Young People Towards Rural Localities], *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, March 30 2012, accessed September 2016, http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFK23032_X20C12A3000000/.

[13] Motani Kousuke and NHK Hiroshima Shuzaihan [NHK Hiroshima's Data Collecting team], *Satoyama shihonshugi: Nihon keizai ha "anshin no genri" de ugoku* [Woodland Capitalism: Japan's Economy Runs on the Safety Principle] (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2015), 7.

[14] Ibid, 3.

accumulation. He has no time to cook rice for himself for dinner, or even to wash his clothes so he buys food as well as socks and underwear from a nearby *conbini* (convenience store). He has little contact with the outside world outside of the ritualized interactions of customer and clerk in the *conbini*. All of a sudden, he is "restructured" and finds himself jobless.[15] Not knowing what to do, he moves back to his hometown in the country. He starts working for a store which sells organic jam made of local fruit earning one-tenth of his former salary. Some older women in the village lend him a plot of land where he grows his own fruits and vegetables; he repays them with part of his harvest and still finds his grocery bill has been drastically reduced. Although he uses a washing machine and a refrigerator, he is taught how to build his own fires by the village men. Instead of using fuel imported from foreign countries, he then cooks his food in a pot over the fires he has built. In connecting to the local land, he also frees himself from the violence, exploitation, and pollution that clings to the global fuel trade. Through these reciprocal interactions, he realizes that he now feels joy in his own existence; he has rediscovered his humanity.[16] According to the authors, this kind of simple, local, and sustainable rural lifestyle is the solution to Japan's capitalist crisis.

Rather than merely representing a left-wing utopian strategy presented in academia or *shinsho*, similar rural migration stories which free young protagonists from the chains of their Tokyo office jobs abound in contemporary popular culture. Interestingly, as in the following examples from recent Japanese films, young people often morph into entrepreneurs in the countryside, utilizing local products, like the organic jam mentioned above, as means to support themselves. Although these stories are far more like neo-liberal success stories than the radical off-the-grid lifestyle presented in *Satoyama Shihonshugi*, the emphasis on human relationships,

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[15] Ibid, 3-5.
[16] Ibid, 5-6.

harmony with local rural life, and happiness through escaping Tokyo's corporate capitalism are strikingly similar.

The recent movie *Umi no Futa* (2015),[17] based on the novel by Yoshimoto Banana, is one such story of youth rural migration. Mari (Kikuchi Akiko), the protagonist, attends university in Tokyo where she has landed a job in production design. When the film opens, however, she has left Tokyo and is taking a ferry home to a small town in rural Shizuoka prefecture. On the shore, when her ex-boyfriend Osamu (Kobayashi Yukichi) asks why she has chosen to return to a place with so little economic opportunity, she replies that in Tokyo, at work, "something somehow didn't feel quite right." Moving back to live with her parents, she has decided to open a *kakigori* (shaved ice dessert) business specializing in syrups made from local products, like molasses and *mikan* oranges. Throughout the movie, alongside her mother's college friend's daughter, Hajime (Mine Azusa), who is visiting for the summer, Mari's *kakigori* café and the girls' friendship slowly develops even as she comes to terms with rural Japan's aging society, economic stagnation, and depopulation. While rural living does not bring riches or easy happiness to Mari, by sharing her love of the sea and the locality with Hajime, she helps her friend gain a sense of purpose and rekindles her own dedication to the place she was raised.

Another film, *The Furthest End Awaits* (2015),[18] is set in Ishikawa prefecture's picturesque Noto peninsula. In this work, the protagonist, Misaki (Nagasaku Hiromi), is known for travelling around frequently, never building deep relationships with other people, and being devoted to her work. At the start of the film, she moves her coffee roasting business from Tokyo to her rural hometown in order to find her father. Separated from him at a young age when her parents divorced, Misaki takes up residence in her father's old fishing shack, hoping he will return, despite hearing

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[17] *Umi no futa* [The Sea's Lid], film, directed by Toyoshima Keisuke (Tokyo: Phantom Film, 2015).
[18] *The Furthest End Awaits/ Saihate Nite*, film, directed by Chiang Hsiu-Chiung (Tokyo: Toei, 2015).

that he had been lost at sea eight years earlier. Misaki's neighbours, a single mother named Eriko (Sasaki Nozomi) working as a hostess in Kanazawa and her two children, are at first unfriendly towards the Tokyoite newcomer. As Reiki and her family drink Misaki's heart-warming coffees and get to know her, they forge a profound new bond and overcome a tragic event together. While living in the Noto peninsula, Misaki finds the meaning of lasting human relationships and a sense of calmness and rootedness in place that was unachievable in her big city life. Together, while these popular culture products highlight the struggles of Japanese youth attempting to manage their draining work lives, the solutions they present revolve around idealized portrayals of rural Japan that overlook many of the structural problems that caused population decline in the first place.

These media sources highlight the lifestyle considerations which Japanese young people consistently prioritize when contemplating a return to the countryside: more time for family and friends, involvement in local communities and economies, and a slow life rooted in harmony with the natural environment. Yet, simultaneously, these stories and motivations occur against the backdrop of Japan's rapidly aging population, the continuing depopulation of rural areas, and changes in global capitalism. In turn, these are reflected by the differing value systems held by Japanese youth compared to their parents' generation and by their convergent expectations of what the future will hold for them.

*Satoyama Shihonshugi* shares much in common with the concerns of Japanese youth hoping to move to the country. For one thing, as the book repeatedly stresses, young people are exhausted by working life in urban areas and see little personal respite or reward from their labour. In the 2014 Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism report on rural migration, the authors noted that Japanese in their 20s are less satisfied with their working lives than even three years ago while fewer express interest in working continuously with the aim of getting a promotion.

They conclude, "the sense of excitement towards work is decreasing for the younger generation."[19] This shift in values is also related to the changing nature of contemporary capitalism. In *Umi no Futa*, Mari feels so alienated by her Tokyo job that she returns to her hometown which is facing economic decline.[20] The message of such tales rings loud and clear: the requirements of global capital for ever-increasing profits and competitiveness wear out individual workers while offering them little in return.[21] With further deregulation and changes to the structure of employment, full-time workers are expected to work overtime to compete with the cheaper labour fuelling overseas firms; part-timers, meanwhile, can work long hours yet are excluded from the benefits and earnings of full-timers.[22] With work no longer representing the primary site of identification, young people are placing more value on private time and connections with others, either online or in person, which they imagine are more easily attainable in the country.[23]

Rural depopulation and the greying of Japanese society are other important factors surrounding the return to the country movement. In *Satoyama Shihonshugi*, for example, the protagonist is only able to learn alternative practices through the charity of elders living in his hometown.[24] From the early 1950s, Japan's rural areas have been suffering from systemic decline brought about by the concentration of wealth in Tokyo and the prefectural capitals, and subsequent out-migration and depopulation. Although Japanese policymakers have recognized this issue and have brought forward regeneration programs since the 1960s and 1970s, [25] rural decline has

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[19] MLITT, "Building Up the Country," 11.
[20] *Umi no Futa*, 2015.
[21] Motani, *Satoyama Shihonshugi*, 3-5.
[22] Kuniko Ishiguro, "Japanese Employment in Transformation: The Growing Numbers of Non-Regular Workers," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008), accessed September 2016, http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2008/Ishiguro.html.
[23] Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 47-48.
[24] Motani, *Satoyama Shihonshugi*, 5-6.
[25] Peter Matanle and Yasuyuki Sato, "Coming Soon to a City Near You! Learning to Live 'Beyond Growth' in Japan's Shrinking Regions," *Social Science Journal Japan* 13, no. 2 (2010): 188.

continued until the present day.[26] In *The Furthest End Awaits*, finding few options even for low-wage jobs in Noto Peninsula, Eriko travels to nearby Kanazawa City for work, leaving her children alone at home.[27] *Umi no Futa* tackles this issue by staging a confrontation between Mari and her ex-boyfriend, Osamu, who never left their hometown. Expressing his disbelief and annoyance at Mari's nostalgic vision of their home, Osamu explains how he has been forced to close his shop due to declining tourism and economic recession in rural Shizuoka. At Mari's insistence that he need to try harder, he flees into the night, knowing that his business is unsalvageable.[28] The problem of rural decline has been compounded by the so-called "super-aging" of Japan; its percentage of the population over 65 years old– 23 percent in 2009– is the highest in the world. Although this phenomenon has extended into urban areas, it is most noticeable in rural areas plagued by out-migration.[29] Many of these areas suffer from "double negative population disequilibrium": that is, the natural death rate has overtaken the birth-rate and out-migration supersedes in-migration.[30]

Young people moving to the countryside, an alternative life-path championed in the Japanese media, is representative of changing values regarding work and life. In the deregulated economy demanding more labour for less, the hustle and bustle of Tokyo, and the economic ascendance it represents, are less appealing to some youth, even those who grew up in an urban centre. As one young man in his thirties explained in the Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo survey, "I've

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[26] Interestingly, in 2008, Japanese tax structures were altered in order to provide economic support to declining rural communities. Residents may now choose to send a portion (up to 10 percent) of their municipal tax payments to a community other than that in which they are currently living in a donation akin to a "tax to [the] hometown." This provides outside support to rural areas suffering from depopulation and decline. See Tokumi Odagiri, *Rural Regeneration in Japan* (Newcastle: Centre for Rural Economy, 2011), 38, accessed September 2016, http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cre/publish/researchreports/Rural percent20Regeneration percent20in percent20Japan.pdf.
[27] *The Furthest End Awaits*, 2015.
[28] *Umi no Futa*, 2015.
[29] Naoko Muramatsu and Hiroko Akiyama, "Japan: Super-Aging Society Preparing for the Future," *The Gerontologist* 51, no. 4 (2011): 426.
[30] Matale and Sato, *Learning to Live 'Beyond Growth*,' 199.

always [lived] in the city, so I yearn for the country. I'd be able to relax my body and mind in a place with a river flowing nearby with lots of mountains and nature."[31] Living a slower life, immersed in the natural world, demonstrated so effectively on film, clearly attracts contemporary city youth even while the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism survey found that those who actually move often have roots and family businesses to return to in the countryside.[32]

Further, with the bursting of the bubble and resulting long-term recession, so-called "*defure karucha*" [deflation culture] has been spreading nationwide.[33] With free cell-phone games, cheap fast food, family restaurant chains, and reasonably-priced clothing brands, like UNIQLO and Shimamura, proliferating in the countryside as well as the cities, Tokyo's status as an elite consumption site has become less of a draw; whether you eat and shop at low-priced restaurant and apparel chains in Tokyo, a prefectural city, a suburban mall, or in the countryside, the products are standardized.[34] When Furuichi Noritoshi writes of the paradox of youths who report that they are happy in government life satisfaction surveys despite the economic and social problems facing them, he speaks to the same social change: "Maybe we can't hope for another high growth period for Japan. But, in this country, there are many things which can bring us pleasure and enrich our everyday lives." He continues, "for example, we collect our basic items from UNIQLO or ZARA, wear fashionable clothes from H & M, spend three hours idly chatting with our friends at

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[31] Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo [Aoyama Happy Research Institute], "Shourai, anata ha idou shitai desu ka?" [In the future, do you want to move?], accessed September 2016, http://www.asahigroup-holdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/201408/00515/.
[32] MLITT, *Building Up the Country*, 31-32.
[33] As Leo Lewis writes of deflation culture in *Financial Times*, "Japan now has a generation of newly enfranchised adults that becomes stressed over a price difference of five yen between two doughnuts at rival stores, keeps count of its micro savings in *kakeibo* [household accounting] notebooks, but struggles to explain what it wants to do with the money." Leo Lewis, "Japan: Deflated Generation," *Financial Times*, January 16, 2016, https://www.google.co.jp/amp/s/amp.ft.com/content/1b24264e-b9d8-11e5-bf7e-8a339b6f2164.
[34] Harada, *Yanki keizai*, 28.

McDonalds having lunch and coffee[…] even without spending much money, we can have a fairly enjoyable ordinary day."[35] The spread of deflation culture and disengagement from an alienating urban labour market bolster youth dreams of the rural, even as the idyllic natural setting they crave is struggling through depopulation and the aging of its inhabitants and infrastructure. In media, and in youth desires, rural migration has emerged as a prominent trend in recent years. However, the Ministry of Land rightfully cautions that, for all the interest youth express in returning to the country, only 10.3 percent of 20 to 29-year-olds and 10 percent of 30 to 39-year-olds want to make the move anytime in the next five years.[36]

*Freelancing*

Another alternative to being a *seishain* is the "non-career" path of freelancing. This choice is presented as improving young people's work-life balance, honing their individuality and freedom, and allowing them to make money by doing what they love. As Takahashi Shunsuke explains in his *shinsho*, *Jibunrashii career no tsukurikata* (2009),[37] while Japan's economy continues to be deregulated, individuals have altered the meanings they ascribe to labour. Since the high growth era, workers have been called "corporate warriors" and expected to prioritize paid labour over family and private time. However, the post-bubble era has ushered in uncertainty: "economic prosperity and future goals and dreams alone are ineffective motivation for sustaining [this type of working lifestyle] in the long term. More than [thinking of] the future, people are looking for what can bring them enrichment in their public and private lives right now."[38] Like rural migration, different forms of freelancing as attractive alternatives for youth appear across a

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[35] Furuichi Noritoshi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011/2015), 7.
[36] MLITT, *Building Up the Country*, 28.
[37] Takahashi Shunsuke, *Jibunrashii career no tsukurikata* (Tokyo: PHP Shinsho, 2009).
[38] Ibid, 4.

variety of media. For instance, there are self-help books, directed mostly at young women, suggesting that self-improvement requires freedom from the 9 to 5 life to develop a unique business and related self-image; as their subtitles insist, "others' evaluations of you are unnecessary," [39] "be creative," [40] and choose "the unmarried, highly educated, non-career lifestyle."[41] In works of fiction also, these themes have come to be paramount; there are television dramas where protagonists learn that doing what they love as their own boss makes them far happier than their higher-earning but stifling previous jobs. While these varied sources come together to make the non-career track look like a promising life-path choice for young people unsatisfied with their office jobs, they omit the necessary class background required to be successful in a neo-liberal environment with weakening social security nets.

One prolific designer, author, and lifestyle blogger who sees entrepreneurship and the marketization of the self as a path to happiness is Miyasaka Erika, who writes under the pen-name, "Erika". In 2003, as a young woman, Erika left for New York City which was uncharted terrain for her when she first arrived. In order to fulfil her dream of starting her own business in the fashion industry, she had to overcome many hurdles. Yet, she found success after designing a unique line of made-in-Japan hosiery, which was patented in both Japan and the United States. Buoyed by her own happiness and financial security, Erika then remade herself as an overseas fashion and adventure blogger, writer, and lifestyle coach for Japanese women with entrepreneurial dreams, all the while continuing to sell her hosiery on the internet.[42] In her 2014 advice book for Japanese

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[39] Erika, *New York no jyosei no 'tsuyoku utsushiku' ikiru houhou* [How New York Women Live With Strength and Beauty] (Tokyo: Daiwa Shobo, 2014).

[40] Hasegawa Tomomi, *Suki na koto de okane wo kasegu houhou: Tanoshimi nagara seikou shite iru hito no 38 no himitsu* [How to Earn Money Doing What You Love: 38 Secrets from People Who Succeed While Having Fun] (Tokyo: Daiwa Shobo, 2015).

[41] Kajiwara Kimiko, *25 pa-sento no onnatachi: Mikon kougakureki nonkyaria to iu ikikata* [The 25 percent Women: The Unmarried, Highly Educated Life-Path] (Tokyo: Apple Publishing, 2014).

[42] Erika, "Erica in Style," accessed September 2016, http://ameblo.jp/ericainstyle/. Erika has published an astonishing three self-help/life advice books in Japan in 2014-2015 with another on national bookshelves in 2016.

women seeking a similar non-traditional life-path, she explains: "Starting a business as a woman, alone, in New York was tougher than I had ever imagined. But, steadily, in order to make my dream a reality, I trusted myself and persevered."[43] According to the author, the key to the financial success and happiness that she achieved was cultivating her individuality, or "[the thing that] makes you sparkle in a different way from other [people]."[44] Erika's ability to pursue her dreams comes with little to no mention of the pre-conditions that helped to facilitate her rise to fame and fortune. Namely, how was she able to financially move to New York City from Japan to start a business at a young age is omitted. This absence and the accompanying emphasis on perseverance and believing in oneself serve to make her ascent to self-help stardom that much more amazing. Erika's mantra of self-confidence fits comfortably alongside the marketization of the self under neo-liberalism.

Erika also admonishes her audience with words of wisdom from her New Yorker model friend, Ariana: "women who are just pretty are boring." Instead, she and Ariana contend, a sense of self is what will bring life success and self-fulfilment. Using the example of a doughnut shop, she notes that customers will always choose the one star-shaped doughnut over the multitude of round ones. Yet, to Erika, Japanese women all strive to be happy and beautiful in the same way, such as by perfectly styling their hair and makeup according to magazine prescriptions and choosing a stylish seasonal nail polish colour, rather than carving out their own niche.[45] She insists:

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See: Erika, *New York no jyosei no 'tsuyoku utsushiku' ikiru houhou* [How New York Women Live With Strength and Beauty] (Tokyo: Daiwa Shobo, 2014); Erika, *New York no jyosei no 'jibun wo shinjite kagayaku' houhou* [How New York Women Hone Their Belief in Themselves] (Tokyo: Daiwa Shobo, 2014); Erika, *New York ryuu honmono no bi wo migakikata* [How to Shine Up Your True Beauty, New York Style] (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2015); Erika, *New York de mananda 'watashi wo ugokasu' 47 no kotoba* [47 Words I Learned in New York That Inspired Me] (Tokyo: Takarajima, 2016). Further, although Erika is based in New York, her personal brand is directed almost exclusively to Japanese consumers, not American consumers.

[43] Erika, *New York no jyosei,* 2.
[44] Ibid, 12.
[45] Ibid, 13.

"Your difference from others, your originality, is what charms and attracts people. The international standard of beauty is not just about being pretty; like the doughnuts, individuality and difference are what are [truly] desirable. If a person has individuality, they will sparkle brightly with a shininess that others do not possess."[46] In her conclusion, the young entrepreneur tells her readers, "Live your life according to your own rules. This is your life's meaning."[47] Here too, Erika's lesson that an idealized life is attainable through marketable individualism and effort purposely overlooks the role of structural limitations that make such a path impossible for most readers. Indeed, the idea of dream fulfilment that lies at the core of her brand depends on convincing her audience that it is possible. Or, for some readers, Erika's out of reach lifestyle offers an opportunity for escapism, much in the way a TV show or film does.

Kajiwara Kimiko sees a similar solution for Japanese youth in her book, *25 pa-sento no onnatachi*.[48] In this work, she pitches freelancing as an alternative which many young highly educated Japanese women – the 25 percenters[49] who she references in the title – are already attempting to put into practice. Rather than drawing merely on personal experience as Erika did, Kajiwara interviews young men and women who are working in unstable labour jobs about their life experiences and expectations. Through this research, Kajiwara argues that the 25 percenters represent a new category of Japanese woman in the twenty-first century.[50] When describing this new woman, the author writes that, unlike her predecessors, she cannot be dichotomized as either a career woman or a housewife. Instead, she eschews the world of full-time salaried work yet remains unmarried, creating a more equal relationship with her partner. Further, she has attended

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[46] Ibid, 14.
[47] Ibid, 235.
[48] Kajiwara Kimiko, *25 pa-sento no onnatachi: Mikon kougakureki nonkyaria to iu ikikata* [The 25 percent Women: The Unmarried, Highly Educated Life-Path] (Tokyo: Apple Publishing, 2014).
[49] She compares them with the 65 percent of young Japanese women who are aiming for the previous vaunted life goal for women of getting married, becoming a housewife, and devoting themselves to childcare. Ibid, 62.
[50] Ibid, 5.

higher educational institutions, usually a technical school (*senmon gakkou*) or four-year university, but sometimes graduate school as well.[51] As Kajiwara writes, "these women are exiting or plan to exit what many people call 'the natural human life-course.' In other words, they are diverging from the female life-course decided by patriarchal society."[52]

Rather than merely suggesting this life-path to other similarly minded young women, Kajiwara sees freelancing as a healthy alternative path for all Japanese society; she suggests that *seishain* (full-time regular workers) of both genders and male *freeters* (part-time unstable labourers) look to the 25 percent women for a new model. To the author, instead of being bitter about their lack of full-time work or the necessity of overwork, these women have managed to combine meaningful work with hobbies to create a happy and different kind of lifestyle. As Kajiwara writes, "they decided [to step off the prescribed course] by [simply] following what they liked to do, asking themselves emotion or sensation-based questions like, 'how do I want to live/ what do I want to do?' and 'what do I like/ what do I dislike?'"[53] Although they work part-time for NPOs, for example, and might not make very much money, their life focus is on self-enrichment and happiness rather than on marriage or full-time work.[54] Further, she notes that time spent not working by these women is often redirected into cultural pursuits, grassroots movements, and volunteering: Japanese women overwhelmingly occupy the seats at cultural centres, dominate overseas and domestic travel, and make up 90 percent of the audience members at public lectures. Thus, Kajiwara concludes, "the [25 percent] women are enjoying their lives so much that one is led to wonder: are they [in fact] not the ones [truly] supporting Japan's cultural activities?"[55] As

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[51] Ibid, 5-7.
[52] Ibid, 8.
[53] Ibid, 197.
[54] Ibid, 6.
[55] Ibid, 202.

in the case of Erika, Kajiwara does not engage with who can join the idealized *freeter* category, only stating that those who can dream big enough can successfully make the transition. Like Erika, it does not matter because both of their self-made brands are selling lifestyles crafted to look attainable or desirable. Furthermore, lifestyle entrepreneurs advocating for a voluntary shift to precarious work in hopes of living a happier life also omit the reality that increasing numbers of labourers are pushed into *freeter* lifestyles as a result of economic circumstances.

Another young beauty and lifestyle entrepreneur who has penned a self-help book for women seeking a more fulfilling life is Hasegawa Tomomi.[56] As Hasegawa explains in her book, holding onto her individuality was key to her eventual business successes. As a middle schooler, she fought with her teacher over wearing a short skirt which she felt represented her own style. When she was told to follow the school rules, she replied, "Why were the school rules decided that way? Why is it wrong to be different from others?"[57] She dropped out of high school eventually, working various part-time jobs until landing what she thought would be her dream employment as a salesgirl for a store in Shibuya 109, a stylish youth mecca. Yet, even then at 22, her independent spirit was balking: "I don't want to be under others' direction! I want to wake up in the morning at my own preferred time! I don't want to ride a packed train [to work in the morning]! I want to work with people I love, in the way I like!" As she admits, "To others, this might seem simply selfish, but I couldn't suppress [these feelings]. And, [so], I resolved that the only way to escape would be to start a business."[58]

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[56] Hasegawa Tomomi, *Suki na koto de okane wo kasegu houhou: Tanoshimi nagara seikou shite iru hito no 38 no himitsu* [How to Earn Money While Doing What You Love: The 38 Secrets of People who Succeed While Having Fun] (Tokyo: Daiwa Shobo, 2015).
[57] Ibid, 5.
[58] Ibid, 7.

Hasegawa's advice to would-be self-employed women demonstrates her familiarity and ease with the new economy's focus on personal marketing: "invest first in the brand of you."[59] She prefaces this by explaining her own brand: "There are many people who ask me, 'Tomomi-san, it looks like you are always playing, […just] doing what you like whenever you want to. But, really, how much are your earning and how much are you spending?' [All of] you who are thinking that, you are completely fitting into my strategy! Because, 'work that looks like playing' is my own [personal] brand."[60] Generally, according to Hasegawa, if you want to be a self-entrepreneur, you need to decide what kind of brand you want to be. This is "the era of yourself as a product" and you need to invest in your brand by playing to your strengths by honing your learning, experiences, and skillset while also covering up your weaknesses.[61] Since the brand you are selling is yourself, it needs to be reflected in others' impressions of you as well. The author thus reminds her readers that, for women, how you look is very important. If a woman looks well-put together, Hasegawa says, others will leave encounters with her and think, "That person can really manage herself properly!" and will feel secure in entrusting work to her.[62] In this way, Hasegawa encourages young women to pursue self-employment through personal branding, which she emphasizes will bring happiness and freedom.

Freelancing and entrepreneurship as attractive alternative life-paths have been the themes of many Japanese television dramas since the turn of the twenty-first century. One 2004 drama, *Boku to kanojo to kanojo no ikiru michi,*[63] provides an especially effective comparison of the virtues of working for yourself as opposed to working full-time for a large corporation. In this

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[59] Ibid, 120.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid, 122-123.
[62] Ibid, 176-177.
[63] *Boku to kanojo to kanojo no ikiru michi* [The Way We Live], television drama, directed by Hirano Shin, Miyake Yoshishige and Takahashi Nobuyuki (Tokyo: Fuji Television, 2004).

drama, Koyanagi Tetsuro (Kusanagi Tsuyoshi) is a workaholic father who showers his wife and young daughter with material goods, but fails to connect with them on an emotional level. When his wife files for divorce, he is left to provide and care for their seven-year-old daughter, Rin (Miyama Karen). Tetsuro is initially stressed and angry at having to perform household and caregiving tasks as well as work at the bank, which often includes overtime. Through conversations with Rin's English home-tutor, Kitajima Yura (Koyuki), however, he comes to crave more work-life balance. Yura, Tetsuro discovers to his surprise, used to work for a large securities firm as a full-time regular employee until a year previous. When she explains to him why she quit such a prestigious job, she focuses on her "anxiety" at the job and desire to find what was truly important to her:

> It wasn't an easy decision, you know. Quitting my job took courage. At the time, work was my entire life; I had nothing outside of it. I thought if I quit, I would have nothing left. Actually, it's not that I wanted to quit. I just wanted, for once, to stand still. I thought that time would just continue passing and I would never realize the things that were truly precious to me. In order to stand still, the only thing I could do was quit the company…I thought about it for a year, but that was all I could do.

Being a self-employed children's home tutor is satisfying for Yura since she gets to see children smile every day and make her own schedule. Heeding her life advice, Tetsuro eventually quits the bank for a job with zero overtime where he is paid half of his previous salary. This way, though, he has more time to watch his daughter grow. Although the drama ends on a sad note, when Tetsuro loses Rin in a custody battle with his ex-wife, the proclaimed inhumanity of full-time labour remains a prominent theme throughout the work.

Despite the bright future of freelancing pitched by the media, this path does little to extricate young people from the same neo-liberal capitalism which is exacerbating problems in Japan's current employment system. In fact, I suggest that this "alternative" needs to be considered

as a natural extension of Japan's increasing economic deregulation and decreasing social welfare provisions since the 1990s. As Lukacs has shown, mirroring calls by policymakers for greater personal responsibility, youth-oriented media has championed lifestyles based on consumption and individuality.[64] The self-help books and drama explored above represent an extension of the focus on unique personalities and life choices: they celebrate the marketization of one's own identity as a freelancer. Erika and Hasegawa Tomomi are experts in this marketed self for the new economy. Although freelancing and entrepreneurship are the subjects of their books, they also embody these ideals in their own lives. As Hasegawa writes, "for me, business is a tool to express yourself […] The know-how which I introduce in this book …I found out through actual practice. After much trial and error, the me of the present [emerged]."[65]

Yet, the non-career life-path does not merely provide greater personal freedom for young people – it simultaneously removes them from the remaining social security net and has them compete as individuals on the free market, with all the associated risks which that entails. Although a freelancer or small business entrepreneur, for instance, might gain in terms of work-life balance, they forfeit the benefits which still arrive hand in hand with full-time jobs in Japan and the security of knowing where the next pay-check is coming from. Even when compared to working as a part-time or contract employee, which itself is often bemoaned in the media, the freelancing path offers the weakest safety net for workers. In 2015, for example, although only 9.6 percent of contract or part-time workers were eligible to obtain pension contributions from their employers, 54.7 percent

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[64] Gabriella Lukacs, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[65] Hasegawa, *Suki na koto de okane wo kasegu houhou*, 2015, 7-8.

were covered by health insurance.[66] But, for freelancers and entrepreneurs, if the project fails, it fails on the shoulders of the young person alone and they will be left without any such support.

Further, by monetizing hobbies, physicality, or personality traits as a freelancer, a strategy suggested by Hasegawa and Erika, conceptualizations of selfhood become even more bound to neo-liberal norms of competition and individuality. While freelancing is viewed as an alternative to an employment system which burdens labourers with unreasonable hours and overtime, when self and labour become intrinsically intertwined for young entrepreneurs, there can be no true escape from work. Hasegawa writes about this directly: "I am always 'on'. […] If you want to grow quickly, if you are not 'on' in the present, 24 hours a day, you will not be able to seize all possible opportunities."[67]

Even being always "on", however, does not guarantee success in these appealing yet precarious life-paths. A recent survey by the Japanese firm Levtech Freelance, which supports freelancing engineers and developers, demonstrates the gap between people's hopes for the non-career path and their realities. When Levtech asked their subscribers why they had chosen to become freelancers, the top answer (39 percent) was to make more money,[68] a result of stepping off the full-time track that many of the authors of the books above imply will come with time. In a subsequent question about how satisfied they were with their current income, however, the answers were revealing. While 4 percent were very satisfied and 16 percent were satisfied, 41 percent responded that they were neutral, 29 percent responded rather unsatisfied, and 10 percent

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[66] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), *Hiseiki kouyou no jyoutai to kadai* [The Situation of Unstable Employment], accessed September 2016, http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11650000-Shokugyouanteikyokuhakenyukiroudoutaisakubu/0000120286.pdf.

[67] Hasegawa, *Suki na koto de okane wo kasegu houhou*, 2015, 165-166.

[68] Levtech, "Freelance 700nin ni kiita! IT gyoukai no shuunyuu ya career ni kansuru itsutsu no shitsumon," [700 Freelancers Answer! 5 Questions About Salary and Career in the IT World], accessed October 2016, https://freelance.levtech.jp/guide/detail/32/.

very unsatisfied.[69] In other words, even excluding those who felt relatively neutral, 39 percent were unsatisfied with their salaries – despite the fact that they had started to freelance for the express purpose of earning more money. Yet, as we have seen, the non-career path is rarely described in terms of what is lost; rather, non-fictional and fictional success stories abound. As young Japanese consume these mediated messages, freelancing appears to be a straight line to a self-actualized future full of freedom and financial independence.

Within Japan, two alternatives life-paths which tempt young people away from dreams of steady full-time employment in urban areas are rural migration and freelancing. For other Japanese youth, however, like those living overseas in Montreal, Canada who populate subsequent chapters of this thesis, life-paths outside the archipelago, where they might in fact explore similar strategies to their peers in Japan, seem especially appealing. The final section thus deals with television dramas and self-help books which praise the virtues of travel outside Japan as ideal for self-improvement.


*Travel & Migration*

The final life-path explored is travel and living overseas. Like rural migration and freelancing, travel has been vaunted in recent Japanese popular literature directed at young people. Vacationing and living overseas in the popular media is often pitched as a self-building exercise: by leaving Japan, you can build a more productive and self-actualized "you". Travel itself is seen as a key to becoming a more active protagonist in your own life with the potential to change individuals from passive followers to the heroes of their own existences. One place in which this theme has played out is on popular youth television programs, and specifically in live-action

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[69] Ibid.

dramas. Self-help books written by and directed at young people also see travelling as an important mechanism of building a better you. These pieces come together to form a body of visual and print media sources which glorify making connections with the world outside of Japan. By taking yourself out of the comfortable and known world of Japanese society, these works suggest, you can find out what truly matters to you and go on to succeed.

From the trendy drama heydays of the 1990s to contemporary dramas on television in the mid-2010s, Japanese television aimed at youth has capitalized, if not spearheaded, this idea. In one of the most popular dramas of all time,[70] 1996's smash hit, *Long Vacation*, starring Kimura Takuya as Sena, and Yamaguchi Tomoko as Minami, moving overseas takes on a surprisingly crucial role in the ending.[71] Sena, a pianist, is finally able to reach his true potential at the drama's conclusion after he wins a competition and lands a job with the Boston Symphonic Orchestra. Minami, the central love interest of the series, is invited to join him in the final episode. In an iconic scene, after they scream out each other's names in joy and embrace, Sena whispers to Minami, "Let's go to Boston together: it will be way more fun than [what we have] now."[72] The show's penultimate visual of the pair laughing and running through Boston's streets in their wedding attire was an excellent demonstration of self-actualization through moving; in Boston, Sena both achieves a career boost and marries the woman he loves.

Having protagonists self-actualize overseas is a prominent theme in youth television. The 2016 summer romance drama, *Suki na hito ga iru koto*, starring Yamazaki Kento (Shibasaki Kanata) and Kiritani Mirei (Sakurai Misaki), concludes with the protagonists on a romantic walk

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[70] With a viewership rating of 36.7 percent. "Kimura Takuya shuen drama shichouritsu ranking," [The Viewership Ratings of Kimura Takuya Dramas], accessed October 2016, http://nendai-ryuukou.com/article/139.html.
[71] *Long Vacation,* television drama, directed by Nagayama Kouzou, Suzuki Masayuki, and Usui Hirotsugu (Tokyo: Fuji Television, 1996).
[72] Ibid.

through New York City where the heroine has taken up residence as a pastry chef.[73] The overseas theme did not immediately appear relevant in a drama which starts out with rural migration, as Misaki struggles to find a new job as a pastry chef in Tokyo after the small bakery she was employed at closed its doors. Eventually, she meets her old crush, Chiaki (played by Miura Shohei) who runs a restaurant with his brothers in a beachside Kanagawa prefecture that is looking for a pastry chef. As the drama, and Misaki's relationship with younger brother Kanata, progresses, we learn that she has always yearned to work in the United States, a dream which is offered to her after she and Kanata headline a culinary festival in the last half of the show. Although moving overseas for her career will part her from her on-again off-again partner, Misaki choses to pursue her professionalization and self-building in New York despite Kanata chasing her down at Tokyo's Haneda airport.

In popular books which take up a similar mantle to the dramas mentioned above, a key message remains the merits of leaving Japan to construct a better more individualized self. In *Jibun wo sagasu na* (2012), the editors argue that you should "say goodbye to a never-ending search for self."[74] By interviewing fifteen young Japanese who took a step forward in their own lives to remake themselves, the editors hope to demonstrate that sitting at home and contemplating who you are is a fruitless exercise. As they assert, "your selfhood is not something to search for. Your selfhood is something to be made!"[75] The question which arises, then, is how to best make a new selfhood? In this work, four of the interviewed youth worked towards their idealized selves by travelling overseas – one to Hong Kong, one to Singapore, one to Europe, and one to New York. Through travel, these young people put their dreams into action, and, in the process, became new

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[73] *Suki na hito ga iru koto* [There Is Someone that I Like], television drama, directed by Kanai Hiro, Tanaka Ryo, and Moriwaki Tomonobu (Tokyo: Fuji Television, 2016).
[74] Nippon Dream Project, eds., *Jibun wo sagasu na* [Don't Search for Yourself] (Tokyo: Iroha Shuppan, 2012), 3.
[75] Ibid, 4.

and better versions of themselves. As the editors explain, "the most important thing is to live in order to leave footprints. If you think about it, whether you fail or succeed, the result of your personal challenges [will follow you as your] footprints. When you don't know what road to take, looking back at your footprints will certainly show you [the way forward]."[76] By facing new challenges, often by physically uprooting yourself, you can start on this alternative life-path, and, as a result, become a more fulfilled version of yourself.

These themes are brought to the fore even more forcefully in a book released the following year by the same editorial team, *Live Your Life* (2013).[77] In this work, they interviewed only "world travelers" and collected their words of wisdom about how to become the hero or heroine of your own life. Travelers, they argue, make the perfect role models to help young Japanese choose an alternative life-path in individualized quests of self-fulfillment. As the editors write: "The world travelers were all somehow able to offer fascinating words [of wisdom]. Maybe it is because, more than anyone else, people who travel can continually fill-up the pages of the book that we call life. While traversing national borders and jumping into guarantee-free but adventure-filled tomorrows, [they always] move from known to unknown worlds."[78] Indeed, in this alternative life-path, media sources play up the glamour and fun challenges of overseas life through which, it seems, you will automatically grow as a person. In *Live Your Life*, constructing a new selfhood is deemed almost inextricable from leaving your homeland by the editors. In the book's conclusion, for instance, they clearly express the important parallels between travel and self-building in their eyes:

Why do people travel? In response to this question, we answer, "so that they can

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[76] Ibid, 8.
[77] Nippon Dream Project, eds., *Live your life: Jinsei wo saikou no monogatari ni kaeru 68 no kotoba* [Live Your Life: 68 Words to Change Your Life into the Very Best Story] (Tokyo: Iroha Shuppan, 2013).
[78] Ibid, 5.

become the protagonists [of their own lives]." In our everyday lives, it is quite hard to feel that you are the hero [of the story]. Unable to make your dreams of becoming a celebrity or an entrepreneur into reality, you are "villager A", [a character] without even a name. Ah! What a boring life! [When people feel this way], they decide to travel… The moment that you [set foot] in a new country, you suddenly become the hero of the trip. The people that you meet in unknown cities change "villager A" [for the better]. In this unknown world, you [are no longer bored, but rather] excited for the adventure [which is unfolding].[79]

Another self-help book which praises travel is the *Virgin Trip: Jyoshi ga tabi ni deru riyuu* (2014) compiled by the editorial team TABIPPO, which tells the stories of fourteen Japanese young women's first travel experiences.[80] As the editors write in the introductory pages, "just as everyone becomes cuter following their first love, travel beautifies and enriches women."[81] Rather than speaking in general about the merits of travel for selfhood, this work is light on editorial content and instead lets each traveler express their own feelings about their trips in their own words. For the purposes of this project, the eighth story in the volume on studying in Canada is most relevant.[82] In this young woman's story, successful self-building emerged from overcoming the many challenges facing her as an international student at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. As the author concluded when reflecting on her time overseas, "I want to live a brand new life. I want the one life I have to live to be without compromise."[83]

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[79] Ibid, 157.
[80] TABIPPO. *Virgin Trip: Jyoshi ga tabi ni deru riyuu* [Virgin Trip: Why Women Travel] (Kyoto: Iroha Shuppan, 2014).
[81] Ibid, 9.
[82] Ibid, 121.
[83] Ibid, 131.

She begins her account with her negative initial impression of her surroundings: "A dirty room in an old tower. An elevator that seems broken and a shower room with no key. To wash your clothes, you [use] a washer and dryer that are worn-out. The first day that I came to Canada to study…(Can I survive even half a year in a place like this?) When I thought this way, my excitement extinguished and I [became] overwhelmed by anxiety."[84] She notes that before she began her studies at Acadia, she had high hopes for her time in Canada; she expected to not want to return to Japan, that her English would soon be on par with native speakers, and that she would have a wonderful time at many home parties. Yet, after entering regular classes after a period of English preparation with other international students, she spent her days locked in the library. She wrote, "in one week, I had to read about 400 pages of English. As I became painfully aware of my lack of English language ability, [there were times when] I cried out of mortification."[85]  As she eventually admitted, however, not once was she able to think, "I don't want to go home."[86]

And yet, as she writes, she grew as a person. She acknowledged that she was forced to confront her weak sides, uncouth sides, and lazy sides.[87] Also, through being in Canada, she began to want to develop herself more as a person. As she explains, "I've developed interests in things I previously just overlooked and I want to challenge myself in different ways. This is because [in Canada] I felt the gap between the difficulty of the everyday in another country and the [complete] lack of inconvenience or discomfort in Japan."[88] She decided that staying in the same city you grew up in and facing little to no challenges would bring a quick end to the kind of life she hoped to lead. Two examples that she offers demonstrate her self-improvement in Nova Scotia. She

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[84] Ibid, 122.
[85] Ibid, 125.
[86] Ibid, 124.
[87] Ibid, 129.
[88] Ibid, 130.

asserts, "I got 98 percent on an assignment that I never thought I would finish… [And], when I got my passport stolen in Montreal, I returned to the strength I had accrued over the past two months."[89] Travel and living in a foreign country are entirely responsible for this transformation in her eyes: "In Japan, I would have begged someone in tears to help me and would have received a resolution [to the problem of the lost passport]. [In Canada, however,] I became able to solve problems [of this nature] entirely by myself."[90]

The previous works see self-building as intrinsic to travel whether expressed via editors' bold statements or the life stories of young Japanese who took the leap. Japan, in these sources, is synonymous with inertia and convenience– the exact opposite of the conditions needed for self-growth. By stepping out of their national comfort-zone, these books encourage young Japanese to expand their personal horizons. Of course, as with rural migration and freelancing, interest in travel as a tool for self-building does not necessarily translate into actual behavior, and varies across age and gender lines. For example, an Aoyama Happy Research Institute recent survey on migration found that while most Japanese imagined moving within Japan rather than outside of it, 22.2 percent hoped to move overseas while 15.8 percent were unsure if they would rather stay in Japan or live in another country. Researchers also noted that there was a gender gap in respondents, with women being 4 percent more interested in living overseas than men, especially when they had previous experiences of studying, working, or vacationing outside of Japan.[91] As marketing researcher Miura Atsushi has noted in his contemporary work on women's consumer cultures, travel was considered a stereotypically feminine interest during the high growth and bubble

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[89] Ibid, 130.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo [Aoyama Happy Research Institute], "Shourai, anata ha idou shitai desu ka?" [In the future, do you want to move?], accessed October 2016, http://www.asahigroup-holdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/201408/00515/.

periods.[92] More recently as well, in North America especially, young Japanese women dominate the foreign study market;[93] in the United States in the 1990s, as many as 70 percent of Japanese students were female.[94] Women interested in living abroad surveyed by Aoyama expressed, for instance, their strong interest in living life at their own pace overseas and their admiration for the kindness of people in other countries,[95] thus overwhelmingly citing life-style concerns rather than economic concerns as research with actual migrants corroborates.[96]

As the Aoyama study found, for both genders, past experience travelling was an essential component to their decision to live overseas. Tellingly, Yamashita has similarly argued that tourism and migration have been intrinsically linked in contemporary Japanese migrant flows, as long-stay tourists and students settle in their favored destination without giving up Japanese citizenship. This pattern also holds true for participants in this dissertation who all unanimously have held onto their Japanese citizenship, regardless of their length of stay in Canada. As Yamashita suggests: "They should perhaps be seen not as migrants but rather as long-staying tourists searching for their own 'real' selves."[97] This statement serves as a cautionary note for research on Japanese migration. Unlike many Nikkei past who settled on the shores of Western

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[92] Miura Atsushi, *Karyuu shakai dai 3 shou: Oyaji kei jyoshi no jidai* [Downstream Society 3: The Age of Old Geezer-Type Women] (Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho, 2011), 11.

[93] Despite women's dominance in youth migration, however, Japanese government outmigration statistics show that after 29 years of age, Japanese men become more likely to leave Japan than Japanese women. Statistics Japan, "Japanese Who Departed from Japan by Age Group (2013, 14)," accessed October 2016, http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/1431-02.htm.

[94] Hirosuke Hyodo, "The Era of Dual Life: The Shin-Issei, the Japanese Contemporary Migrants to the U.S.," *The Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 13, no. 1 (2013): http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol13/iss1/hyodo.html.

[95] Aoyama Happy Kenkyuujyo, "Shourai, anata ha idou shitai desu ka?"

[96] Following Machiko Sato, *Farewell to Nippon: Japanese Life style Migrants in Australia* (Melboune: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), researchers have long noted the importance of lifestyle to Japanese women's migration motivations. See for example: Karen Kelsky, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Tetsuo Mizukami, *The Sojourner Community: Japanese Migration and Residency in Australia* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006); Yuiko Fujita, *Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Youna Kim, *Transnational Migration, Media, and Identity of Asian Women: Diasporic Daughters* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[97] Yamashita, 2008, 7.

North America, for example, and formed deeply rooted communities only fractured by internment during the Second World War,[98] contemporary Japanese in Canada are temporary or long-term life-style migrants still strongly committed to their citizenship in Japan. Thus, while Japanese are not departing from their homeland in droves in response to mediatized messages, the centrality of self-building to travel is a relationship which holds both in the popular literature sources and the personal experiences of travelers. In subsequent chapters, the importance of these individual lifestyle choices and self-building to Japanese in Montreal will be examined.

*Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have turned to three prominent alternative life-path choices which appear across a variety of youth-directed media in Japan. Rural migration, freelancing or the non-career path, and travel and life overseas have all proliferated as major themes in such varied media as self-help literature, television dramas, films, and *shinsho*. Further, they all have been positioned convenient and useful ways out of the dismal future as part or full-time workers in corporate Japan, now ambivalently seen as the home of the final few treasured jobs with lifetime employment or as a soul-destroying commitment to a life of all work and no play. By looking at surveys and statistics cataloging Japanese youth opinions and behaviours, I have suggested that these new directions may not be quite as emancipatory, nor as widespread, as they first seem in the sources analyzed. While each of these paths are touted as ways of finding a more balanced life which prioritizes one's individual concerns and allows for (or even creates) the environment for personal growth,

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[98] See for example, Midge Ayukawa, *Hiroshima Immigrants in Canada 1891-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008) and Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese* America (New York: Oxford, 2005).

they each sidestep economic circumstances intrinsic to globalization and neo-liberal capital which could lead to greater precarity for the young people who have committed to them. In the following chapter, I introduce the mobility stories of Japanese who chose to settle in Montreal, Canada, with a careful eye to the economics behind transnational movement and the subjectivities produced in its wake.

**CHAPTER 3: WORLDS IN MOTION**

*Introduction*

When I first met Youji and his wife in a small cafe in downtown Montreal, he was 30 years old and had already lived almost half of his life outside of Japan. From childhood throughout his twenties, Youji had been on the move, travelling from country to country almost ceaselessly. Following his family, he first left Japan and his hometown of Hashima in Gifu prefecture behind in the mid-1990s as a 10-year-old elementary school student: "I didn't like Japanese education," he noted. The last two years of his primary education were spent in Banff, Alberta, Canada. He returned to Japan again for middle school and stayed until his second year of high school. At that point, he went abroad for a second time, to London, England, for one year. To finish his high school years, rather than go back to Gifu, he travelled back to Canada, this time to Burnaby, British Columbia.

Following his high school graduation, Youji then turned his gaze on the United States, enrolling in a community college in Seattle, Washington in 2004. He studied abroad in Italy for a year before returning to Seattle for two more years. Before choosing a university major, he headed to South Korea for two years to gain work experience and study the Korean language. After his sojourn in Korea, he moved to California in 2010 to study linguistics at the University of California at Los Angeles. Yet, by the time he had arrived in Montreal, he had ventured hesitantly into the trappings of adulthood in Japan by getting married and working as a *seishain*. This step, however, was short-lived as his wife decided to pursue her graduate work in Canada. In Quebec, Youji was jobless and not particularly interested in settling down; he told me that they were looking to move again in a couple of years. Thus, after experimenting with the stages of adulthood in his home

country, he returned to his overseas adventuring, content to retain the traditional restlessness of a young(er) person.

Both the uniqueness and universality of Youji's narrative are key to the analytical framework of this chapter. When Youji listed his different homes around the world one after another, he was not merely naming off the stamps in his passport; instead, he was constructing a version of himself in our interview space. Through his narration of moving from one place to the next with accumulated experiences and skills in tow, he presented himself as a global citizen, one who, importantly, only began to take shape upon leaving Hashima. The unsettled character of his life which included repeated upheavals and few examples of stable employment up until the interview reflect his desire for an extended youth. Although the destinations differed, many interviewees' narratives contained the same practice of selfhood creation rooted in the absence of traditional markers of adulthood. Next, reading deeply into these stories reveals what my interview partners did not openly share: transnationalism, and the flexible young subjectivities produced in its wake, are deeply indebted to the wealth accumulated by the previous generation. If the degree of mobility Youji has enjoyed in his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood was impressive, so, too, were the costs his family incurred in underwriting his travels. Examining Japanese Montrealers' "worlds in motion" required me to be attuned to both the narrative strategies and silences employed by my interview partners.

This chapter revolves around youth mobility and youth migration, following the starts and stops, ebbs and flows, of contemporary Japanese young people as they touch down in Montreal. In this, I conceive of mobility as both capable of reinforcing normative life-paths and privilege in Asia and a tool which allows youth to imagine otherwise. I argue that Montreal is not being imagined as a permanent destination, but rather as a nodal point in a web of inter- and trans-

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national mobility. A close examination of interviewees' personal migration narratives reveals two key themes that I will explore in this chapter: transnational subjectivity and class. Whereas the former is voiced, the latter remains silent. In the first section, I suggest that the transnational subjecthood narrated by my interview partners is intrinsically linked to their conceptions of youth and flexibility. In the second section, I draw on my narrators' life stories and recent studies on youth mobility to explore how transnational migration was central to self-making and intergenerational financial support helped finance Japanese youth's dreams of mobility. The freedom of movement also comes with the dependence on family. As a result, this dynamic draws the young into a web of family obligations and relationships that – in their hearts and minds – cement their home country as their final point of settlement. Thus, while movement begets more movement in these stories, paradoxically, Japan remains a constant touchpoint and, for many, the hoped-for eventual home in a story of circular migration.

My interview partners are united by their shared lived experiences of youth. Here, I draw on Etsuko Kato's work to push the definitional boundaries of the term youth in the Japanese context; rather than delimit the term with age, the author contends that it should be grounded in delayed experiences of traditional adulthood, like marriage, securing a career, and starting a family.[1] While my interviewees varied in age, they all arrived in Montreal in their 20s and 30s, sidestepping the usual pathway of adulthood in Japan. Similar to the Japanese writings on alternative life-paths in the previous chapter, my interviews demonstrated how going abroad functioned as a way of imagining otherwise and dislodging the traditional school-work (or school-

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[1] Etsuko Kato, "Self-Searching Migrants: Youth and Adulthood, Work and Holiday in the Lives of Japanese Temporary Residents in Canada and Australia," *Asian Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2013): 20-34. Robertson et. al note that the notion of extended youth, often grounded in Jeffrey Arnett's 'emerging adulthood' psychological theory, is currently gaining popularity in Asia, especially in middle and upper middle-class circles, rather than being already established as it is in the West. Shanthi Robertson, Yi' En Cheng & Brenda S. A. Yeoh, "Introduction: Mobile Aspirations? Youth Im/Mobilities in the Asia-Pacific," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 39 no.6 (2018): 614.

work-marriage) transition. As I suggest, migrants' mobility allowed them to extend the flexibility and instability of youth, which in turn became key to the transnational subjectivities that were formed through these life choices.

Yet, transnational mobility is not a possible or desirable choice for all young Japanese. In this, I build on Shanthi Robertson, Yi' En Cheng and Brenda S. A. Yeoh's work which sees mobility for Asian youth as both capable of reifying privilege and potentially transformative as a way to step off of prescribed life trajectories. [2] My interview partners' class backgrounds are key to understanding how their narratives can seemingly be so effortlessly mobile. Many of my participants initially left Japan with university degrees and full-time employment, designating them as winners in contemporary Japanese rhetoric. But, instead of continuing along this path, they used the money accumulated from their labor, as well as what appears to be substantial familial economic safety nets, to go overseas. When in Canada, several of my narrators seemed unfazed by their inability to obtain well-paying full-time work, preferring to remain "flexible" and able to visit Japan whenever they desired. The ability to engage with and enjoy the oft-touted freedom of a part-time work or student lifestyle paired with frequent travel is predicated on significant financial resources – a factor my narrators rarely acknowledged.

In these stories of extended youth and wealth, we can clearly see the importance of what Elizabeth Sinn calls nodes – multiple geographies travelled through by people as they make their ways through the world. Disrupting national mythologies and migration historiography which has prioritized a Point A to Point B framing of migration, Sinn urges us to consider the back and forth, coming and going, of migration. As she writes: "How different would migration maps look if,

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[2] "Mobility can reinscribe the normative markers of successful adulthood, or make them harder to reach, creating various frictions and suspensions. Yet mobility can also become a vehicle through which young people actively adjourn life-course expectations or aspire towards alternative routes and possibilities." Robertson, Cheng & Yeoh, "Introduction," 622.

instead of simply colouring Country A and Country B, we were to identify all the nodes, the 'in-between' places, through which migrants pass and in which they reside temporarily or settle for good after they leave home? Would this not result in a more nuanced, albeit messier, picture of migration?"[3] Heeding this call, this chapter holds that Montreal functions as one nodal point for young Japanese whose lives have already been dominated by mobility. While the interviews took place in Montreal, they also contain imagined futures elsewhere in the world, often back in their home country – a theme which we will return to throughout this thesis. For many Japanese, then, Montreal is not the final destination; rather, their stay in Quebec is but one stop in a mobile life. By considering that today's home may be tomorrow's point of departure, I hope to complicate nationalistic stories of safe Canadian harbors for the dispossessed and needy. In so doing, as Sinn suggests, I aim to highlight "the frequent transits and detours, zigzags and crisscrosses"[4] which characterize contemporary Japanese migration.

*Extended Youth and Mobility*

As this chapter holds, looking at Youji and other Japanese Montrealers' stories allows us to paint a clearer picture of contemporary Japanese migration to Canada. A key element of these stories is the importance of an extended young adulthood. In recent years, the analytical category of "youth" has expanded its reach in response to economic and socio-cultural shifts. With the preponderance of irregular work in the Global North and the increasing necessity of higher educational qualifications for securing a middle class income, the unsettled stage before home ownership, marriage, and childbirth continues to lengthen. In 2002, Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth

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[3] Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 9.
[4] Ibid.

Beck-Gernsheim famously argued that in contemporary post-industrial societies, the life-course has become more and more individualized: "The normal biography thus becomes the 'elective biography', the 'reflexive biography,' the 'do-it-yourself' biography."[5] In other words, the traditional markers of the life course, such as graduation, living alone, full-time work, marriage, and childbirth, are now being obtained by individuals in a non-linear fashion, and often far later than these milestones had been reached in their parents' and grandparents' generations. In Canada, for instance, federal statistics show that youth are postponing their transition to adulthood by living with their parents longer, extending their post-graduate education, and getting married and starting their families later.[6] In Japan, as the *shinsho* in previous chapters emphasized, with rising precarious employment, prolonged co-habitation with parents and low marriage and fertility rates, past notions of instability and flexibility of youth have come to represent greater percentages of the population.[7] Similarly, in Furuichi Noritoshi's influential book, *Zetsubou no Kuni* (2011), the author holds that the issues facing contemporary Japanese youth embody both individual identity and larger Japanese cultural patterns and problems.[8]

Reflecting the change in terminology and categorization of young people in Japan as well as the West, in Etsuko Kato's work on temporary residents in Canada and Australia, rejects using an age cut-off for her participants. Instead, she considers the "youth" she studies as "those who, regardless of their age, consider that their true life […] has not started yet, and consider themselves in a preparatory stage before they fully commit".[9] Kumiko Kawashima similarly sees Japanese

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[5] Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization* (London: Sage, 2002), 3.
[6] Vered Amit, "'Before I Settle Down': Youth Travel and Enduring Life Course Paradigms," *Anthropologica* 53, no. 1 (2011): 80-81.
[7] Misa Izuhara, "Life-Course Diversity, Housing Choices and Constraints for Women of the 'Lost' Generation in Japan," *Housing Studies* 30, no. 1 (2015): 61.
[8] Furuichi Noritoshi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamono tachi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011), 65.
[9] Etsuko Kato, "Self-Searching Migrants: Youth and Adulthood, Work and Holiday in the Lives of Japanese Temporary Residents in Canada and Australia," *Asian Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2013): 23.

migrants to Dalian, China in their late twenties to mid-thirties as youth in "a constant tug of war between the disciplining force of the [Japanese economic] transition regime and the migrants' hopes to lead a life as they desire."[10] Thus, the category of youth has come to stand-in for the many people in contemporary post-Fordist societies who have, for a variety of reasons, not "settled down" yet.[11]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many migrants whom I interviewed set out as young people. Like Youji, Yuichi, first left Japan as a child. Although he identified as a Tokyoite, Yuichi, aged forty-three at the time of our interview, spent much of his childhood and adolescence in South Korea and Singapore, where his father worked as a businessman. He "used to deal with the petroleum business," Yuichi explained.[12] His early years abroad were formative. He credited his time in South Korea and Singapore for the reason why he speaks English with such fluency. He subsequently enrolled at the Science University of Tokyo to study electronics to further his knowledge of his favourite instrument, the synthesizer, hoping to work as a sound designer for video games. His early mobility helped him achieve his goal on an international stage as his English skills helped him to land a job as a video game sound designer for Electronic Arts (EA) in Montreal after the EA office in Japan abruptly closed. After leaving his job for EA Canada with permanent residency in hand, Yuichi was able to return to create a more flexible, if financially unstable life for himself that allowed him to escape the obligations of a 9 to 5 working day. In Montreal, he focused on making music and building connections with people without worrying overly about money or what he ought to achieve in life. Although he told me that Quebec was "too

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[10] Kumiko Kawashima, "Longer-Term Consequences of 'Youth' Migration: Japanese Temporary Migrants in China and the Life Course," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 39, no. 6 (2018): 668.

[11] As Amit (2011) points out, although the boundaries of youth are argued to be in flux by scholars in a variety of disciplines, "adulthood" is viewed as both vague yet somehow immutable by researchers and their participants. The interview partners in the above two studies, for instance, often aspired to modern adult capitalist goals, such as home-ownership or marriage, but understood these things to be in some faraway undetermined future.

[12] Yuichi, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 23 November 2015.

slow and inefficient" for his tastes, at the same time, "people here in Montreal, have their own lives, and they enjoy life. There are so many good music opportunities here. Because Montreal is an immigrant city and has so many talented musicians." Still, he longed to live in Tokyo in some ways as well. In his early 40s, Yuichi's life was unsettled, flexible, and young-seeming, which was just the way he liked it.

As Yuichi explained, Japan is very much a well-oiled machine when it comes to life transitions. For university, he said, "Everything is automatic – after graduation, maybe [you] would work in a company. Like, I didn't think of anything before graduation." Similarly, he mused: "Tokyo is very efficient and smooth and it's like everything goes smoothly like a river. But, actually, this is a good thing and at the same time, a bad thing. I feel like I'[ve been] captured by something else sometimes…and wonder what is the [meaning] of [this kind of] life?" To deviate from this set structure, even in the extended instability of the post-bubble years, required migrants to reject the expected path.

Takahiro, aged 26, also stepped outside of the assigned path in Japan to go overseas. As a teenager enrolled in a high school international program, Takahiro jumped at the opportunity to study abroad. His first stay was in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada for ten months. Although the number of Japanese students studying abroad has increased in recent years, the vast majority stay under one month – in other words, not long enough to disrupt the flow of Japanese school life. [13] Takahiro's story was unique in two important respects: he had signed up for the international studies program in his high school and he was from Okinawa, where the vast majority of United States military bases are located. [14] In Okinawa, as Takahiro explained, there were only two

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[13] Erik Fritz and Junko Murao, "Problematizing the Goals of Study Abroad in Japan: Perspectives from the Students, Universities, and Government," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41, no.6 (2020): 519.

[14] While American and Japanese conservative media argue that the bases on Okinawa serve as a deterrent against China's power plays, Okinawans pay the price and have a strong history of anti-base activism which extends to the

"famous universities" which prompted him to leave the island to pursue higher education elsewhere: "if I was going to leave Okinawa, I thought, I'd like to have a more different experience and, since I was interested in [learning] lots of different languages, I thought it would be best for me to go to university in a foreign country."[15] In his international program, twenty to thirty percent of the classes were taught in English and many of his classmates studied abroad at the same time as him, all aided by the native English-speaking teachers at their high school who guided them.

Unlike his classmates who returned to Japan after having spent the school-year in Ottawa, Takahiro was keen to stay. He asked local residents about other cities in Canada that he could live in and was intrigued by their description of Montreal:

> From people in Ottawa, the info I got from people there, was that it was very carefree, that the buildings were old, both in the positive and negative meanings of old, like there were many buildings from the '60s and '70s, that the economy sucked, and that the streets were in disrepair. I didn't have a very good image of it! But, according to people from Ottawa, Montreal was a party city, and there was a great nightlife.

Takahiro signed up for CEGEP at John Abbott College in Montreal as soon as he finished his high school obligations in Japan. At 26, when I interviewed him, he was still in the city, after obtaining permanent residency in Canada and finishing a degree from an English university in Economics and French. He was working part-time at a farm and living alone, enjoying the freedom that Quebec offered. By contrast, work in Japan did not suit Takahiro's priorities: the complicated post-university job search, which requires waiting even after obtaining an unofficial offer, as well as expectations of working longer-term, clashed with his desire for flexibility. As he explained: "The reason why I want to live in Canada is that its comparatively easy to take vacation. Like, I think

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present day. Paul O'Shea, "Strategic Narratives and US Military Bases in Japan: How 'Deterrence' Makes the Marine Base on Okinawa 'Indispensable,'" *Media, War & Conflict* 12, no. 4 (2019): 450-467.
[15] Takahiro, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 10 November 2015.

Japan has more holiday days, but by law, here, you can take a week or two off when you like and I can take that time to go to Japan so…In Japan, though, it's harder to take vacation days so even if I really wanted to visit my friends in Canada, for example, it would be difficult to do so." Takahiro, like Yuichi, saw Montreal as a place where he can live an extended youth with limited long-term commitments, flexible work hours, and the ability to be mobile. In this way, Takahiro, Youji, and Yuichi stepped outside of the traditional and set salaryman life-path for Japanese men[16] and instead pursued youth and mobility overseas.

For my interviewees, the extension of youth came with the sense of freedom, flexibility, and fun. Youji and Takahiro described escaping a stifling hometown and relocating to Montreal for its nightlife as rewards for taking chances abroad. Both contrasted the exhilaration of an ongoing youth in Montreal and other global locales with the stressful and restrictive Japan they left behind. However, the emancipatory value of the West which interviewees wove into their narratives should be viewed with a critical eye. It is difficult to ascertain how much participants' vaunted flexible lifestyles were a result of choice or circumstance or both. For instance, although Youji and Takahiro framed their part-time employment as a conscious choice that allowed for a flexible lifestyle, Montreal's economic landscape does not, in fact, offer many opportunities for Japanese residents to secure stable, well-paying work. Youji, for example, had been in Montreal for six months with an undergraduate degree from UCLA, two years of work experience, and Japanese and English language skills in hand by the time we down for his interview, but had been unable to secure a job. Yet, rather than narrating this as a setback, Youji framed the experience of

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[16] This extension of youth, as especially noted in the men in my interviews, can be considered a rejection of Japan's hegemonic masculinity. As Reijiro Aoyama explains, "in the last two decades some Japanese men have begun to opt for a life overseas, embarking on non-normative life paths outside the strictures of masculinities most highly prized in Japan." Aoyama, "Introduction: Japanese Men and Their Quest for Well-Being Outside Japan," *Asian Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2015): 215.

unemployment as an opportunity. Thus, the hallmarks of an extended youth should be viewed as both a desire to live a more liberating life free of societal pressures, as well as a socioeconomic circumstance that shapes individual choices and possibilities. As the next section explores, while interviewees' extended youth was steeped in self-discovery and liberation from rigid life paths, their journeys depended on deeply rooted privileges accumulated by previous generations.

*Class and Mobility*

By and large, my narrators were reluctant to talk about class or to discuss their family's socioeconomic status. But, a foray into the rich literature on transnational migrants from East Asia reveals a predominant pattern of Japanese youth migration. As Hiroki Igarashi found in his study of Japanese women and children on short educational sojourns in Hawaii, "Middle-class and privileged East Asian families pursue global cultural capital [in the form of English language proficiency and experiences overseas] in an attempt to remain competitive."[17] Compared with other East Asians, Japanese are particularly interested in obtaining domestic cultural capital – i.e. cultural capital to be used in their home country of Japan – with their short or longer term transnational migration.[18]

In fact, Japanese Montrealers and other young education and lifestyle migrants, do not represent the elites from their home society; young people from Japan's highest class are able to buy into western cultural capital at home in the form of private language tutors and European and American brand goods. It is not necessary for them to diverge from the set life paths in Japan in an attempt to acquire a more cosmopolitan outlook. For relatively wealthy middle and upper

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Hiroki Igarashi & Saori Yamamoto, "The Transnational Negotiation of Selfhood, Motherhood and Wifehood: The Subjectivities of Japanese Women through Oyako-ryūgaku in Hawaii," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 23, no. 4 (2014): 455.

middle-class Japanese, however, going abroad can potentially unlock new career opportunities at home or overseas with sought-after English skills and foreign experiences.[19] Further, Japanese in Montreal are not from Japan's lower classes, unlike earlier generations of migrants to North America. Compared to the precariat who are the subject of many recent scholarly and popular non-fiction reviewed, Japanese migrants to Canada have the means to sojourn in a foreign country right after graduation from university, often with little or no work experience through which they could have built up savings. The funds sustaining them during their time abroad are often contributed by their parents and families. As Hirosuke Hyodo notes in his dissertation on Japanese New Yorkers, *ryugakusei* [students studying overseas] "come from middle- or upper-middle classes rather than exclusively from elite families. The boom can be seen as a reflection of the drastic growth of middle-class families in Japan in terms of their size relative to the entire population, of their incomes, and of their *kokusaika* [internationalization] consciousness."[20]

This combination of money and a global outlook among Japanese Montrealers is not a coincidence, but rather a reflection of postwar Japanese patterns of intergenerational wealth accumulation. The first generations after the Second World War benefitted from Japanese governments which provided generous pensions and expanded the possibilities of home ownership to working adults (who were almost exclusively men). As a result, many families were able to secure a strong foundation of monetary and land assets made possible by the social contract of wealth sharing and low interest borrowing. In the post-war social contract, parents were expected

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[19] Modifying Nana Oishi's category of lower middle class "adventurous women" migrants in Asia who seek new experiences to escape boredom at home and work jobs with limited career mobility, Atsuko Kawakami explains that young Japanese internationalist women seek "career potential" in western countries since they originally come from Japan's middle and upper middle class. See Oishi, *Women in Motion: Globalization, State Policies, and Labor Migration in Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) and Kawakami, "From an 'Internationalist Woman' to 'Just another Asian Immigrant': Transformation of Japanese Women's Self-Image before and after Permanent Settlement in a Western Country," *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009): 24.
[20] Hirosuke Hyodo, "'The Japanese New Yorkers': 'Adventurers in Adventureland' in Globalized Environments," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2012), 168.

to devote their energies to gendered work inside and outside the home,[21] while households accumulated wealth through full-time "permanent" employment – wealth which could be passed on to their children.[22] Although the West certainly held a universal appeal as a status symbol for these generations, for the most part, the active search for transnational cultural capital via study abroad programs or language learning was left to post-bubble youth. We can see these aspirations of a globalized lives in participants' life-paths. Youji and Yuichi both traveled abroad for schooling, while Takahiro was enrolled in an international English school in Okinawa. Put differently, my participants' ability to chase idealized versions of themselves cannot be disentangled from the intergenerational transfer of both assets and *akogare* for the West. While research on lifestyle migrants has been critiqued for its silence on economics, this chapter builds on the nascent body of work which demonstrates that the relative wealth of the mobile class should guide scholarly considerations of their life-paths and motivations.[23]

Although class and access to financial capital rarely appear as topics in my interviews, they are nevertheless significant factors in interviewees' narratives. Indeed, my narrators' omission of financial discussions does not suggest the absence of class as a significant theme, but, rather, normalizes the degree of financial comfort that underpins their ventures abroad. While my interview partners said little directly about their economic backgrounds, they offered glimpses of

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[21] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, "The Japanese Corporate Family: The Marital Gender Contract Facing New Challenges," *Journal of Family Issues* 40, no. 7 (2019): 836.

[22] Naohiro Ogawa, Andrew Mason, Amonthep Chawla, and Rikiya Matsukura, "Japan's Unprecedented Aging and Changing Intergenerational Transfers," in *The Economic Consequences of Demographic Change in East Asia*, ed. Takatoshi Ito and Andrew Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 151. Ogawa et al. show that over the 1984 to 2004 period, public pension transfers to the elderly increased while familial monetary contributions to elderly members decreased by 70 percent. By contrast, financial support from older to younger family members increased 34 percent over the same period.

[23] Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly, "From Lifestyle Migration to Lifestyle in Migration: Categories, Concepts, and Ways of Thinking," *Migration Studies* 4, no.1 (2016): 29-30. The idea of relative wealth is also helpful moving forward in this thesis to better understand how [Japanese] migrants who emerge from a globally advantageous standpoint can still be vulnerable and precarious in their host country [Canada] due to separate structural factors (racism, language laws, etc.).

their financial means through stories about their education, employment, and family histories. Thus, we must search for unstated markers of class, and the financial security it afforded, to understand what made my narrators' transnational pasts, presents, and imagined futures possible.

While Youji's transnational voyages began as a student, perhaps more so than any other interviewee who shared their trajectory, his stories of student life quietly gesture at the financial safety net that supported his globetrotting adventures.[24] Before setting out from Japan, Youji grew up in Gifu, a landlocked prefecture in the central Chubu region of Japan. Hashima, his hometown, was not only significant as the setting of his first ten years in life, but also served as a foil to the person he had become by the time of our interview. His reflections on Hashima revealed a strong disdain rooted in class. Youji described his hometown as "a very small town" where "there are many farmers and that's about it," a place that lacked the economic foundation for a satisfying life: "Most people work in a factory or as a farmer, or work for a café. There's not big companies in Hashima." Noting that he had no interest in ever living in Hashima again, Youji continued, "I don't think there are many [opportunities there]." When I asked him what he did not like about Hashima in particular, he answered: "Pretty much everything: food, culture, people." In Youji's narrative, the image of Hashima met its formidable foes at the time he turned ten years old: the schools beyond Japan's shores. Youji spent much of his educational life from elementary school to university studying in Canada, the United States, England, Italy, and South Korea.

Throughout his recollections of this period in his life, he made no mention of part-time jobs, his family's employment history as it related to the locales he resided, or anything else concerning the financial cost or sacrifice such relocations may have required. He neither discussed opportunity costs nor the burden of sending a student abroad. Yet, the reality is that tuition,

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[24] Youji, interview by Elizabeth Tabakow, Montreal, 2 March 2016.

transportation, housing, food, leisure, and other costs needed to be paid for by someone, whether that was a family member or Youji himself as a young adult pursuing higher education. Youji and his family might have struggled to make ends meet to ensure his globalized education would become a reality. However, his narrative did not revolve around this tension (if it existed at all) and instead focused on the fruits of someone's unnamed labour.[25] What Youji instead stressed was the contrast between an economically stilted rural hometown he left behind as a ten-year-old and the transnational destinations that lay beyond the countryside that he believed limited his potential.

At the time of our interview, Youji was unemployed, studying French, and hoping to find a job in the future. The social precarity of the interview-present, namely the necessity of learning a new language in his mid-30s, was not accompanied by the strain of economic precarity, despite him remaining jobless in Canada. Rather than sharing stories of financial hardship, Youji looked ahead to when his wife would finish her Master's degree, and imagined the next destination that lay beyond Montreal. Youji characterized his life as one on the move. His future, according to him, looked no different. This daydreaming about the next global locale, all the while being unemployed gestured towards a secure foundation that laid underneath Youji, one which had made possible his international forays in the first place. Wealth accumulated by an earlier generation was essential to send him outwards from Japan as a child. As an adult, he continued to withdraw funds from this generational bank that underwrote his life of mobility and travel.

My interview with Yumeko (20) also revealed the importance of a strong financial base for transnational migration.[26] Yumeko first left her hometown of Obihiro City, Hokkaido at 18 years old when she was accepted at Aoyama Gakuin, a prestigious private university in Omotesando,

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[25] A recent study of Japanese university students found that a key barrier to participation in study abroad programs is families' decreased ability to invest in international education. Akiyoshi Yonezawa, "Challenges of the Japanese Higher Education Amidst Population Decline," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 18, no. 1 (2020): 49.
[26] Yumeko, interview by Elizabeth Tabakow, Montreal, 2 December 2015.

Shibuya-ku, Tokyo. Relocating to the centrally located Minato-ku in 2014, she was driven by her interest in other cultures and languages to enroll in a law program with hopes becoming an immigration lawyer. Yumeko's desire to interact with other cultures and see the world outside prompted her to move to Japan's sprawling and bustling capital. When looking back on why she wanted to try living in Canada, she explained, "There are many reasons why I left Japan. For one thing, I love studying languages, but in Japan, even in Tokyo, the environment is not good for that…Also, I don't like Tokyo." Before long, Yumeko was on the move once again, this time to Montreal to pursue her passion in language and cultural education.

Even more so than Youji who was over a decade older than she was at the time of our interviews, Yumeko must have leaned on generational assets to make her internationalized life possible. Indeed, the timing of Yumeko's departures from both her hometown and Japan immediately after completing high school are significant in understanding the hidden importance of class in her narrative. While the typical transition between the end of high school and the start of university in Canada and the United States is separated by the summer months, Japan's different educational calendar leaves only a few weeks at the end of March and beginning of April for preparations. This forecloses the option of summer employment to help pay for tuition, textbooks, and housing the following semester.[27] With no mention of part-time work during her first semesters at Aoyama Gakuin, we can assume that her relocation to Montreal was made possible through a secure financial safety net. Yumeko's future plans also point to a globalized study and career path: "In the future, I want to work in Japan. First, overseas, I want to study immigration

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[27] Indeed, as Armstrong and colleagues note, Japanese families traditionally have borne the cost of their children's education which has caused considerable strain on households with the dramatic university tuition rise between the late 1970s and early 2000s. Shiro Armstrong, Lorraine Dearden, Masayuki Kobayashi, and Nobuko Nagase, "Student Loans in Japan: Current Problems and Possible Solutions," *Economics of Education Review* 71 (2019): 122.

and immigration law. Then, I want to return to Japan and work in that field." Here too, the back and forth between geographies located on opposite sides of the globe come with the aspirations reflecting a global outlook, but without the details of how to finance such a lifestyle.

This section examined the hidden role of class in Japanese migrants' ability to create internationalized lives. For some, such as Yumeko who was still a university student when she came to Montreal, there would have been no opportunities to accumulate their own wealth given the academic and employment calendars in Japan. In Youji's case, who began his voyages abroad as a grade schooler, his family's wealth must have financed the trips back and forth between Japan and the outside world, as well as accommodations and tuition in the locales he stayed. Central to the financial safety net that interviewees may have relied on is the intergenerational transfer of wealth created during the high growth and bubble years. Thus, in addition to the tangible items packed away in suitcases destined for destinations abroad, the intangible baggage of financial security from an economically powerful nation cannot be overlooked.

*Conclusion*

As the stories of Youji and other Japanese whose stories have been featured this chapter attest to, Montreal was one location in a vast web of nodal points that connected the site of our interview to their Japanese hometowns and the locales in-between. As Elizabeth Sinn contends, migration is rarely the movement from point A to B; the geographies that migrants pass through are significant in understanding the broader picture of migration and help to destabilize nationalistic tropes of a utopic West standing opposed to the politically and economically unstable other. Certainly, my participants spoke at length about their complex motives for migration. However, these mobile lives were not only restricted to overseas migration. Although Yumeko has only lived in Japan and Canada, her move from a small city in Hokkaido to the booming Tokyo

metropolitan area for university was the one which whet her appetite for further travel, in this case, to Montreal. As for challenging nationalistic myths, many of my interviewees did not imagine their time in Canada as the final chapter in their migration stories, merely the one being written in the then-present. As I will further explore in Chapter 6, the limited economic opportunities my interviewees experienced in Montreal were woven into each narrative I recorded. And yet, there is still more that mobility can reveal. Building on Sinn's nodal points concept, these transnational adventures tell us about the places my narrators visited and the people they met along the way. These narratives also underscored how a sense of self was fashioned out of experiences of migration and mobility. The stopovers around the world and the experience of travelling served both as settings to their life stories and sites where selves, particularly ones with cultural, linguistic, and skills-based competencies, were made and remade.

My interviewees then made sense of their patchwork journeys by spotlighting the importance of experiences and skills accrued along the way, particularly language and cultural familiarity. Yuichi, for example, had learned English as a child as his family followed his father around Asia on business. These English skills allowed him to easily communicate with an EA Montreal Sound Director on an otherwise ill-fated business trip to Vancouver. Through these connections, he was able to rise above the closing of the EA Japan studio and move to Canada. In this way, his childhood mobility set the stage for his later mobility. Similarly, Youji's early foray away from the Japanese education system in Canada at the age of ten equipped him with linguistic and cultural competencies in North America. This gave him the option to go to the United States for university in English and return comfortably to Canada in his mid-twenties on his wife's behalf. The narrative progression of Yuichi and Youji's paths from their respective hometowns to nodal points scattered throughout Japan and beyond flows like a stack of falling dominoes; interviewees

arrange experiences of distant pasts to tumble into more recent ones, resulting in the weight of accumulated knowledge and skill forging the paths ahead. Rather than Montreal being the final domino, the city lies somewhere in the middle of their still evolving life-paths.

My interviewees' worlds in motion also all tie back, sooner or later, to Japan. Despite their global trajectories, Japan looms large in their visions of their life-paths. Takahiro, for example, went back to Okinawa almost every year. As he explained, "When I was a university student in Canada, I would return to Japan for summer vacation and for 3 or 4 months, I would work part-time… It was at my aunt's workplace. In the summer, there wasn't enough staff so she told me I could work there. It was a bowling alley, and I worked the cash register and entered customer's names in the computer."[28] Although Montreal was his home when we met and had been for all of his adult life, he still saw Japan in his long-term future, as well as his summer base. Yuichi spent much of his young life away from Japan but returned for university and his first steady job. Even though he enjoyed Montreal and harshly critiqued Japan's education system and housing market, he still saw his ideal as a split between Japan and Montreal. As Yumeko explained, while she did not enjoy living in Tokyo, her future as an immigration lawyer would undoubtedly lie in Japan. In this way, rather than using their current destination of Montreal as the jumping off point of conversation, my narrators cast their forever base – as the first and final destination of their otherwise transnational stories. Instead of a straight line of migration, the travels and transnational exploits of my narrators resembled a web of nodal points often tying back to Japan at the beginning, middle, and end.

In conclusion, the four migrants whose stories dominated this chapter tell us much about youth and mobility as well as the place of their home country in their life trajectories. Building on

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[28] Takahiro, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 10 November 2015.

the intellectual and popular culture currents of contemporary Japan in the previous chapters, we learn that the transnational alternative life paths chosen by many migrants to Montreal are an apt example of delayed adulthood, common in Japan as in other post-industrial places. At the same time, however, once young people's mobility gained traction, it often snowballed and stretched a one-time working holiday or study abroad session into a lifetime spent straddling many in-between places. Youji, Yuichi, Yumeko, and Takahiro's lives each involved multiple nodes or "homes" along the way, each experience adding skills and confidence which set the groundwork for further mobility. Yet, despite a youthful avoidance of domestic expectations, in the long run, Japan dominated their field of vision. Although these migrants' everyday life existed outside of the archipelago, their home country continually exerted a strong pull on their imagined futures. The lasting force of Japan on short and long-term Japanese sojourners to Montreal is a theme to which we will return throughout this thesis.

**CHAPTER 4: CONSUMING CANADA**

*Introduction*

When Aoki Setsuko arrived in Montreal in 1986, by her own account, she could speak neither English nor French. In order to receive a scholarship to study at McGill University, she needed to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a score above 550. She managed this by taking the test twice. It was split into three sections: reading, grammar, and listening. Although she did well on the reading and grammar sections, she mostly did not understand the listening comprehension questions. She thus came to North America with very little ability to engage with its inhabitants.[1]

Coming to Montreal was her first time overseas. Aoki was extremely nervous on the flight from Japan to Canada, and even more so since she had to transfer at Vancouver. When she finally landed at Montreal's airport, at nearly 2 a.m., the taxi driver could not understand her English instructions and she had to resort to writing her destination, the McGill University women's dormitory, on a piece of paper and passing it to him. Sitting in the taxi, "the shadows of the city in the humid stillness of a July night made her heart dance." As she wrote exuberantly: "Finally, the day had come! At long last, I had taken my longed for first step into 'the West.' It was all unknown, but in front of my very eyes, my new life was expanding outwards before me."[2]

The optimistic imagining of finding one's real self through a quest to the West has little to do with precise destinations, like Montreal. Instead, it has much to do with the history of uneven encounters between Japan and Western powers, from the nineteenth century onwards. After being forcibly opened for trade by Matthew Perry's black ships, Japan's elite prioritized western learning

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[1] Setsuko Aoki, *Fudangi no Montreal Annai* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1997), 15.
[2] Ibid, 16.

in their remaking of the country during the Meiji Restoration, utilizing *oyatoi gaikokujin* or foreign advisors from England, America, France, and Germany whose specialized knowledge was considered essential to modernization. In the Taisho period, symbols of the modern, such as the so-called "modern girl" with a short flapper-style dress and haircut, were consciously imported. After the Second World War and General Headquarters (American) occupation, learning English and American-style comforts such as owning one's own "my home" and colour television became the dream of the expanding middle class. Today still, despite Japan's status as the world's third largest economy, the idea of the West remains tied to domestic anxieties and cultural capital. Just as modernity was deemed to start in the West and move into Japan, leaving Japan to go to Europe, Oceania, or North America carries with it connotations of individual success and fulfilment. In this way, the narratives of my interview partners concerning their journey to Montreal and Canada always reflect the West writ large in Japanese discourse the home of the modern self-assured individual.

In the previous chapter, we saw that Montreal was one of many nodal points for Japanese a stop among many in distinctly transnational lives. Yet, such lifestyles, whether through travel or living abroad or enrolling in English language schools are not options open to all Japanese people. These choices remain limited to middle-and-upper class Japanese. Building on this, I suggest that my interviewees are viewing their trip from a Japanese perspective, which diverges from Canadian self-images of Canada as a welcoming land of liberal multiculturalism. Analysing Japanese popular discourse about Canada reveals that, in many ways, it is imagined as an empty placeholder to play out their search for self. Following Japanese media and information sources, Canada and Montreal are rendered as easily marketable consumables of cityscape and nature, shorn of their national and historical contexts, just as Japan has remained wedded to stereotypes of yellow peril,

militarist, economic enemy, yellow fever, and 'weird' pop cultural playground in Canadian minds. From my own experiences as a Montrealer in Japan, I have become accustomed to my hometown being synonymous with the Olympics or its failed baseball team, if at all, and Canada eliciting images of wilderness, winter, and perhaps a representative food item, like maple syrup. Indeed, although the representations of other countries in Japan often draw on their historical or geopolitical character, such as France being tied to high style and culture, or America being synonymous with their powerful military and Hollywood movies, Canada mostly draws a blank. This chapter, then, argues for a repositioning away from how Canada hopes to be viewed globally to an in-depth look at how prospective migrants from Japan actually imagine their future destination.

In this chapter, I seek to situate my interview partners' disinterest with their destination within the larger Japanese discourse about travel and destination, self and consumption. As Azuma Hiroki has suggested in the Japanese context, contemporary society has produced a database-ing effect where culture and place are reduced to consumable bites. [3] First, I consider the historiography dealing with Japanese migrants' views of the West. Following this, I examine Azuma's theory expounded in his book *Database Animals* to better understand how Canada is mediated for contemporary Japanese young people, like those who made their way to Montreal. Next, I listen in to how several of my interview partners viewed Montreal and Canada before they arrived. Finally, I explore how Canada is consumed across different Japanese media platforms: a manga and anime, a tourist commercial in anime form, a major guidebook, and a travel and study abroad agency website. As we will see, before setting foot on Canadian soil, Canada itself means

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[3] Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

little more to migrants than a snowy backdrop to their overseas sojourn. In this way, I emphasize again that Japanese contemporary migrant stories deviate from both Canadian historiography and national narratives; with little to no knowledge of Canadian claims to multiculturalism and liberal exceptionalism, Japanese mostly view Canada as a particularly nature-based overseas location to construct personalized long vacations.

*Historiography*

For this discussion, I am drawing on a body of work which considers meanings of the West to Japanese —especially young women— in the contemporary period. Karen Kelsky's seminal book, *Women on the Verge* (2001), remains the touchpoint for discussions of Japanese women's *akogare* [longing] for the Western world. As she writes, "to have *akogare* (to *akogareru*) is to long for something that is unattainable. *Akogare* exemplifies the relations of teacher-student, dominant-subordinate that have characterized Western/Japanese interactions in the modern era: the West is the desired, always unattainable, Other."[4] *Akogare* has emerged as a central concept when considering Japanese migrant "pull factors" as well. For example, Hirosuke Hyodo lists *akogare* for the West as a key characteristic of *shin-issei* [new first generation] New Yorkers.[5] Further, as Yuiko Fujita found in her study on Japanese young people's cultural migrations to New York and London, the West looms large in Japan's image of the rest of the world. In pre-migration world maps that her interview partners drew, Japan and the United States were often placed closer together than in typical Mercator projections. Although North America appeared on each

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[4] Karen Kelsky, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 26. Kelsky also tempers her definition by acknowledging that critiques of *akogare* from both the Left and Right, as well as from her own interview partners, are commonplace in Japan.
[5] Hirosuke Hyodo, "'The Japanese New Yorkers': 'Adventurers in Adventureland' in Globalized Environments," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2012), 14–15.

prospective migrant's map and Europe on nearly all of the maps, "most respondents omitted the Middle East and about one fourth…omitted Asia and Africa."[6] Across different disciplines,[7] discussions of short-term migrations, such as young Japanese people using working holiday visas, have cited rosy views of "the West" at large as key migration motivations.[8] As Keiron Bailey cautions, however, "In practice…it is impossible to define *akogare* in neutral or non-Occidentalist terms."[9] In this chapter, I examine seemingly Occidentalist tropes about Canada and Montreal, but diverge from the works above in my analysis. I suggest that these images of Canada do not merely represent Japanese *akogare* and the uneven power relations which this implies, but also emerge from a particular form of consumption and way of viewing the world which is common across postmodern and neo-liberal societies. As we have seen so far in this thesis, for mobile young Japanese, the goal of self-searching and a vague "alternative" to contemporary Japan is often prioritized over specific attachment to specific locales and their imagined values. Below, I turn to Japanese theorist Azuma Hiroki's discussion of consumption to help us understand why Canadian self-images and *akogare* are not the primary motivating factors for Japanese Montrealers.

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[6] Yuiko Fujita, *Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 41–45.

[7] Such as Asian studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, Tourism studies, Media studies, etc.

[8] See, for example, Kumiko Kawashima, "Japanese Working-Holiday Makers in Australia and their Relationship to the Japanese Labour Market," *Asian Studies* 34 (2010): 267–286; Youna Kim, *Transnational Migration, Media, and Identity of Asian Women: Diasporic Daughters* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Huong T. Bui & Hugh C. Wilkins, "The Mobility of Young Japanese: The Travel–Migration Nexus," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 33, no. 5 (2016): 581–596.

[9] Keiron Bailey, "*Akogare,* Ideology, and 'Charisma Man' Mythology: Reflections on ethnographic research in English language schools in Japan," *Gender, Place and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2007): 593.

*Database Animals: A New Type of Consumer*

   To Azuma Hiroki, Japan of the 1980s and beyond is a postmodern society characterized by the decline of grand narratives.[10] Drawing on Jean-Francois Lyotard, he explains that modernity was characterized by various systems, such as the nation-state, which organized citizens into a unified social group. As he holds, "in contrast, in post-modernity the grand narratives break down and the cohesion of the social entirety rapidly weakens." In Japan, this breaking point occurred in the 1970s when high growth ended, the Oil Shocks began, and other social upheavals came to the fore, such as the United Red Army Incident where a radical leftist group took hostages in 1972.[11] These grand narratives, Azuma argues, have fragmented into small narratives due to shifts in consumption, such as the proliferation of subcultures.[12] He calls this new way of understanding the world the database model.[13]

   In the database model, people organize the world through metaphorical databases where traits are sorted and systematized. Using popular culture as an example, Azuma explains that consumers can find and combine their favourite characteristics and storylines to create personalized content for themselves. Because there is no grand narrative or authentic inner layer of the database system, derivative works (simulacra), such as *doujinshi* [fanzines], can flourish. In this way, images and narratives are separated from their producers and contexts, and consumers can create their own fantasies by mixing and matching: "independently and without relation to an

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[10] Although the main subjects of Azuma's work are *otaku*, Japanese fanatical consumers, his database theory is instructive in understanding post-modern consumption in general. As he writes, "I absolutely do not perceive the emergence of *otaku* culture as a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. Rather, I think that it should be grasped as one manifestation in Japan of a grand trend toward the post-modernization of culture that began in the middle of the twentieth century." Azuma, *Otaku*, 10.

[11] The violent climax of Japan's radical leftist student movements came in the winter of 1972 when five armed members of the United Red Army took a hostage inside a lodge near Karuizawa, Nagano, leading to a 10-day standoff with police. "The Asama-Sanso Incident," *50 Years of NHK Television*, accessed October 2018, http://www.nhk.or.jp/digitalmuseum/nhk50years_en/history/p16/index.html

[12] Azuma, *Otaku*, 28.

[13] Ibid, 31.

original narrative, consumers in the 1990s consumed only such fragmentary illustrations or settings."[14] Yet, although there is room for individual expression, corporate and multi-national media networks use the database to corral consumers into particular lines of consumption and their accompanying affective terrain.

More broadly, instead of relying on shared narratives and concepts, in the post-modern world, individuals search for meaning by consuming bites of culture pulled from an abstract database of ideas and images severed from history, context, and narrative. The joy of consuming is the allure of each particular trait rather than how they all fit together. As I suggest, when Japanese see Canada as a potential place to visit or live in, they are not connecting to Canada as a real place with a unique history and culture per se. Rather, they are drawing on the few images abounding in Japanese popular media as a backdrop to their personal journeys of leaving Japan, learning languages, or opening up their worldviews. In the next section, we will explore some of the images which form Japanese consumers' database for Canada, first from my interview partners and then from the media itself.

*Imagining Canada: Interviewee Reflections*

"I didn't really have a strong image of Canada [before coming]. Like, perhaps only the red maple leaf flag and it being next to America or sort of close with America. I think that the average Japanese person wouldn't have much of an image of Canada at all." [15] (Interview with Yumeko, 2015)

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[14] Ibid, 36.
[15] Yumeko, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 2 December 2015.

"Before I planned [to come here] a year ago, I definitely didn't know that a place called Montreal existed. When I thought of Canada, it would be of Vancouver or Toronto …When I heard about it, I thought, 'what could be so different [about Montreal compared to those cities]?' I really didn't have any idea except that it was a small island."[16] (Interview with Hikaru, 2015)

When Yumeko (20) and Hikaru (21) first arrived in Montreal in 2015, they were stepping into an unknown world. Moving overseas was not the first major life change in Yumeko and Hikaru's lives. Yumeko, as we saw in the previous chapter, grew up in a small northern Japanese city far from the capital where, she explained, depopulation and a rapidly aging citizenry made the economy look bleak. Hikaru's hometown is Naha, the capital of Japan's southernmost island prefecture of Okinawa, which suffers from economic dependence on the many American military bases nearby and some of Japan's lowest wages. Both women had successfully applied for admission to major universities in Tokyo and held dreams of working with foreign populations in Japan, either to provide legal or diplomatic services. Yet, despite their interest in stepping out onto the global stage, neither had any firm impressions of Canada or Montreal before researching study abroad destinations.

In fact, Hikaru had long harboured a yearning to go abroad. However, Canada was not the site she had set her sights on. As she explained, "from elementary school, I yearned for France. I always talked about France, and I especially loved Marie-Antoinette! She's the kind of princess that little girls dream of! I loved her so much, I [poured over] her history, movies about her, books about her, manga about her…I looked at these things so much." So, when she decided to study abroad, France was, of course, her dream destination: "First, honestly, I wanted to go to France,

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[16] Hikaru, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 7 December 2015.

but now [2015], France has become dangerous[17] and I still couldn't speak French fluently. So, when my study abroad agency told me that I could learn both [English and French] in Montreal, Canada, I [decided to go for it]." Before being directed to Montreal by her agent, Canada was not really on her radar. "When I heard about it, I thought, 'what could be so different [about Montreal compared to other Canadian cities]?"

The lack of knowledge of Montreal and Canada was not restricted to Japanese with little experience outside Japan. Even Maiko (28), who had lived in the United States for many years and was studying in a psychology PhD program at Concordia University, professed to know little about her current adopted city before setting foot there: "I didn't know anything about Montreal. I didn't know anything about the French culture. I didn't know until I actually [went and] searched for it, like, when I started looking at what [this place] is. I [only] knew there was the Olympics in the 1970s or 60s in Montreal. That's all I knew about Montreal!" Unlike Yumeko and Hikaru who had previously only left Japan for a few months, Maiko grew up in a suburb of Tokyo and her family had strong ties to North America. Her grandparents made a point of hosting Americans in their home in Japan and one of her aunts had pursued education and work in the United States. As she explained: "My aunt has been in a pioneer in studying abroad and international work. So, she, my aunt, did study abroad when she was in high school, and then my grandparents were [being a] host family back in the day, thirty years ago, which was very rare. At that time, some people didn't even like Americans, but my grandparents took in a lot of American students in exchange for my aunt going and studying in the US" Following her aunt's example, Maiko herself also attended

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[17] Many interview partners mentioned that France had become "dangerous" in their minds in the mid-2010s due to fears of terrorism following several attacks in 2015 and 2016. Between the 2015 and 2016 tourist season alone, Japanese tourism to France dropped 46.5 percent, the largest decrease among all visitors. Jess McHugh, "Paris Has Lost $846 Million in Tourism Revenue So Far This Year," *Travel & Leisure*, August 27, 2016, https://www.travelandleisure.com/travel-tips/paris-terror-tourism.

high school and university in the States for several years before returning to Japan briefly to work as a research assistant outside of Tokyo. Here, we also see how class underpins the possibility of a transnational life. As Maiko herself admits, few Japanese people were relocating to the West in her aunt's generation. This connection between Japan and the US was one only achievable for families of favorable economic standing.

Maiko was inspired by her aunt to learn English and study overseas in the United States. When she looked into graduate programs, she was not deterred by the fact that Concordia University was in Canada, but she was not particularly motivated either. She told me, "I didn't think Canada would be that different from the U.S. so I didn't have many expectations." Upon reflection, she noted that Montreal had not been on her radar at all even though she was living not so far away: "Even after living in the eastern U.S. for six years, I didn't know anything about Canada! I'd never been to Canada except Whistler to ski... That was all I knew about Canada. Even [though] McGill [University] is called the 'Harvard of Canada' or whatever, none of my Americans knew McGill!"[18] Class mediated Maiko's limited Canadian frame of reference; the only place she had visited personally was a posh ski resort in British Columbia.

Another recent migrant on a working holiday visa who I interviewed was Asami (22). She grew up in the Fussa suburb of Tokyo which houses an American military base. As she explained to me, "compared to other cities [in Japan], there is a lot more collaboration between foreigners and Japanese [in Fussa]. A famous place is 165 street, what we call 'American Street,' which is kind of like a boundary between Fussa and the base. The most famous food is the "Fussa Burger" a hamburger." Living in Fussa encouraged Asami to look outside Japan when considering her future options; she eventually chose to study International Relations at university. At university,

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[18] Maiko, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 17 February 2016.

she participated in a study abroad program which placed her in Seattle, Washington for six months, a fun experience: "That encouraged me to try and look outside of my own little world," she confided. As for moving away for longer, Asami told me: "[I wanted to move overseas because] I was interested in broadening my outlook, learning how to speak English, and finding friends from many different places."

Canada and Montreal were not destinations that she had long been dreaming of; instead, she took the advice of her university professor's friend in Montreal who suggested she come to Canada. She was perhaps the most dismissive of my queries on what she had thought of Canada and her newly adopted city before arriving: "I didn't have [an image of Montreal because] Montreal is not famous in Japan... My image [of Canada before arriving was of] tons of nature, maple syrup, and bears." [19]

The women above admitted to knowing little about Montreal or even Canada before arriving. The imagery which emerged from our interviews were of the vastness of Canada's nature, the maple leaf and maple products, and the Olympics for Montreal specifically. As we will see, these representations, with little contextual information surrounding them, repeat across Japanese popular media forming a database for prospective migrants to draw on. Further, my narrators did not imagine coming to Canada specifically, but rather hoped to go "overseas," which in this case functions as a code word for the desired West,[20] and hone their (usually linguistic) skills before returning to Japan. Montreal, for these migrants, mattered only so much as the city helped them become better, more international versions of themselves. Japanese discourse about Canada and

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[19] Asami, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 1 December 2015.
[20] As Yuiko Fujita explains, while the West is central to young Japanese people's conceptions of overseas [*kaigai*], even the West itself is split into two distinct kanji compounds and imaginaries, *seiyou* 西洋 which implicates Europe and the Old World, and *oubei* 欧米 which brings to mind the contemporary world and America. Fujita, 40–41.

Montreal cannot provide a more realistic vision of their destination; similar to the images offered by my interview partners above, tropes of the natural world abound that are divorced from political, historical, and cultural contexts. In the following section, I examine different Japanese media sources – manga, anime, guidebooks, and travel agency websites – to see how Canada is consumed by prospective migrants, like the young women above.

*The Forgettable Canada-san: Mediated Canada in Japanese Popular Culture*

One particularly popular Japanese representation of the West in the late 2010s, when many of my interview partners first came to Canada, is *Hetalia*.[21] *Hetalia* was first written as an amateur web gag manga by Himaruya Hidekaz, who was attending art school in New York City. It is a comedic take on world history, with a focus on World Wars One and Two, where countries are personified by cute young boys and international relations are parodied through personal relationships. In Japan, *Hetalia* was first discovered by female netizens and was subsequently published by Gentosha Comics and turned into an anime series and film. In the late 2000s, it was the top original work sampled by young Japanese women to create derivative doujinshi [fanzines] for sale.[22] *Hetalia* and its sequels are a convenient example of the commodification of the national in the contemporary world. For instance, main character Italy is lovable and childish and obsessed with pasta, America is clad in a military outfit and loudly proclaims he is the world's hero, whereas Japan rarely states his own opinions openly and speaks in formal Japanese. Below, I will examine Canada-san, the anthropomorphized version of Canada in the original *Hetalia* web comic.

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[21] The title is a humorous contraction of the Japanese words, "hetare" [incompetent/lazy/good-for-nothing] and "Itaria" [Italy].

[22] Toshio Miyake, "Doing Occidentalism in Contemporary Japan: Nation Anthropomorphism and Sexualized Parody in Axis Powers Hetalia," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 12 (2013), accessed September 2018, https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/436/392.

Canada-san is America's almost identical-looking brother and owner of a polar bear, Kumajiro. Canada-san's main personality trait is how forgettable he seems to be; the other countries always neglect to include him, ask who he is, or act confused when he asserts his independence. A major punch line concerning Canada-san is that his pet bear, Kumajiro, does not remember him even though Canada-san is his owner: he responds to all of Canada-san's comments and complaints with "who are you, again?" When the G8 countries meet, a skit which repeats itself throughout the manga and anime, the other seven countries repeatedly forget that Canada-san is absent. In one skit, Canada-san is running late while the major powers debate who could be missing when the room seems complete. In another, Canada-san is present, but is being restrained by Russia, representing Canada and Russia's friction over territorial boundaries.

Canada-san's lack of memorable attributes is further parodied in a panel where Canada-san complains to Kumajiro that no one ever remembers him. The bear suggests he change his appearance to be more obviously Canadian. After affixing a maple leaf to his head, Canada-san pays a visit to America-san and starts to explain that with the maple leaf, they can no longer be confused. Mid-sentence, however, America replaces the maple leaf with an American flag. This storyline demonstrates the other main trait of the Canada character in *Hetalia* – that he is often confused with America. The case of mistaken identity plays out especially dramatically in skits involving Cuba, who is friendly to Canada-san, but hostile to America. Cuba always sees Canada-san first as America, however, and attacks him, despite Canada-san's cries of "maple!" to distinguish himself from America.[23] Of course, the irony lost on Japanese audiences here is that

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[23] Himaruya Hidekaz, "Tobikose! Canada san" [Jump Over! Canada], accessed May 2018, http://www.geocities.jp/himaruya/cnd.html.

Canadians' own self-images often revolve around being different from America, as in Molson's popular "I am Canadian" commercials from March 2000.[24]

Hetalia's Canada character is an exaggerated representation of how present-day Japanese think about Canada: nature, maple syrup or maple leaves, and America's similar next-door neighbour. In addition, perhaps the most salient trait is the lack of a strong image altogether. Overall, it demonstrates that Japanese largely do not have a sense of Canada as a lived space or a historical and political entity. Besides Canada's close relationship with the United States, Canada's role in the world is not common knowledge. Secondly, Hetalia's Canada-san character, one in a cast of many stereotyped and personified nation-states, verily demonstrates a trend towards Azuma's new type of consumer.

Another interesting recent exemplar of Azuma's theory comes from Canada Theatre, the Japan branch of the Canadian crown corporation, Destination Canada. The anime produced for their winter 2017 campaign demonstrates how a company can "read up" (in Azuma's terms) on the traits which speak to certain populations and produce content which aligns with these desires. On their webpage, Destination Canada explain that their "campaigns are targeted to reflect individual market conditions and traveller interests" in ten countries.[25] On the market research page for Japan, they note that "natural attractions and the Northern Lights rate as the top activities on the wish list of Japanese tourists in Canada" and "the majority of Japanese visitors included Ontario, British Columbia or Alberta as part of their travel itinerary."[26]

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[24] CBC Digital Archives, "I.AM. CANADIAN by Molson," accessed May 2018, www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/i-am-canadian-by-molson.

[25] Destination Canada, "Who We Are," accessed March 2018, https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/about-us

[26] Ibid, "Market Background: Japan," accessed March 2018, https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/markets/japan.

This is reflected in the short anime produced by CoMix Wave Films, the studio behind the 2017 animated film, *Kimi no na wa* [Your Name],[27] for Canada Theatre's winter 2017 campaign. The 30-second anime titled *Atatakai, fuyu Canada* [Canada – Warm in Winter] is aimed at Japanese millennial audiences and promotes "the heartwarming" and "unique" experiences to be had in Canadian winters.[28] The video follows two young adults, Yuya and his girlfriend Sasaki, around popular Canadian sites for Japanese tourists: Banff, the bubbles on Abraham Lake, the Rocky Mountains, Vancouver, Niagara Falls, Toronto, and the Northern Lights.[29] Three themes emerge from this short. First, there is a focus on the breathtaking natural beauty of western Canada, seen in shots of the sites above drawn in spectacular detail. Next, is the friendliness of Canada – perhaps the very warmth suggested in the title – encapsulated by a helpful Canadian man of a similar age to the protagonists who helps Sasaki recover with a smile and thumbs up when she almost falls while skating. Finally, of note is that, like my interview partners' reflections above, the film's presentation of Canada goes no further East than Toronto. *Atatakai, fuyu Canada* is effective because it is beautifully animated and draws on the locations that prospective Japanese consumers are interested in. Through its protagonists, it also sells Canada as a backdrop to a certain kind of personal and emotive experience desired by young Japanese. The anime combines traits that Japanese know and respond to about Canada – western Canada's natural beauty, the northern lights, and Toronto and Vancouver's cityscapes – with the romance of a young couple on vacation from their responsibilities in Japan.

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[27] *Kimi no na ha* became the highest grossing animated film worldwide of all time. "*Your Name* is the Highest Grossing Anime Film Worldwide, and it Deserves to Be," https://kotaku.com/your-name-is-the-highest-grossing-anime-worldwide-and-1791278393

[28] Canada Kankoukyoku [Canadian Tourism Commission], "Fuyu Campaign 2017 'Atatakai, Fuyu Canada,'" accessed April 2018, https://www.canada.jp/news/post-18241/.

[29] Ibid, "Atatakai, Fuyu Canada," accessed April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a822uufNGlw.

These same tropes about Canada are replayed over and over across Japanese popular discourse. But, perhaps out of all representations, they are most noticeable and problematic in travel guides. As video producer and travel writer Takashiro Tsuyoshi explains, the content of overseas vacations for young Japanese has shifted in recent years. Youth no longer have the income or interest to go on the stylized package deals to Europe and North America, following the recommendations of guidebooks, tour guides, and travel agencies which emphasize the fanciest hotels and poshest restaurants. Eschewing the package deals that had characterized an earlier era of travel where the tourist industry and elite establishments aided each other through mutual promotion, young people are searching for cheap airplane tickets on the internet and orchestrating their trips solo. These trips and sojourns, like travel to Montreal for many of my interview partners, revolve around self-development and improving skillsets with cultural capital in Japan, such as language abilities. By circumventing the set trip course and putting time into organizing their travels, they are able to individualize their travel experiences and make overseas vacations work for them.[30]

Unlike the English-language Lonely Planet series, Japanese guidebooks, as Takashiro suggests, have missed this shift of travelling priorities. He asserts that the major guidebook series in Japan, such as *Chikyuu no aruikikata* or *Rurubu* which I will examine below, fail Japanese consumers by not offering enough historical and contextual information about destinations and by pushing irrelevant and overpriced locales over ones which might better suit the needs of consumers. One reason for this, he argues, is that the writers often have never even been to the overseas locations they are writing about and certainly have never lived in them. As a result, the image presented does not capture the necessities of daily life as a tourist or traveller in the area

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[30] Takashiro Tsuyoshi, *Survival jidai no kaigai ryokou jyutsu* [How to travel overseas in the survival age] (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2009).

profiled. Using Barcelona as an example, Takashiro shows that Japanese tourists following these travel guides would arrive for lunch when restaurants are closed for a siesta, be shocked when they are greeted in Catalan rather than Spanish and use the Spanish for "good night" at 8 o'clock in the evening when they should be using "good afternoon."[31]

Despite these drawbacks for Japanese travelers, as several studies have found, guidebooks are far and above the most popular source of information, both before and during their trips.[32] The excessive natural world focus in guidebooks to Canada only encourages young Japanese to view the country as a perfect backdrop to discover a new, freer self. Shiho Satsuka explains in her book, *Nature in Translation*, that Lost Generation youth were drawn to visiting Canada precisely because the country has become synonymous with wilderness in Japanese publications. As she writes of one of her interview partners: "Satomi simultaneously 'escaped' from the company and the country. She looked to Canada as the ideal place for finding herself; with its vast natural landscape and its image as a frontier land, Canada seemed to be the place where she could free herself from these old social bonds and ties."[33] As I will explain, Japanese guidebooks speak in broad strokes when dealing with Canada and Montreal. Yet, when the tropes from guidebooks are combined with those in other media sources, such as *Hetalia*'s Canada-san and the *Atatakai, fuyu Canada* commercial, what Azuma would term the database for Canada takes shape.

The cover of *Rurubu*'s Canada guide for 2006 is like a collage of nature scenes. The bottom corners showcase red and orange fall trees while the centre is taken up by a shimmering turquoise lake flanked by evergreens in front of towering snow-capped mountains. In the sky above the

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[31] Ibid, 31–34.
[32] See, for example: Sachiko Nishimura, Robert Waryszak, and Brian King, "The Use and Perceived Usefulness of Information Sources among Japanese Overseas Tourists," *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 6, no.4 (2006): 293.
[33] Shiho Satsuka, *Nature in Translation: Japanese Tourism Encounters the Canadian Rockies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 41–42.

mountains, the colours blur to mimic the aurora borealis. Around and below the large red lettering for Canada readers encounter more photographic evidence of the power of Canada's wilderness in the form of animals, like a polar bear, a moose, and various horses, and outdoor sports, like dogsledding and white-water rafting. Small pictures of cityscapes are confined to the left-hand side of the page while Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica earns a cover shot, however inconspicuous. The largest writing on the busy page waxes poetically on Canada's scenic beauty: "Towards the Colourful Land: An Interwoven Tapestry of Beautiful Mountain Chains and Rivers."[34]

In the guidebook, *Rurubu* also profiles Canada's "Dynamic Nature", featuring the Canadian Rockies, the Maple Road, and Prince Edward Island (of particular interest to Japanese because of the popularity of Anne of Green Gables)[35] and "Refined Cities", Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. Despite the seemingly egalitarian spread, however, the more detailed city guides tell a different story with sixteen pages devoted to Vancouver, six for Toronto, and six for Montreal. Further, more than half of guidebook itself focuses on the rural over the urban, profiling Niagara Falls for eight pages, Prince Edward Island for six pages, and the northern lights for four pages, with extra attention paid to the Rockies which occupy about thirty pages.[36] Clearly, to the Rurubu staff, the Canada that Japanese are looking for is largely composed of the wilderness exclusive to the west of the country.

The Canadian wilderness produced in *Rurubu* offers us a microcosm of what Canada (and the West more generally) means in the eyes of sojourning Japanese. The lakes, mountains, rivers, and Northern Lights appear as untouched examples of Canadian nature ready to be explored. Dog-sledding through the country's unforgiving northern tundra and rafting down a one of Canada's

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[34] Rurubu, *Canada* (Tokyo: JTB Publishing, 2012).
[35] Ibid, 6–7.
[36] Ibid, 8–9.

many treacherous rivers are scripted as adventures wherein the individual overcomes the natural world. In a similar way, the West is often viewed as a blank slate where Japanese people with financial means have the opportunity to remake themselves. In both cases, Canada is represented as an empty space that can serve as a site for self-discovery. Of course, the seeming freedom of the wild unknown is more manicured than it appears to be. Treks are carefully planned through terrain which has been shaped by human activity for millennia. Nature does not exist in the untouched way it is presented in guidebooks like *Rurubu*. Indigenous people as well are completely absent from this imagery. Instead, this presentation of the Canadian landscape provides a stunning backdrop for people to act out their desires, whether it be to best a mountainous ascent or destress from the societal pressures they left back in Japan.

Turning to the urban sections of the guidebook, the Montreal pages depict the city as an architectural beauty with a Paris-like flavour. As a backdrop to visitor's own adventures, the city looks appealing. Essential information about Montreal as a life space, though, is absent from the guidebook as is contextual information that would prove useful tourists to the city: immigration and multiculturalism, for instance, play no part in the Montreal on the guidebook's pages. Unlike in Takashiro's Barcelona guides, *Rurubu* does include a language cheat sheet with both English and French on it. Yet, the tagline above Montreal's introduction page pitches the metropolis not as a francophone centre, but instead as "a romantic ancient city" where "the colour of France remains." Indeed, although they guidebook notes that Montreal is the largest city where French is spoken outside of Paris, its explanation of the "Paris of North America" catchphrase is decidedly past tense; for example, Old Montreal in particular is described as a place where "French architecture and French culture's historical presence can be markedly felt."[37] *Rurubu*'s suggested

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[37] Ibid, 108.

model course also steers clear of the modern and urban with a focus on the old-world architecture of the churches and cathedrals, and the natural beauty of Mont Royal Park, especially come the Fall when the leaves turn.[38] While two of the six pages are devoted exclusively to Old Montreal,[39] even the guide to Ville Marie/downtown is populated by the city's museums and religious architecture, like the Mary Queen of the World cathedral, rounded out by small write-ups on shopping on Sainte-Catherine, Sherbrooke, and Crescent streets and several malls in the underground city, such as the Eaton Center.[40] Despite describing Montreal as an "sophisticated city with a love of music and art" and highlighting its nightlife on the Refined Cities page, popular haunts for young Montrealers, such as the Southwest, the Plateau, and the Mile-End, are not mentioned in *Rurubu* Canada. Much like the wilderness described above, the urban terrain portrayed in *Rurubu* is largely devoid of the rhythms of 21st century life and instead constructs spaces frozen in romanticized bygone eras that never really existed. Capturing the lived realities of Montreal are less important than providing potential travellers with an enticing fantasy world where the potential for consumption and self-making collide. And, again, the imagined audience is a relatively small one which can afford to fly to the other side of the world to dabble in the pleasures of the Old World and untamed wild.

Beyond popular media and guidebooks, Canada can also be consumed via Japanese travel agencies which organize study and work abroad programs for young people. Agencies function in an in-between space, as cultural translators of all things Canadian so that sojourners can focus on their goals of self-improvement and adventure: they set up language schools, jobs, and accommodations, such as home-stay families, for their clients. According to my narrators, travel

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[38] Ibid, 109.
[39] Ibid, 110–111.
[40] Ibid, 112–113.

agencies have provided them with detailed information suggesting in what city to live for their time abroad and what schools to study at. Upon arrival, some agencies even pick up new migrants from the airport and brought them to their accommodations. For instance, a short-term study abroad trip to Montreal using *Arukikata* T & E [Globetrotter T & E] agency[41] in the summer of 2018 includes a placement in a home-stay family with three meals a day, registration and class fees at the Culture, Language, Connections private language school, flights from major centers in Japan (Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Sapporo, and Fukuoka) to Montreal and back home, 24-hour-a-day telephone support throughout transit, and a pickup at Trudeau International Airport upon arrival.[42] In short, agencies and their staff mediate the Montreal and Canadian experiences for Japanese with the financial means and ability to temporarily step away from social, familial, and work responsibilities. The website of the Japanese-Canadian study abroad agency, *Brand New Way,* was cited as a key resource by many of my interview partners.

The home page of *Brand New Way* lists the Canadian cities the agency operates in: Victoria, Vancouver, Kelowna, Calgary, Winnipeg, London, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec, and Halifax as well as Montreal, and highlights three main points which differentiate the agency from other similar ones. For Montreal, the agency provides a drop-down menu with the following options. First, there is General Information, including history, climate, basic statistics, access/public transportation, and miscellaneous data, such as languages spoken, safety, and famous Montrealers.[43] Next, is Tourist Information, including major tourist spots in the city and its environs.[44] This is followed by Lifestyle Information, including shopping for clothes, sundry

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[41] *Chikyuu no Arukikata*, the parent company of this agency, is of the biggest names in published travel materials in Japanese.

[42] Arukikata T & E, "Culture & Language Connections Tanki Ryuugaku Program," [Culture & Language Connections Short-Term Study Abroad Program], *Seikou Suru Ryuugaku* [Successful Study Abroad], accessed October 2018, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/tour/p/CA/d18301/.

[43] Brand New Way, "General Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/general.html

[44] Brand New Way, "Travel Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/travel.html

goods, and groceries, with an emphasis on Asian products, and very brief sections on finding a job, home, and volunteer opportunities.[45] Study Abroad Information, the most extensive section, has categorizations of schools based on a variety of criteria such as class sizes.[46] They also have a section on Service Information, introducing the agency's services, staff, and space.[47] Finally, *Brand New Way* provides a list of important contacts associated with government offices, such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada; public transportation and tourism, such as VIA rail; general lifestyle needs, such as major Canadian banks; and portal sites in English and Japanese, such as the Montreal Japanese job hunting and information site, "From-Montreal"[48] as well as a page detailing upcoming Events and Seminars.[49]

Overall, the site provides prospective migrants with detailed information unavailable in Japanese print materials with a particular focus on the agency's speciality of study abroad help. The Montreal pitched on this website is cultured, open to foreign students, and above all, accessible for Japanese native speakers with limited knowledge of English or French. In other words, *Brand New Way* provides a platform for would-be migrants, such as my interview partners, in search of the ever-elusive cultural capital of the West. The *Brand New Way* website is especially effective at presenting Montreal as knowable and homey to their Japanese audience while also providing much useful information otherwise inaccessible, and notably not available in other Japanese representations of Canada. For example, the agency suggests which parts of the city to avoid at night for safety reasons,[50] and provides the addresses of reasonably-priced places to buy fruits and vegetables, such as the Jean-Talon Market and Asian grocery stores, including Japanese and

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[45] Brand New Way, "Life Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/life.html
[46] Brand New Way, "School," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/school/montreal/index.html
[47] Brand New Way, "Service Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/service.html
[48] Brand New Way, "Contact Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/link.html
[49] Brand New Way, "Event & Seminar," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/service/event/montreal.html
[50] Brand New Way, "General Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/general.html

Korean stores on Sainte-Catherine Street West between Atwater and Guy-Concordia metro stations.[51] In this way, the website functions as a demonstration of the agency's professional knowledge; by peppering the more easy-to-find information, such as major tourist destinations, with specifically Japanese commentary on the city and its spaces, a sense of familiarity and support, essential for sojourners with few ties here, radiates from *Brand New Way*'s web pages.

Compared to the popular cultural representations of Canada, or those in the guidebooks, the Montreal which emerges from the *Brand New Way* website comes closer to the actual city which migrants will set foot in when they arrive. Of course, the agency is hoping to encourage prospective sojourners to choose Montreal so they are presenting a generally rosy picture. For instance, despite the proliferation of the French language on signboards, it is recommended to learn English in the city because of its firmly established Anglophone environment. Yet, the agency also lets migrants know that it is difficult to find work without French language skills, leaving only few options available such as waitressing, working the kitchen in Japanese restaurants, or offering seasonal tours for Japanese visitors to the city.[52] In this way, agencies act as in-betweens, connecting migrants more concretely with their destinations and providing more detail than the database from popular cultural products provide about Canada and Montreal.

*Conclusion*

The Canada consumed by Japanese, then, is a patchwork of tropes which repeat across media sources. Yet, as Azuma cautions, this is not only a Japanese phenomenon. Instead, this form of consumption characterizes many post-industrial societies. Drawing on the database for a

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[51] Brand New Way, "Life Info," accessed January 2017, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/life.html
[52] Brand New Way, "Life Info," accessed October 2018, http://www.bnwjp.com/montreal/life.html

particular country, young people imagine themselves as global travellers, building new lives with different flags as the backdrops. Japanese young people who decide to come to Canada, like the women whom I interviewed in Montreal, often know little about their destination before arriving. Rather, they combine the vague traits which they associate with Canada and create an image of the country that serves a specific purpose in their life stories: Canada and Montreal are attractive but contextually empty stand-ins for a wished-for overseas adventure. As a result of these consumption patterns, migrants do not really know the real personality of the place they are arriving to. Fresh off a plane or megabus, the thrill of a new life and new self can overwhelm any anxieties. When the fairy dust lifts, however, the Canada consumed in Japanese media products is nowhere to be found. Instead, as we will see in the next chapter, migrants must come to terms with daily life in a city quite different from the one they had imagined.

Although Canadian popular self-images often focus on peaceful multiculturalism and triumphant immigrant arrival stories, young Japanese project their own unique ambitions and dreams onto Canada before arriving and are often shocked and concerned by some of the very things that Canada and Montreal are ostensibly famous for, such as the French language and the preponderance of immigrants. Just as Japan is often seen simultaneously as a pre-industrial land with a samurai spirit, as an economic power dotted with a robotic and futuristic cityscape, and as the still suspicious emperor-worshipping enemy by westerners, the Canada in Japanese consumer products is a weaker twin of the United States, populated largely by white people, blessed with a powerful natural beauty uncomplicated by tar sands, indigenous land rights battles, and depopulating rural areas. When migrants take the first step in their journey across the ocean by setting foot in Montreal, hazy imaginings make for a first few months filled with unexpected hurdles and disappointments. For many, in the end, Canada seems comfortable for a long stay, but

Japan's pull is far stronger and more insistent. The following chapter, then, explores how the shared and limited geography of the city, as well as the language of entrepreneurial self-improvement, influence the narrated selves of Japanese migrants navigating the unknown city.

**CHAPTER 5: SPACES, SELF-MAKING, & STORYTELLING**

*Introduction*

It's 3:55 pm and I'm taking the elevator upstairs to a language school in Notre-Dame-de-Grace. I have been taking Japanese classes there for a few years at this point and am used to the routine: remove my boots at the door and slip on plastic slippers, be greeted casually in Japanese as Rika, the administrative assistant, continues her conversation with one of the Japanese teachers, and round the corner into the open area with long tables set up where the Tea Time, or language exchange, is taking place every week. Although the language school offers the chance to practice French, English or Spanish for free on other days, I always attend on Tuesdays for Japanese, this time with my partner in tow. As I write both of our names on an attendance sheet, I scan the room to get a sense of the dynamics for today. There are a few new faces – probably Japanese women around my age who just started taking classes at the language school or were referred by friends – but otherwise the crowd looks similar. I sit at the far corner of the longest table next to a PhD student from the Middle East who came to practice Japanese for his biology research, and the leader of Tea Time, one of my interview partners, Yumeko. As is often the case, two Quebecois men in their early thirties sit at the other long table flanked by the recent arrivals. Although they both come to the exchange regularly, they are not so much here to practice language as to find a Japanese woman to be in a relationship with. This, they mentioned openly–albeit in French–to one of my male Japanese acquaintances who was sitting beside them a previous week. One is clearly more successful than the other at engaging with female attendees; every week, he leaves the exchange flanked by a different Japanese woman in her twenties. While we see each other every Tuesday without fail, neither speaks with me during Tea Time. I am the only white woman at

language exchange and periodically am escorted by my boyfriend who is learning Japanese. Also, as the only consistent attendee who shares both their cultural background and the Japanese skills to communicate with the women they are seeking, I am not an attractive partner for language practice.

After securing a chair, I walk over to a table near the washrooms where the hot water dispensers are displayed and make myself a cup of black tea. The room is filling up as I try to squeeze through people to make my way back to my seat. Halfway across the room, one of my acquaintances steps into my path and introduces me to Taka, a well-dressed Japanese man likely in his mid-thirties carrying a briefcase. His attire surprises me – at 4:00 pm on a Tuesday, Tea Time mostly attracts long-stay visitors, students, and freeters – and his attitude suits the more formal outfit. We chat for about two minutes, and I learn that he is an engineering professor teaching a semester at McGill. Suddenly, he stops speaking, seeming to appraise me. "Your Japanese is so much better than anyone else's here," he asserts, "Maybe we should practice together somewhere else?" I'm standing against a wall and he's leaning on a desk beside me, far into my personal space. I protest and gesture back towards my table, where my boyfriend is chatting with the other PhD candidate, insisting that my Japanese still needs a lot of work. When he continues undeterred, I finally state: "I'm sorry, but my boyfriend is over there so…" He sighs dramatically, and I make my exit, remembering once again why language exchange goes more smoothly for me with my partner present.

This day was not the first one where I had felt the unspoken power of gender and sexuality on Tea Time. A few weeks earlier, when I had first suggested that my partner join me, we were greeted by a chorus of shrieks when we walked into the open room. "It's *sensei* [teacher]!" one young Japanese woman I had never met gestured excitedly towards my boyfriend. It was

unsurprising that some language exchange participants would know him; the previous year, he had taught English at the same language school as a part-time job while studying towards his master's degree. Neither of us were prepared for what was shared with me next however. "They have a fan club," one of my interview partners, herself in her early twenties like the former students, explained. I laughed, and she chastised me, "I'm serious! Isn't he so *kakkoii* [hot]?" Realizing the awkwardness of the situation, I decided to quickly defuse it, "yeah, he is and he's my boyfriend." My interviewee, shocked, blushed furiously and ran over to the other girls while he and I uncomfortably found our seats. From then on, despite my constant presence at the exchange, I was never greeted by the other members of the fan club. That day, as well as many other times throughout the course of my presence at Tea Time, I was dramatically reminded of the sexual dynamics behind learning Japanese and English in Montreal. In a small community so tight it might be deemed a closed system, competence in cultural codes in both Japan and Canada can make or break your social position.

This chapter zooms in on the geographic and social world of Japanese Montreal. As my experience at Tea Time above implies, the city in the eyes of young Japanese migrants at times seems as small as a village. The rulebook that controls self-presentation, however, does not originate in the language school or even in the Japanese restaurants where many people work part-time in the kitchens. Instead, the new selves-in-the-making revolve around comparisons to Japan and other Japanese, and the Montreal experienced is largely one mediated by agencies from across the ocean. In this chapter, I turn to discourses of self-making in key spaces for the Japanese Montreal community, such as language schools and exchanges like the Tea Times that I attended throughout 2015 and 2016. I suggest that, as was evidenced in the stories of mobility explored in

the previous chapter, Japan looms large in migrant worlds and the stories they tell about themselves in Canada.

One way that I will explore this theme is through mental maps constructed by my interview partners. These maps, which are annotated with important locations in their everyday lives, demonstrate the often-shared social geography of Japanese people in Montreal and the role of Japan-based businesses in mediating migrants' experiences in Canada through their connections to Montreal host families, language schools and worksites (such as Japanese restaurants). As I suggest, Japanese travel and study abroad agencies in particular are curating the overseas experiences of young people, setting them on a safe and well-worn path which contrasts with rhetorical desires for adventure and individualism.

Looking to my interview sources provides further insight into how individual Japanese people understand their lives; in the second half of this chapter, I conduct a deep reading of Hisako's story, an interview featuring a Japanese woman aiming to create a new self in Montreal that is globalized, independent, and self-reliant. Just as tracing migrant cartographies can open up new meanings of selfhood, following the long narrative arc of a single interview can also reveal how individuals make sense of their pasts, presents, and futures. Yet, as I hold in this chapter, the limited spaces of in-situ community and lack of opportunity for more integration into Quebec society often lead to Japan continuing on as the primary referent of selfhood. In this dilemma, interracial relationships with (usually) white Canadian men and comparisons with other Japanese women at home or abroad become important vehicles of self-presentation in the community and the interview. Spaces such as Japanese Tea Time at language school become important sites to negotiate not merely a new language and culture, but also present a brand new self with sexual and cultural capital in Japan.

*Mapping & Narrating the Neo-Liberal Migrant*

  This chapter will first draw upon the Montreal maps annotated by my interview partners. Mental mapping, also referred to as mental sketch mapping, is a methodology often used in conjunction with interviews across a variety of disciplines. Mental mapping can be viewed as a physical representation of cognitive mapping, first defined by psychologist Edward Tolman in 1948 as how individuals think about and act on space.[1] As Chris Brennan-Horley explains, "Cognitive mapping describes the marriage between spatial and environmental cognition – the mental representation of spatial knowledges and the internal processes that imbue environments with meaning…mental mapping exercise[s are] a means for eliciting a physical manifestation of an individual's cognitive map, or graphical representations of place."[2] In his classic study, *Maps of Meaning*, Peter Jackson notes that maps "codify" knowledge and experience and symbolically represent it.[3] Getting individuals to draw or annotate a mental map can thus provide a window into how they understand and navigate spaces, and view the world around them; it can also reveal oppression embedded in the spatial realm or in maps themselves.[4] While in some research, participants are asked to draw particular spaces freehand, such as in Yuiko Fujita's *Cultural Migrants from Japan* study where migrants sketch their own world maps, others provide delineated "base" maps which interviewees then make their own.[5] For my study, I provided the migrants with whom I was meeting with maps which had country (a World map), prefecture (a map of Japan),

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[1] Jack Jen Gieseking, "Where We Go From Here: The Mental Sketch Mapping Method and its Analytical Components," *Qualitative Inquiry* 19, no. 9 (2013): 713.

[2] Chris Brennan-Horley, "Mental Mapping the 'Creative City,'" *Journal of Maps* 6, no. 1 (2010): 252.

[3] Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 1989/2012), 186.

[4] Norbert Gotz & Janne Holmen, "Introduction to the Theme Issue: 'Mental Maps: Geographical and Historical Perspectives*," Journal of Cultural Geography* 35, no. 2 (2018): 157.

[5] Yuiko Fujita, *Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

or borough (a map of Montreal) divisions and showed them my own annotated versions of these maps as an example.

This chapter focuses specifically on the Montreal maps where participants indicated in different colours places which were relevant to their everyday lives and quotidian trajectories. The resulting personalized mental maps offer a glimpse into the spaces which structure migrants' days in Montreal revealing the shared geography of their experience. By heeding their Japanese travel agencies' advice and following the pathways of other Japanese sojourners in Canada, the community's contours stay enclosed, as we saw at the language exchange above. This chapter thereby builds on the research above by exploring how mental maps can both challenge cartographic knowledge about a specific place and illuminate how space(s) reflect structural hurdles for contemporary migrants.

As Japanese arrive and settle in the spaces of the city, they also begin to engage in a new process of self-making across the ocean. In considering self-making, I first draw on historian Alexander Freund's work on oral history and subjectivity. In "Confessing Animals," Freund places the oral history interview within the longue durée context of the Western confessional encounter.[6] He concludes that in all confessionals, including the oral history interview, "the self is not revealed but made."[7] Rather than viewing oral history as a necessarily liberatory tool, he suggests further historicization of how the interview itself functions as an institution of self-making. Building on this, in his follow-up article, "Under Storytelling's Spell?" Freund historicizes the contemporary boom of storytelling and demonstrates its links to neo-liberal economics and selfhood production.[8]

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[6] Alexander Freund, "'Confessing Animals': Toward a Longue Duree History of the Oral History Interview," *Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014): 1–26.

[7] Ibid, 14.

[8] Alexander Freund, "Under Storytelling's Spell?: Oral History in a Neoliberal Age," *Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 96–132.

He writes that the emphasis on the individual in storytelling often leads to a narrative where the speaker is the hero who succeeds despite personal setbacks. Larger structural factors are left unexplained and unimportant in stories where individual will can seemingly triumph.[9] He cautions that oral history interviews can thus unwittingly prioritize the individual neo-liberal subject while skirting the social and economic constraints on interviewees' lives.

This chapter similarly argues that the narratives of Japanese Montrealers produced in the oral history interviews that I conducted bring out the self-reliant, mobile, and individualized characteristics of the speaker-protagonist. Young Japanese, like Hisako whom we meet later in this chapter, presented themselves using neo-liberal language of the independent protagonist striving against the world. Yet, I also complicate this image by noting an important push-and-pull in overseas Japanese women subjecthood: the focus on Japan and individual success needs to be viewed in the historical context of women's changing roles and pressures in their home country. In analyzing the convergence between how my interview partners self-present and the global language of neo-liberal success stories, I aim to further Freund's discussion of oral history's relationship with a particular mode of self-creation and expression. Overall, I suggest that Japanese migrant stories point to the importance of the extension of neo-liberal values across the social plane in East Asia, a trend which has been elucidated effectively by researchers of Korean migration.

The literature on East Asian migrant selfhoods and neo-liberalism takes Michel Foucault as its point of departure. Indeed, Freund's concerns with oral history and the production of a specific subjectivity has much in common with Foucauldian writing on neo-liberalism. Following

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[9] Ibid, 97. As Freund notes, this type of storytelling "is motivated by liberal beliefs in individual autonomy, freedom, and rights. Inadvertently, however, it supports neoliberal values of consumerism, competition, and free market solutions to all economic, social, and cultural problems."

Foucault, this literature shows how neo-liberal values have permeated social as well as economic fields and even shaped how individuals comprehend their own place in the world. As Foucault explained in his lectures in the late 1970s, in neo-liberal regimes, "government must not form a counterpoint or a screen, as it were, between society and economic processes. It has to intervene on society as such, in its fabric and its depth."[10] One way in which this is achieved is by encouraging the formation of a neo-liberal subject as "an entrepreneur of himself."[11] This transformation of subjectivity thereby allows neo-liberalism to conceptualize individuals as "human capital" and apply economic analyses and maxims to society at large.[12] For example, in this scheme, investing in education, such as by learning English, is not so much about fulfillment or pleasure, but making yourself more marketable in a relentless job market.[13]

In the East Asian context, researchers on Korean migrants to English-speaking countries have explored how the neo-liberal turn in Korea has permeated stories of migration.[14] For instance, as Kyong Yoon notes about Korean youth in Toronto, Canada, although they narrate themselves as "free subjects" creating individualized life courses for themselves, their stories reveal "a particular mode of subjectivity equipped with attributes to be constantly measured and compared by certain criteria of the neoliberal labour market."[15] Similarly, in an analysis of how the Korean press presented fluent English language learners, Joseph Sung-Yul Park found that being a

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[10] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*, 1978-1979, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008).

[11] Ibid, 225–226.

[12] Ibid, 227.

[13] Jim McGuigan, "The Neoliberal Self," *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 223–240.

[14] In a rare study centered on Japanese migrants which focuses on retirement lifestyle migrants to Southeast Asia, Mayumi Ono also draws links between viewing oneself in terms of neo-liberal priorities and lifestyle migration among older Japanese. Rather than fleeing away from something in Japan, Ono argues that her participants view their journeys as an individualized way for middle and upper class older people to actualize themselves. She explains that retirement migration is "stylized" and "commodified" by the migrants themselves who view their lifestyle migration to Malaysia as an essential step to researching their potential. Mayumi Ono, "Commodification of Lifestyle Migration: Japanese Retirees in Malaysia," *Mobilities* 10, no. 4 (2015): 609–627.

[15] Kyong Yoon, "Transnational Youth Mobility in the Neoliberal Economy of Experience," *Journal of Youth Studies* 17, no. 8 (2014): 1025.

proficient English speaker is seen as a promising individual enterprise leading to self-fulfillment. This sidesteps the reality that structural advantages, such as being able to study overseas due to familial wealth, play a large role in successful language acquisition.[16] In another study co-authored by Park and Adrienne Lo, the authors argue that English language learners who travel overseas are viewed as ideal neo-liberal subjects; living in the Anglosphere is seen as key to forging an unbeatable skillset in English, complete with 'native' pronunciation.[17]

This chapter aims to add to the limited research in the Japanese context on migrant selves under neo-liberalism by following the example of the Korea-based studies. As the maps and stories explored below demonstrate, neo-liberal language, such as valuing self-reliance and independence with little attention paid to structural support, has permeated ways of self-presentation for Japanese overseas migrants as well. Further, this chapter will combine an analysis of the neo-liberal lexicon utilized in migrant storytelling with attention paid to the spatial and structural experiences and limitations of their lives in North America which nuance their self-presentations as unobstructed global citizens. More specifically, I look to Montreal mental maps which highlight the roles of Japanese agencies in shaping migrant experiences of the city and draw close attention to the historical and structural factors at play in the stories that I heard, such as the changing and conflictual gender expectations for contemporary women in Japan.

*Mapping Montreal: A Shared & Limited Geography*

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[16] Joseph Sung-Yul Park, "Naturalization of Competence and the Neoliberal Subject: Success Stories of English Language Learning in the Korean Conservative Press," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2010): 24.
[17] Joseph Sung-Yul Park and Adrienne Lo, "Transnational South Korea as a Site for a Sociolinguistics of Globalization: Markets, Timescales, Neoliberalism," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 16, no. 2 (2012): 147–164.

One way into the lifeworlds of the young Japanese people in Montreal who are the centre of this study is through the maps that they annotated at the end of our interviews together. On the Montreal map, with the city boroughs, such as the South West and Westmount, already separated out and named, I asked each interview partner to identify places of resonance for them in four categories: a.) places they have lived and frequent with their families; b.) places where they commonly run errands or shop; c.) places where they go to have fun or hang out with friends; d.) and places where they have gone to school or work. As researchers have noted, this method "affords social science research […] another way of literally seeing and hearing participants' experiences that may go unrecorded if the studies of space and place rely solely on verbal interchange."[18] In other words, expressing in words how certain spaces matter can be challenging for both interviewer and interviewee, by encouraging new ways of communicating more closely attuned to the physical layout of the city, we can try to discover more nuanced relationships between places and people. Following theories of mental mapping outlined above, I suggest that the Montreal maps annotated in my interviews be considered a window into individual Japanese women's spatial sense of selves: what these maps reveal is a closed and limited geography whose contours have been curated by travel agencies across the sea.

A preliminary observation of the maps produced by my interview partners reveals the shared nature of the geography that dominates their daily lives. First, their places of residence, play, school, and work are largely scattered across the more English-speaking parts of the island of Montreal: Downtown, the Plateau, Notre-Dame-de-Grace (NDG), Westmount, and the West Island. Importantly, the interview partners who lived and ran errands more often in the predominantly Francophone parts of the greater Montreal area almost exclusively had

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[18] Gieseking, "Where We Go From Here," 722.

Francophone husbands or partners. Even then, however, if their homes were located on the Eastern more historically French sides of the island, their own quotidian trajectories often leaned to the West. This trend was consistent across the thirty maps I collected. As recent research on population segregation has demonstrated, English speakers in Montreal continue to be heavily clustered in the central and Western parts of the city.[19] Since many Japanese initially come to Montreal to learn English, perhaps it is unsurprising that they would be living, working, and playing in more Anglophone areas. This focus on English, as demonstrated by their residential and quotidian patterns noted in the maps, which was consistent even among Japanese permanent residents of Quebec, is unusual for immigrants to Montreal. Due to Quebec's immigration policies which favour French speakers, in 2011, four of the five top source countries for Quebec's immigrant population (Algeria, Morocco, France, and Haiti) were Francophone.[20] Yet, for Japanese, a central pattern which emerges from the mental maps is a tendency to live and work in anglophone areas. Language, then, emerges as an important variable in the limited geography presented by my interview partners.

Looking at Japanese migrant mental maps of Montreal also shows a more nuanced shared geography than merely the overlapping Anglophone areas where people live, play, and work. Instead, most maps include host family homes, language schools, and Japanese restaurants as prominent features of their Montreal.[21] In the 30 collected maps, for instance, fifteen included Japanese restaurants under the "school or work" colour category. Sometimes, the same person had worked at multiple Japanese food establishments, even if their tenure in Montreal was brief. For

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[19] Steven Farber, Antonio Paez, & Catherine Morency, "Activity Spaces and the Measurement of Clustering and Exposure: A Case Study of Linguistic Groups in Montreal," *Environment and Planning* A 44 (2012): 323.

[20] Brahim Boudarbat and Gilles Grenier, "Immigration in Quebec: Labour Market Integration and Contribution to Economic Growth," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 49, no. 2 (2017): 16.

[21] Although host family homes were not annotated in a different colour than their own private residences on the maps, by cross-referencing with the interviews, it became clear that most migrants spent at least their first month with a host family.

language schools, only nine of the thirty maps did not denote one of these educational venues; however, five of those nine were engaging in language study anyways at CEGEPs and universities. Similarly, six of the 30 worked at language schools according to their maps.[22]

Importantly, listening to migrant interviews shows that the host families, language schools, and workplaces they ended up in were chosen by their study or work abroad agencies or through consultation with Japanese-language sources while back at home. This shared geography of experience, then, seems to have its roots not in the physical spaces of the city, but across the ocean. In the following section, I suggest that the existence of these key places point to an important determinant in migrants' self-presentations both in the maps and in the interviews: Japanese migrants' Montreal is limited and the layout of their city is being mediated by Japan. In other words, for migrants living in Montreal, Quebec, the frame of reference and most valued point of comparison is not in the city itself, but back in Japan. But, as I caution below, the dominance of Japan in my interview partners' spatial experiences in Montreal is not merely a function of their home country's well-functioning tourist and overseas visitor businesses; instead, it points to a landscape for Japanese migrants that is lacking in physical community spaces and difficult to integrate into.

In order to understand the many overlapping locales on Japanese mental maps of Montreal, we need to examine how and why they entered host family, language school, and restaurant spaces. Here, I argue that Japanese study and work abroad agencies are performing the act of curating the spaces where young people are headed. In essence, agencies are shaping migrant experiences of spaces overseas in two interrelated ways. By embedding their clients into well-trodden pathways

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[22] A few others mentioned this in the interview, but did not denote the schools as workplaces on their maps. For example, although Minako worked at GEOS' Montreal office for five years when she first arrived in the city, she did not write it into her map. Minako, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 18 December 2015.

of the same host families, schools, and work sites that other Japanese have been placed in before them, agencies are simultaneously restricting the (spatial) possibilities available to youth far away from home.

A key concept in understanding the agency system is safety. Contextually, Japanese concerns with the safety of youth overseas partly has its roots in Japan's exceptionally low crime rate. In 2017, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that Japan's homicide rate, considered one of the best measures of a country's safety since murders are almost always reported to the police, was 0.2 percent – the lowest of all OECD countries.[23] Public order and crime were often cited by my interview partners as important factors affecting where they would go overseas. When asked why they (in conjunction with their agency) chose Canada, many interview partners responded that, unlike the United States and France, two other locations of particular interest, "*chian ga ii*" [Canada is safe and has good public order]. Hikaru, for example, a young Okinawan woman whom we will meet below, wanted to live in France, but felt it was far too dangerous so was encouraged by her agency to study French in Montreal instead.[24] Agencies attempt to limit the possibility of danger, as well as minimize potential confusion while relocating by guiding travellers through airports, new living situations, schools, and work. Yet, while agency curation provides youth with a sense of protection and support, their experiences on the ground become constrained by established pathways.

The agency-guided system of short-term stays for Japanese begins with choosing a visa type. The young people in my study almost all come to Montreal either on working holiday or student visas, with working holidays by far the most common. The choice of location, visa, and

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[23] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Better Life Index: Japan, accessed June 2019, http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/japan/.
[24] Hikaru, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, December 2015.

details of future life overseas are all organized before youth depart from Japan through consultations with their agency advisors. Agencies arrange their clients' pickup from the airport, place young people into host families to live with in the destination city for a set period of time (anywhere from two weeks to several months), prearrange registration in a language school for English and/or French learning and provide information on the type of jobs available in the location and how to get these jobs. Their information seminars in Japan also provide young people with contacts of others of similar ages and life circumstances who offer them further information concerning their on-the-ground experiences. In the overseas locale, clients can often have access to an agent in Japan through the internet or phone as well as in person for the agencies with Canadian branches. Finally, the detailed and animated agency websites were listed by most interview partners as key sources of information regarding their sojourn. These websites, explored below, offer further insight into why migrants presented similar key locations on their mental maps.

The websites of the agencies "*Last Resort*" and "*Chikyuu no Arukikata* [Globetrotters]" can be considered as case studies of how Montreal is being curated and mediated from afar by Japanese corporations. To begin, comparing Canada to the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe and Asia (such as the Philippines and Italy), "*Last Resort*" stresses its exceptional standard of education and special programs which allow students to improve their careers through study at language school: "It's the perfect environment for those who want to study hard and connect their study abroad experiences with their futures." They also note that Canadian English does not have a strong accent; thus, you can learn a clean and nice-sounding version of the language.[25] Similarly, "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*"'s website for

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[25] Last Resort, "Canada X Gogaku Ryuugaku," [Canada X Language School Study Abroad] accessed April 2019, https://www.lastresort.co.jp/study_abroad/country/ca/.

prospective Working Holiday Visa holders in Canada defines a young person who would be a perfect fit for Canada: a Free Spirit Brimming with Curiosity [*Koukishin Ousei na Jiyuuha*]. More specifically, organizations encourage applications by those who want to master English without an accent, want to experience both the city and the country, and enjoy winter sports to choose Canada as their destination.[26]

"*Last Resort*"'s page on Montreal focuses largely on the ability to learn French and English simultaneously; on the streets of Montreal, they tell prospective clients, you can practice using natural French in everyday life. Further, they claim that the combination of few Japanese in the city and the high volume of Canadians coming to study French offers a unique opportunity for migrants to meet and befriend local people.[27] Focusing less on student experiences and more on the city's international reputation, "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*" profiles Montreal as "the Paris of North America": a "bilingual town" with an underground city developed "to beat bad weather" and world class business, talent, culture, and politics.[28]

Home stays, a prominent section on "*Last Resort*"'s website, are recommended as an excellent way to interact with native Montrealers. Montreal home stay families are pitched as being "friendly" with "convenient" properties within an hour of downtown on public transportation. Further, "there are almost no families with strict rules [for home stay visitors] so they will usher you into a very relaxed environment."[29] "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*" also warns prospective clients

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[26] Chikyuu no Arukikata, "Canada no Working Holiday," [Working Holiday in Canada] accessed May 2019, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/working_holiday/canada/.

[27] Last Resort, "Montreal no Gogaku Ryuugaku Jijyou," [The Circumstances of Language School Study Abroad in Montreal] accessed April 2019, https://www.lastresort.co.jp/study_abroad/city/mon/.

[28] Chikyuu no Arukikata, "Montreal," accessed May 2019, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/working_holiday/canada/montreal/.

[29] Last Resort, "Montreal no Home Stay Jijyou," [The Circumstances of Home Stays in Montreal] accessed May 2019, https://www.lastresort.co.jp/home_stay/city/mon/.

that Montreal home stays can either be in majority French or English-speaking areas: "definitely do a thorough pre-investigation when you are deciding where to live!"[30]

In terms of language schools, "*Last Resort*" has a partnership with EC Montreal, a language school downtown. Backing up their claims in their general Montreal language study section, they note that the percentage of Japanese is only five percent and that there are no Japanese-speaking staff members at the school.[31] As a particularly large overseas study and work agency, "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*" has a partnership with three language schools in Montreal: International Language Schools of Canada (ILSC) in the Old Port, CLC (then in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, now downtown), and EC. While ILSC is touted as offering language courses in a global environment, they recommend CLC for its small class sizes and volunteer and activity opportunities. Like "*Last Resort*," "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*" promotes EC's "international" feel and student body with many Europeans and few Japanese.[32] Following a link on "*Last Resort*" for those going to Montreal on a working holiday visa rather than merely a student visa offers more insight into the maps produced by my interview partners. The most popular part-time jobs, they write, is working as a waitress or as part of the kitchen staff at Japanese restaurants.[33] "*Chikyuu no Arukikata*," however, sidesteps the difficulty of finding a non-Japanese job in the city. They only write that knowing French will be advantageous in your job search![34]

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[30] Chikyuu no Arukikata, "Canada Home Stay" [Home Stays in Canada], accessed May 2019, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/homestay/canada.html.

[31] Last Resort, "Montreal no Gogaku Ryuugaku Jijyou," [The Circumstances of Language School Study Abroad in Montreal] accessed April 2019, https://www.lastresort.co.jp/study_abroad/city/mon/.

[32] Chikyuu no Arukikata, "Montreal Ryuugaku Gogakugakkou Ichiran," [A Summary of Language Schools for Study Abroad in Montreal] accessed May 2019, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/online/2/ca5/160/.

[33] Last Resort, "Montreal no Wa Hori Jijyou," [The Circumstances of Working Holiday Visas in Montreal] accessed April 2019, https://www.lastresort.co.jp/wh/city/mon/.

[34] Chikyuu no Arukikata, "Montreal," accessed May 2019, https://www.studyabroad.co.jp/working_holiday/canada/montreal/.

Now, I turn to the mental maps and interviews of Japanese people in my study to zoom in on their on-the-ground interactions with the agency-curated city. One particularly vibrantly annotated map which encapsulates the trends outlined above was Rika's.[35] Rika came to Canada in her late twenties, aiming to expand her horizons and live her life to the fullest after tragically losing her best friend at a young age. Following the advice of the agency in Japan, "*Last Resort*," that she had used to plan her travels abroad, she decided on Canada rather than Oceania to avoid the abundance of Japanese women in their early twenties who lived in Australia and New Zealand.[36] First, Rika had made her way to Vancouver since flights back to Japan were quicker and cheaper than elsewhere in Canada. She also originally felt more comfortable there because "*Last Resort*" had an office on site. Yet, only four months in, she left her temporary home in Vancouver eager to try out Montreal's French flavor.

Rika quickly set down roots in the francophone city. For the first year that she lived in Montreal, 2006, she bounced between three homes with roommates in the Plateau (May and June), Verdun (July and August), and Pointe-Saint-Charles (September to January 2007).[37] From 2008, she lived for seven years with her Quebecois boyfriend at d'Iberville metro in the more Francophone area Villeray-Saint Michel-Parc Extension. Despite living in Villeray for many years, except for one Vietnamese restaurant that she enjoyed frequenting nearby her home, Rika's errands and places of leisure were all in the English-speaking areas of the city. For example, the eateries that she noted going to with friends were almost all in Ville-Marie (Downtown and Chinatown) or Notre-Dame-de-Grace/Cote-des-Neiges. Finally, she moved Notre-Dame-de-Grace (NDG) on the

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[35] All maps were annotated in the interview space, either before or after the recorded interview according to each interview partner's preference. Rika, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 2 February 2016.

[36] Indeed, in 2013, after the United States and China, Australia was home to the highest number of overseas Japanese, posting a sizable increase of about 3300 migrants between 2012 and 2013. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japanese Nationals Living Abroad," 2016.

[37] Her visa expired after eight months in Montreal so in the interim, between moving in to her home in Villeray in June 2008, she returned to Japan.

West side of the city, in 2013, where she still resided when I interviewed her at her workplace in the same district in 2016. As for work and school, Rika's map centred on language schools, such as CLC where she worked as an administrative assistant. The schools which she attended and workplaces that she commuted to were also all in the Central or West sides of the island except for her francization courses for permanent residency in Quebec which were held at College Rosemont in Rosemont-Petit-Patrie.

Hikaru, a young interview partner from Okinawa, Japan's most southernmost prefecture, was guided through her Working Holiday Visa by the agency *Brand New Way*.[38] Her love of French originally shaped her choice of university specialization and brought her to Montreal. Upon arriving, she could speak some English and French, although her French was far from fluent by her own account. In the city, she studied both English and French at BLI language school in Plateau Mont-Royal, ALI language school downtown, and Maison de l'amitié in the Plateau. She also worked at Yokato Yokabai and Bistro Isakaya. The agency that she used directed her to Montreal after she worried that France was becoming too dangerous. Before she arrived, the agency had provided her with "information about Canadian life, Canada's weather and temperatures, and other various topics." They also directed her to their very detailed website which explained life in Montreal. The day after she arrived, she was even provided with a "lifestyle tour" of the downtown area, which introduced her to the city. The guide also explained early on how to navigate aspects of the city which bewildered many of my interview partners: "When I first came, my agent explained to me how to buy tickets and ride the metro and stuff like that."

Generally, she credited her agency with making sure her arrival and settling in happened smoothly, but she still had to deal with the unexpected occasionally. The first moment of friction

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[38] Hikaru, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, December 2015.

occurred early: at the airport. Hikaru first arrived in July 2015. It was a long trip from her hometown to Montreal. As she explained: "I'm from Okinawa so first, I took a plane to Tokyo and then [another plane] to Toronto, and finally from Toronto to Montreal." She had never come to North America alone before and the transiting, especially within the city, made her anxious. She recounted to me: "When I arrived in Canada, I was alone, right? So, at first, my agent was going to pick me up in a car and bring me to my home stay. But, then, I ended up having to do it alone. I used a taxi, but I was very nervous."

Hikaru's map shows that she only lived in two places in Montreal: her first two months were with a home stay family and the subsequent months with a Japanese roommate. The home stay, for Hikaru and many other interview partners, is a liminal space: while its existence is controlled by the agencies in Japan, the on-the-ground realities are less regulated, requiring young people to come to terms with different cultural expectations. Hikaru's second moment of discomfort upon arriving was at her home stay when she "lived with a… family near Snowdon. The contract was for one month." Hikaru's careful and short explanation of what went wrong is telling both in what she expresses and what she omits: "The home stay [mother] was an immigrant and her meals didn't work for me so I got out of there after the month was over." Although Canada's self-image is linked to the trope of multiculturalism many of my narrators confided that they had expected Canada and Montreal to be mostly white. As Hikaru told me: "[An image that changed for me] upon living here, has to do with race and immigration. Actually, I [was surprised] that, in Canada or Montreal specifically, lots of people of different races – different immigrants – all live together which is something that I thought would be fraught with difficulties from my perspective in Japan."

For Japanese, the idea that one country is populated by one race is an enduring notion which entered Japan via Western colonial thought. By the post-war period, especially, most Japanese thought of their population as racially homogenous[39] despite the diversity that continues to exist in the form of naturalized Korean and Chinese as well as more recent Asian immigrant workers.[40] This way of thinking about nationhood and race is superimposed onto their new home, Canada. Adding to this, representations of Canada in Japan, both produced within Japan and by the Canadian government, elide the reality of multiculturalism and foreground the images of whiteness. By extension, before and soon after arriving to Montreal, white people were viewed as the "real" Canadians that young Japanese hoped to make friends with. Home stays, where Japanese often have to interact with Canadians of varying racial and cultural backgrounds, can trigger racist feelings in youth imagining North America as populated almost entirely by Caucasians. The multicultural makeup of Montreal, although noted by agencies in their websites, is not something most migrants expect nor is it originally deemed a pleasant surprise. Yet again, Hikaru's initial surprise and discomfort with Canada's multiculturalism point to how my interview partners' filtered their hopes and dreams through Japanese, not Canadian, media and culture.

Yuri, another of my interview partners who was in her late twenties when I interviewed her, only stayed in Montreal for one year – the duration of her working holiday visa. [41] "I just really wanted to study English," she explained to me, and "I wanted to experience a different culture from my own and meet with lots of different kinds of people while I'm still young." Before leaving Fukuoka, Japan, her hometown, Yuri had worked as a salesperson at Hankyu Department Store in

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[39] As sociologist Oguma Eiji argues, the idea of a racially homogenous Japan became especially widespread after the Second World War. Oguma, *A Geneaology of 'Japanese' Self-Images* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002).
[40] Apichai W. Shipper, *Fighting for Foreigners: Immigration and its Impact on Japanese Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
[41] Yuri, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 25 January 2016.

Hakata station, the largest rail hub in the city. As a result, she was able to interact with many people from outside Japan: "At my workplace, I had a chance to see foreigners and I became very interested in them [so I would say that] this was a major influence [on me]." To find information about going overseas and help her set up her temporary life in Montreal, Yuri relied on an agency, specifically, the office of *Working Holiday Kyoukai* [Working Holiday Association] in Fukuoka. They helped her purchase her airplane tickets and find a home stay family as well. After attending information seminars held by the agency and speaking with her advisor, Yuri decided on Montreal. "Canada was recommended to me by everyone," she said, "The English is very clear and it's safe." Montreal in particular came at the recommendation of both her advisor and a young woman acquaintance that she had met at an *izakaya* [pub] in Fukuoka: "My advisor said that Montreal was especially pretty and a girl I met at a bar had lived in Montreal for a while and she told me that it was a great place."

Like Rika, upon arriving to Montreal, she lived on the West side of the city in NDG with the home stay family- a Vietnamese mother and father and two boys. Given her short tenure in the city, her map was understandably sparser than Rika's. Yet, during that time, language schools and Japanese food establishments dominated her quotidian patterns. She studied English at both Upper Madison College (UMC), which is located downtown, and Bouchereau Lingua International (BLI), which is in the Plateau, and attended the Mundolingo language exchange. Although it did not appear on her map, I met her at CLC language school's Tea Time exchange in NDG, which she also occasionally frequented. Language schools and exchanges, she told me in our interview, were her most important site for making friends and acquaintances. Rather than making friends with Canadians, however, she bonded with other students from around the world who had come to learn English; for instance, her three closest international student friends were Brazilian,

Mexican, and Korean. The first language school was set up for her by her agency; it was relatively inexpensive and "since they had a Japanese-speaking counsellor, I felt more secure," she noted. In addition, after being introduced by Japanese friends, she worked part time at the restaurants Kabocha and Yokato Yokabai, both located in the Plateau. At both, despite having a bachelor's degree and much experience in sales, Yuri worked as a member of the kitchen staff, usually washing dishes.

With little access to native Canadians despite the claims of "*Last Resort*'s" website, Yuri had to rely on Japanese contacts to help her support herself for her sojourn. Besides the international student friends that she made, the Montreal that she experienced was resolutely Japanese. Her living and school circumstances had been pre-vetted by an agency in Japan and her work followed the path of other young Japanese around her. Hikaru, similarly, followed her agency's recommendations of language schools and changed her living situation from a home stay to a Japanese roommate when the cultural clash caused her too much anxiety. Yuri and Hikaru's spatial sense of self in Montreal, then, do not so much reflect the mentality of young women successfully internationalizing; what looks like liberty and adventure is actually a pathway constructed by Japanese industry. Indeed, it demonstrates the staying power of Japan in the spaces inhabited by migrants across the sea.

Rika, by contrast, has been in Montreal for ten years. Her self-presentation in the Montreal map shows how she has branched out more in the city, finding her personal favourite cafes and restaurants, and tracing her own paths from West to East and back again. And yet, within these favourite places, most are Japanese restaurants or businesses, such as Saiko, Furusato, and Shinji, which are all located in Ville-Marie borough. The vast majority of the rest are Asian: for instance, Chinese establishments, like Mr. Ma or Vietnamese restaurants, like Pho Lien. Most, as well, are

concentrated in the downtown area. Her workplaces also belie her trilingualism in English, French, and Japanese; at CLC, she conducts most of her administrative work in Japanese, and at Show Flex, she organizes and conducts seasonal tours of Montreal and its surrounding areas to Japanese visitors. The spatial world which Rika presents too, then, is still one which is dominated by interactions with other migrants from her home-country and its environs.

The shared and limited geography which emerges from maps, such as Yuri, Hikaru, and Rika's, is not so much a result of overzealous Japanese agencies and their reach into Canadian spaces as a testament to the difficulties of integration into Quebec society. One facet of Montreal's impermeability to migrants is due to their short-term outlook. Many Japanese, like Yuri and Hikaru, come to the city on a Working Holiday visa, which lasts one year. These sojourners do not imagine a future outside of those parameters. Yuri, for instance, expected to stay for the duration of her visa and, as she predicted, did not choose to extend her time in Canada past these limits. Her aims before arriving were to interact with more foreigners and improve her English skills; yet, since she was only planning on staying in Quebec for a limited time, she reasoned that her skillset in English could only allow for a manual labour job amongst other Japanese. The city served its purpose for her as a backdrop to her language study and allowed her the opportunity to make like-minded international friends with whom she could communicate in English. More integration into Quebec society was not in her plan and her maps communicates this fact.

Rika's story, however, points towards a more insidious reality: that racial and language discrimination caused doors to close for Japanese temporary and permanent migrants. As a recent study on racial microaggressions found, East and South Asian students feel deliberately excluded and avoided on Canadian university campuses. These students often report experiences of "microassault, microinsult, or microinvalidation," such as ridicule based on language proficiency

or accent or being told to go back to their home country.[42] In terms of employment too, studies have noted that while many immigrant women in Montreal are often highly skilled, they are only able to secure more stable employment after retraining in Canada.[43] This is especially evident with migrants such as Rika who are long-time residents of Canada and have linguistic proficiency. Unlike Yuri and Hikaru, Rika had no difficulty communicating in English or French after living ten years in Montreal. Her work experience in Japan was also for an international corporation, Walt Disney, but she had not been able to use this to her advantage in Canada. Further, although her decade in Montreal had contributed to her map being vibrant, it still largely reflected more anglophone enclaves with work experience centered on jobs procured through her own ethnic group. Employment difficulties such as these and related racial, cultural, and linguistic discrimination in Quebec will be the subject of the next chapter.

In the end, while Rika's map was among the most detailed and animated of all of my interview partners, the contours of the Montreal that she presented as well were prescribed by other Japanese. But, migrants' mental maps of Montreal were only one aspect of their self-presentation in the interview and community spaces. By listening carefully to Japanese Montrealers' stories, we can see that interviewees employ the same themes to create their selfhoods: they cast themselves as self-reliant, independent, and globalized. Yet, as I hold in the following section, the limited spatiality and integration explored above contribute to selfhoods which belie internationalism and instead draw upon Japan and other Japanese as their primary referents. Below, we will delve into the life story of Hisako, whose narrative demonstrates the push and pull of

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[42] Sara Houshmand, Lisa B. Spanierman, and Romin W. Tafarodi, "Excluded and Avoided: Racial Microaggressions Targeting Asian International Students in Canada," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 20, no. 3 (2010): 377–388.
[43] Marie-Therese Chicha, "The Deskilling of Highly Qualified Immigrant Women: A Matter of Degree?" *Our Diverse Cities* (2010): 73–77.

selves tied to Japan yet yearning for a more global identity. As I suggest, migrants' understandings of their lives in Montreal continue to be tied back to Japanese gendered scripts where neo-liberal values are sparring with post-war femininity in the form of the housewife figure. In this closed and transitory community, the desired selfhood and cultural capital has its roots not in the francophone and multicultural city that currently serves as the backdrop to their hopes and dreams; instead, it is a twelve-hour plane ride away in their home country.

*Self-Making and Storytelling*

Hisako's map was sparser than the ones profiled above. Hisako, an energetic woman in her forties who was working full-time in Montreal while raising her two children in Saint-Lazare, met me after work at a downtown cafe. [44] Compared to other interview partners, Hisako had been particularly open with me from the beginning even though I had never met her before. Our interview, which she insisted be conducted half in Japanese and half in English, flowed like a conversation; Hisako expressed surprise at how much she had to say about her life as an international migrant. [45] Indeed, the overall arc of her narrative, as well as the broader context of the map-making exercise, such as the moment of creation itself, offer a different window into Japanese migrants' self-making. This section turns to how Hisako exemplifies the self-reliant migrant, a subject who framed her ventures as an individualistic undertaking. As Christina Scharff writes: "Women, in particular young women, have been constructed as ideal neoliberal subjects. Public, media, and policy discourses have positioned young women as subjects of capacity who can lead responsible and self-managed lives through self-application and self-transformation."[46]

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[44] Hisako, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 25 November 2015.
[45] This is also unusual. Most interviewees chose to have our conversations exclusively in Japanese.
[46] Christina Scharff, "Gender and Neoliberalism: Young Women as Ideal Neoliberal Subjects," in *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*, ed. Simon Springer, Kean Birch, and Julie Mac Leavy (New York: Routledge, 2016), 217.

Jim McGuigan describes this ideal neo-liberal self as "competitive", "exceptionally self-reliant" and "rather indifferent to the fact that his or her predicament is shared by others."[47] In other words, in an interview context, the narrator becomes the hero of their own story. In the first part of this section, we examine how Hisako's journey was a feminist success story wrapped in the language of individual perseverance. Yet, as we will see later, Hisako's interview revealed the fragility of her hard-fought victories as the new world she described in Montreal carried many of the same gendered trappings and lack of fulfillment she desired to leave behind in Japan. Thus, like the participants we met in the first half of this chapter, Hisako's self-making was similarly rooted in the neo-liberal self, although this time with a feminist twist, as well as the expectations of a distant homeland.

Hisako began with a dire picture of life in Japan. Although she had found a full-time job at Nissan after university, it was not the kind of position she had hoped for. As she explained, "I would have preferred something more global, or something about [international] trade." Hisako's dissatisfaction with her work life was a common complaint of interviewees I spoke to and similarly functioned as a key impetus to travel the world. Despite the financial and employment stability of her job, she yearned for something different. As an English major in university, Hisako was already interested in the West writ large, but nevertheless chose to continue on the normalized Japanese life-path that followed graduation rather than take her chances abroad immediately. Instead of singling out a desire to immerse herself in Western culture, Hisako understood her decision to relocate from a different angle: "I was thinking of getting married around that time. But, in the end, I quit, [broke up with my partner], and didn't get married. And after that, my life changed in a lot of ways." Looking back on her decision to leave Japan, she remembered, "My friends and

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[47] Jim McGuigan, "The Neoliberal Self," *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 234–36.

family gave up on me and said, '*itterashai*!' [see you/take care!]. You see, it was around the time that everyone was starting to get married and they were like, 'Really, [you're leaving] now?'" Hisako knew her drive to move abroad ran counter to the social pressure to conform, a central feature of her narrative: "Everyone rigidly works all the time only thinking of other people. Instead of thinking of what you want to do and what you should do for yourself and your family, people only think about how [their life] will look to others. That's something I hate." The interviewee narrated a strong contrast between what was expected of her and what she ultimately chose to do. As Hisako's farewells marked the end of the first act of her story, the message was clear; rather than enduring an unfulfilling career, getting married, and living for the benefit of others, she began to free herself from the shackles in her life and looked outwards, first to Spain where she studied Spanish and flamenco dancing, and then to Montreal.

Hisako's first experiences in Montreal were challenging. As she recalled, "It was March when I first arrived in Canada so it was really cold…I saw a stop sign with French on it and thought, 'What?'" In this arrival story, Hisako presented two common Canadian tropes, Montreal's European flavour and Canada's wintery climate, but recast the typically positive characteristics into ones which foreshadowed the difficulties that laid ahead. Upon arriving at her homestay, her expectation of a white Canada were unsettled by her homestay mother: "[speaking in Japanese] They were black. [switches to English] I didn't think [they] would be my hosts. I thought hmmm… [switches to Japanese] you get it, right? That wasn't my idea of Canadians." The interviewee's limited knowledge of Canada's multicultural population demonstrated both a general lack of awareness of Canada outside of its databased characteristics and the equation of whiteness with the West, a construction with a long history rooted in white supremacy. In addition to these hurdles, she also received a ticket for using student bus fare without the proper identification and felt unsafe

living alone in a basement apartment as intoxicated Montrealers frequently peeked in her window. While the details and themes differed, Hisako's reflections on Montreal in the early days paralleled those of her time as a working adult in Japan; namely, both were difficult circumstances that she eventually overcame.

Hisako's success story in Montreal began as she formed social networks, enrolled in schools, and found full-time employment outside of the Japan economy. When her narrative shifted to a 4 ½ apartment that she rented with one of her new friends, she had nothing but good memories to report: "It was party party… With drinking, I would forget that I didn't have enough language [skills]…I would just speak and speak!" With an expanding group of friends and ties with a workplace and school, Hisako started to make roots in the city. The anxious tone of her recollections faded as a more confident narrator emerged. Montreal as a space was redefined from one that was unknown and shocking to routine and exciting. After her one-year visa expired, Hisako still wanted to live in Montreal, so she returned to Japan for six months to work, save up money, and go back. Upon returning, Hisako enrolled in school and studied business administration. She applied for a position at the computer company, obtaining first a work visa and then permanent residency. Eventually, the interviewee also married her Anglophone partner who she met in 2005 after returning to Montreal, moved to Saint-Lazare, and began raising two young children while working full-time as an administrator.

Through transforming these lived experiences into narrative, Hisako shaped herself into the self-reliant, victorious hero of her own story. As Freund has contended, the mode of storytelling where speakers cast themselves as the victor in life's battles has become increasingly popular as neo-liberalism has extended across the social plane. With an emphasis on personal responsibility and overcoming hardship without engaging with the structural factors limiting choice and

opportunity, in this contemporary form of narration, everyone can be a hero. Within the interview context, as we see in Hisako's case, narrators make sense of their triumphs more through perseverance and less via external aid and support.

Indeed, Hisako was firm to point out her ability to support herself: "At [Herzig College], they gave us an easy work permit of one year without any complications. And, it was during that time that I had already applied for permanent residency by myself. I [didn't come to Canada] for marriage or something like that." As was the case when Hisako decided to leave Japan, here too, she took pride in charting her own path forward. These two chapters of her life story spoke to each other in several ways. Marriage and work were coupled together as critiques of Japanese life, while in the Montreal segment they were examples of Hisako's strength and self-determination. When the interviewee first mentioned her marriage, she immediately followed it with, "I'm a *seishain*" [full-time regular worker], punctuating a review of her employment history with the clarification that she achieved permanent residency without the help of a spouse. At this point in her narrative, Hisako had come out on top and shaped herself into an independent, self-reliant woman, a path she started after a series of life changes in Japan. Yet, while Hisako's story certainly carries several markers of success, a close reading also reveals the gendered tensions that lay just under the surface. Key to Hisako's self-making was to define what kind of woman she had become.

In her narrative, Hisako kept referring to women who represented various feminine traits. The first two were homestay mothers who were positioned in direct opposition to each other. Hisako was critical of her (Black) homestay mother in Montreal for prioritizing her job over her role as host mother. Offering a counterexample, Hisako recalled her homestay mother in Spain who "was also making money, but her support and caring [for] the students was really extremely like…she treated me like [her] child. It was a bit different [from my experience with the homestay

mother in Montreal]." The key word here was "but," which positioned the Spanish host in favourable contrast to the Montrealer who did not adequately support her "children." Hisako compared two women tasked with the same job, hosting foreign students, while also employed elsewhere. The significant difference, in Hisako's eyes, was the quality of care each provided. Reflecting on the homestay mother in Montreal, Hisako recalled, "That was actually not such a great experience because she had one fridge for the students and inside of it was rotten, really rotten! And, always when we eat, we [did] not eat together; we were just upstairs and their eating was downstairs. It was just completely different…" Although Hisako did not elaborate on how the Spanish homestay mother cared for her, she nevertheless held her in high regard for creating a family-like atmosphere while also being employed elsewhere. The Montreal homestay mother, conversely, was not able to balance her two responsibilities: earning an income and creating a nurturing environment. Thus, for Hisako, the Spanish woman acted as a model for a working mother.

Next, in Hisako's narrative, we meet Japanese housewives in Montreal who are faulted for their naivete: "I think [people miss Japan] because [those] people don't work so much…The people who miss Japan are the *sengyou shufu* [housewives]. Maybe I shouldn't say that, but…I think they cannot compare the working styles [in Canada and Japan] so much." Hisako could not imagine relocating back to Japan as a working mother. Through her experiences working full-time in both Japan and Canada, she believed that she had gained the necessary knowledge to make an informed decision about where to live, work, and raise children. The interviewee's argument that housewives could not compare the two locales devalued any work experience they might have had, as well as the (unpaid) labour that they carried out in both countries.[48] Hisako's conclusions

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[48] Actually, however, many Japanese women work either full or part time before leaving the work force to care for their children, as is represented by the gentler, but still somewhat present, M-shaped labour curve for women.

about these three types of women were not unique, however; her judgements about womanhood, particularly in terms of care and careers, are reflected in mainstream Japanese discourse about the ideal woman.

Like many women of her generation, an important way Hisako positioned herself vis-à-vis other Japanese women was her status as an independent full-time working mother. As discussed in chapters one and two, the standard middle class life path for Japanese women, has been shifting since the 1990s. In the postwar period, it had been dominated by an M-shaped labour curve whereby women exited the workforce upon marriage and childbirth to return only when their children were grown. Today still, socially conservative rhetoric continues to prize the stay-at-home mother and propagate the *sansaiji shinwa*, a myth that children will experience dire negative outcomes if their mother does not devote herself exclusively to childrearing at least until the age of three.[49] Yet, simultaneously, the long-standing recession and turn to neo-liberal economics has brought new conflicting pressures to the fore. More specifically, women are expected to not only be the primary caregivers of children and the growing number of elderly people, but also engage in paid work at the same time, often in less interesting and remunerative jobs than those offered to similarly qualified men.[50] Womenomics, the catch-phrase for former prime minister Shinzo Abe's gender-linked economic policy, is one example of economic rhetoric which tells women to enter the workforce in order to "shine." Yet, meanwhile, the same government passes laws which suggest, but do not insist on, shifts in workplace culture which would create real change and further

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Hikariko Yazaki and Miho Gatayama, "Japan's Female Labor Force Set to Toss Out M-Curve," Nikkei Asian Review, September 17, 2017, accessed September 2019, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-s-female-labor-force-set-to-toss-out-M-curve.

[49] Nakamura Yutaka,"Sansai Shinwa ha honto ka? Nou no Hatarakikara Kangaeru, [Is the Myth of the First Three Years Real? Considerations from the Perspective of Brain Functioning]" *Asahi Shinbun Globe Plus*, June 4, 2017, accessed September 2019, https://globe.asahi.com/article/11530029.

[50] Irina Averianova and Niculina Nae, "Womenomics: Who Will Work for Japan?" *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 18, no. 1 (2018): https://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol18/iss1/averianova.html.

steps toward equality for working women, such as better access to leaves and childcare.[51] Women are left in a rhetorical catch-22 whereby contradicting social pressures make any decisions that women make about their lives seem contentious.

Despite Hisako's framing of her story as a feminist and neo-liberal success, her narrative nevertheless offered glimpses of the downsides of her present and future. After crafting a life story filled with pitfalls and triumphs, Hisako detailed the job she secured. In at least one key way, it was the type of job she hoped for after graduating from university: "My department deals with [American] companies. Whenever they make a payment in dividends, we manage their money [and make sure that] the money is okay with no flaws." Not only was she able to work in international trade, Hisako also had opportunities to use her English skills with counterparts South of the border. This was seemingly the exact opposite of her disappointing work at Nissan. Yet, after she talked about the average work day, Hisako surmised, "Work is okay. But, my teammates are very sweet people. I really really love them." The interviewee's report of the lived experience of the job was surprisingly underwhelming, particularly in contrast to the liveliness that came with her affection for coworkers. The work itself appeared unfulfilling. The main disadvantage of the job, according to Hisako, was the hour and a half commute between the downtown core and her home in Saint-Lazare, a wealthy suburb of Montreal.[52]

Returning briefly to the mental maps discussed in the first half of this chapter shifts our analysis to gender and geography. Hisako's map was almost empty. In a rush, she had merely

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[51] Shoko Oda and Isabel Reynolds, "What is Womenomics, and is it Working for Japan?" *The Washington Post*, September 19, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/what-is-womenomics-and-is-it-working-for-japan/2018/09/19/558a5b12-bc3e-11e8-8243-f3ae9c99658a_story.html?noredirect=on.
[52] In 2015, for example the average total income of households was $123,479. Statistics Canada, "Saint-Lazare, Ville [Census Subdivision], Quebec," accessed April 2021, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=2471105&Geo2=PR&Code2=24&Data=Count&SearchText=Saint-Lazare&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1 percent20.

drawn X on general areas on her map where she lived, worked, and frequented without adding much more detail. "Is this okay?" she asked me hurriedly, "I have to catch my train!" Our interview, which I conducted in downtown Montreal after work, had gone overtime. As she explained while gathering her things, she needed to catch a commuter train to make supper for her husband and children. This double-shift comprised of a full-time professional career and sole parent responsible for putting food on the dinner table is a contemporary women's problem where mothers are expected to both take the lead in unpaid care work and join fathers in remunerated labour outside of the home. Hisako's narrated life outside of work largely revolved around her family as well, including setting up playdates with Japanese housewives to cultivate Japanese language skills, planning winter activities such as cross-country skiing for the whole family, and wondering if her children were too young to start a stained-glass art class she herself had taken. While her interview may or may not have painted an accurate portrayal of her and her husband's respective responsibilities at home, the image captured in our conversation suggests one of a busy working mother with little mention of her partner's role.

Finally, looking ahead, Hisako was assertive that Japan would not be a future home: "I don't want to live there again…It's the sense of being constrained. It's gotten to the point where I'm kind of strangely scared to go back, always wondering, 'How will people see me?' Even though I want to see my friends and family, I can't think about living there again." The pressures that Hisako imagined were too immense to justify a life back in Japan. The focus on others rather than yourself, your desires, and your life were sacrifices that she did not want to make. Continuing, she referenced a couple (a Japanese woman and a French man) that she knew and mused why some Japanese Montrealers and their partners ended up returning: "I think [people go back] because of [their] husbands' strong will. They want to go to Japan and if they have a good chance to work,

they go back." Male power in this case, from Hisako's point of view, was likely the tipping point in the decision to move back to Japan or not. Indeed, despite her comments above about not wanting to return, as well as her abundant negative comments about Japanese society, Hisako admitted, "But, my husband wants to live there after we retire. I don't know. But, I don't think he knows about Japan so much! We'll think about it." Here too, in a quieter part of the interview tucked amidst stories of gaining financial independence, overcoming the trappings of Japan, and successfully making a home for herself in Montreal, she revealed, in the end, that her future was still in the process of becoming and one where patriarchy may have the final word. Perhaps, as in the case of her female Japanese friend, Hisako's home may one day be back in Japan after all.

In Hisako's life story, as in the reflections of selfhood in the Montreal maps explored above, Japan remained central. Faced with social pressures at home, she set out on her own and charted a path towards a more meaningful life. Mirroring the language of the neo-liberal self so often found in late capitalist societies, Hisako's interview highlighted her feminist triumphs and victory over her new life in Canada. Yet, the struggles of women in Japan, and especially the contrasting messages of the post-bubble period, also structured the way that Hisako made sense of her life in Montreal, even as she strove to be seen as an independent and global working woman. The omnipresence of the gender frictions of her homeland were not merely an idiosyncrasy of Hisako's self-presentation. Instead, it pointed to the monumental changes in women's roles in Japan over the last thirty years and the conflicting pressures brought to bear on Japanese women's everyday lives and self-understandings. As we have seen, in the case of Hisako and other overseas Japanese women who I spoke with, the new messages of "shining women" in the workplace coalesce better with her life choices and overseas stay. Ultimately, as gender roles are shifting and the "right path" is becoming blurrier, women are pitted against each other in a lose-lose situation,

where housewives and working women make gendered sacrifices yet are alienated by economic and culturally conservative rhetoric which serves to simultaneously devalue potential life choices that women make.

*Conclusion*

The language of self-reliance, perseverance, and Japanese gendered paths, as well as an eye back towards Japan lay at the heart of the stories and maps we explored in this chapter. Although internationalism and a sense of wanting to be connected with the Western world provided the impetus to move, migrants ultimately reproduced many Japanese social and gender norms in their new homes. In addition, as the limited geographies of the women's maps show, Montreal itself presented many barriers to their imaginings of life overseas; even for trilingual migrants with permanent residency, such as Rika, stable and well-remunerated employment was very hard to come by given their status as immigrant women. Further, their social lives continued to rotate around the Japanese community as well as other Asian establishments, such as Chinese or Vietnamese restaurants. Rather than immersing themselves in the exotic and appealing land of white English (or French) speaking Canadians that they imagined before arriving, Japanese mostly stayed within the small and closed Japanese community in Montreal. Gendered scripts, as well, shaped the women's presentations, especially in Hisako's interview and my experiences at language exchange and other community gatherings. Indeed, as Hisako demonstrated, the gendered wars at play in my interview partners' sense of selves were both a continuation of strongly internalized Japanese gendered expectations and a reflection of the continued struggles of womanhood in Canada. Hisako's narrative strategy, as Freund suggests, is an exercise in a specific type of self-making, one which aligns with the contemporary values of independence and self-reliance. Yet, in analyzing the interview context and her descriptions of her home responsibilities,

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working women's second shift at home and the pull of husband's desires also permeate the interview. As such, Japanese and Canadian gendered pressures also puncture her otherwise heroic narrative. In the final chapter, one aspect of the small and closed Japanese community in Montreal – employment – will be examined with particular attention to the intersecting pressures of neo-liberal economics and gender which come to bear on the young women and men who I interviewed.

**CHAPTER 6: WORLDS OF WORK**

*Introduction*

According to the Huffington Post, as of 2015, "Montreal is Having a Japanese Food Moment":

> With jumping izakayas, creative sushi chefs and thoughtful takes on tradition, Montreal is in the midst of a Japanese food moment that's blooming like so many cherry blossoms. So raise your plum wine wherever you are dear reader, and let's salute a spring season of bright culinary adventures inspired by the meeting of new and old, east and west, elegance and pub and street.[1]

Indeed, Montreal's culinary landscape has recently been inundated with Japanese restaurants, many focusing on *izakaya* (pub) food and ramen which join the mix of high- and low-end sushi shops as representations of Japanese cuisine. However, Japanese restaurants in the city are not necessarily, or even usually, Japanese-run – a fact demonstrated by the comparatively large number of Japanese food establishments relative to the Japanese population of Montreal.[2] Many Japanese establishments are instead headed by Chinese immigrants and staffed with non-Japanese Asian-Canadians who can deliver the image of authenticity desired by clients while presenting Canadian versions of Japanese food. Indeed, one of my interview partners, Hisako, explicitly told me: "The first thing I want to do [when I go back to Japan] is eat Japanese food, the real one."[3] As Shaun Naomi Tanaka explains, "The Japanese restaurant becomes a medium to stage and negotiate

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[1] Risa D., "Montreal is Having a Japanese Food Moment," *Huffington Post Canada*, April 10 2015, accessed May 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/yelp-canada/japanese-food-montreal_b_7042340.html.

[2] Alan Nash, "From Spaghetti to Sushi: An Investigation of the Growth of Ethnic Restaurants in Montreal," *Food, Culture, and Society* 12, no.1 (2009): 10.

[3] In fact, many of my interviewees expressed their displeasure with the high prices of Japanese restaurants in the city as well as their failure to deliver a taste that migrants considered "authentic." Jessa Riel Alston-O'Connor found in her thesis on Asian Canadian art and Asian restaurants in Montreal, Asian-Canadians view these restaurants as manufactured for Canadian consumers rather than reflections of their home cultures. Alston-O'Connor, "Consuming Culture: Negotiating Asian Canadian Identities Through Food Culture and Art," (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2011).

authenticity through the food, décor, architecture, and staff."[4] The Japanese restaurants in the city thus generally cater to the needs and tastes of the local population, as shown by the Orientalisms peppering the above copy, rather than to Japanese migrants themselves.

These migrants, many equipped with technical college or university degrees from Japan, form the bulk of the low-wage precarious labour behind the scenes at these restaurants. In my interviews with thirty Japanese Montrealers, ten people, or one third, have worked as servers, dish washers, and in food preparation in restaurants in the city. As we have seen in previous chapters, many recent Japanese migrants come to Quebec with dreams of language learning and cultural exchange, viewing themselves as internationally-minded globalized individuals, often already with university degrees and successful careers in Japan. Yet, in the back kitchens of Japanese restaurants, preparing soup stock and cutting onions for customers who appear long after their shifts are over, these recent transplants to Montreal find themselves speaking only Japanese while lacking cultural connections with the city they came to and a venue to practice their languages with native speakers. This "Japan-economy" in Montreal, comprised not only of restaurants but also of language schools and independent ventures, as I explore in this chapter, dominates the labour (im)possibilities for Japanese in the metropolis and is one of the paths most trodden by my interview partners in the city.

In this chapter, I look to Japanese Montrealers' worlds of work and more specifically, the relationship between working life and happiness. As I argue, my interview partners follow two

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[4] In an innovative thesis on race, authenticity, and Japanese restaurants in Toronto, Ontario, Shaun Naomi Tanaka found that "Japanese cuisine becomes not only an objectified Other, but also a product that can be detached from its original geographical landscape and marketed as a cultural commodity." Tanaka, "Consuming the 'Oriental Other,' Constructing the Cosmopolitan Canadian: Reinterpreting Japanese Culinary Culture in Toronto's Japanese Restaurants," (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2008), 12–14.

main paths when it comes to labour in the diverse multi-lingual metropolis, both of which involve a compromise on the road to happiness: marketing their own Japaneseness in the "Japan-economy" or opting out of the labour market as housewives. These choices are inevitably limited by the environment and economic era. Yet, simultaneously, they are also reflective of each individual's personal negotiations of immigration, economic, and lifestyle considerations as they straddle the world between two societies.

Of course, new immigrants, especially people of colour, have long been relegated to an ethnic economy and suffered from low wages and job possibilities in North America. Such observations have been central to ethnic history and studies from their inception.[5] In Canada, rich scholarship of the Japanese historical experience on the West coast have illuminated many stories of racism and crisis, economic and otherwise.[6] Recent work, such as Darren J. Aoki (2020)'s oral history investigation of Nisei Canadian's postwar encounters with White Canadians in Alberta, has highlighted the importance of interviewees telling these kinds of stories in their own words: "interviews sparked 'memory moments', a will to … to talk with the purpose of sharing in order to narrate the past – one's own past and the Japanese Canadians' past – and to lend it moral weight… In the purposeful sharing that ensues, the past and present inspire each other."[7]

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[5] As Kevin Lam notes in his recent introduction, Ethnic Studies began with a racialized struggle for acceptance on White campuses in 1968 and continues to challenge ongoing systemic racism against minorities in North America. Kevin D. Lam, "Critical Ethnic Studies in Education: Revisiting Colonialism, Genocide, and US Imperialism- An Introduction," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 52, no.2–3 (2019): 216–218.

[6] Mona Oikawa and Pamela Sugiman in particular have crafted moving oral history accounts of Japanese Canadian experiences, and especially the legacy of internment. Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Pamela Sugiman, "'Life Is Sweet:' Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadians." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1(2009): 186–218.

[7] Darren J. Aoki, "Remembering 'The English' in Four 'Memory Moment' Portraits: Navigating Anti-Japanese Discrimination and Postcolonial Ambiguity in Mid-Twentieth Century Alberta, Canada," *Rethinking History* 24, no. 1 (2020): 37.

Here, I expand on this work by viewing the labour realities of Japanese migrants to Canada in the 1990s and 2000s as both reflective of agency and the struggle of racialized minorities in Western countries under neo-liberal and multi-cultural hegemonies. This particular historical period in both Canada and Japan, as I have contended throughout this thesis, provides an overarching limiting structure to the possibilities imagined and experienced by my interview partners.[8] Yet, at the same time, these young people also have creatively maneuvered within this system in the pursuit of a happy and balanced life, much like Furuichi Noritoshi's "happy youth"[9] find meaning through small communities and low-middle class cultural signifiers in Japan, such as clothing store, GU and family restaurant, GUSTO.[10]

To analyze Japanese Montrealers' work worlds, I will draw broadly on critiques of both the neo-liberal economics and liberal multi- and inter-culturalism which shape the Quebec labour market Japanese face. While Katharyn Mitchell, Cory Blad, and others have demonstrated the formidable links between neo-liberal rhetoric and multiculturalism across Canada, this chapter sees Japanese labour fortunes in Montreal in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a case study in the convergence of these forces.[11] Following Nancy Fraser in particular, I turn to feminist theory to

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[8] As research shows, when new migrants to Canada enter into precarious jobs in the neo-liberal era, their wage-discrepancy with Canadians is exacerbated, regardless of educational status upon arrival. Parvinder Hira-Friesen, "Does Employment in Precarious Work Lead to Wage Disparities For Canadian Immigrants?" *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 50, no. 1 (2018): 69–86.

[9] Furuichi Noritoshi, *Zetsubou no kuni no koufuku na wakamonotachi* [The Happy Youths of the Country of Despair] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011).

[10] These so-called "fast fashion" and "family restaurants," which proliferated amidst falling incomes and consumer expenditures after the bubble burst, are prized as middle-class national symbols. But, they are also the sites of alienated consumption with reheated food from factories and sweatshirts made in South Asia rather than down the street, despite the distracting advertising ("using only Japanese chicken!") which suggests otherwise. Stephanie Assmann, "Consumption of Fast Fashion in Japan: Local Brands and Global Environment," in *Consuming Life in Post-Bubble Japan: A Transdisciplinary Perspective,* ed. Katarzyna J. Cwiertka and Ewa Machotka (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018) 49–67.

[11] Such as: Katharyn Mitchell, *Crossing the Neoliberal Line: Pacific Rim Migration and the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). For a Quebec example: Cory Blad and Philippe Couton, "The Rise of an Intercultural Nation: Immigration, Diversity, and Nationhood in Quebec," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 645–667; Cory Blad, *Neoliberalism and National Culture: State-Building and Legitimacy in Canada and Québec* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

understand the paradoxical relationship between late capitalism and care; while the focus on constant economic production devalues care-work, capital accumulation capacities simultaneously rely on social reproduction (like giving birth and caring for children, maintaining households, etc.) for expansion.[12] The housewives who populate the second part of this chapter are both victims of this structure and using it to create their own vision of a happy life.

Although many of the work worlds portrayed here will be in Montreal, for my interview partners, Japan is never truly out of the equation. Accordingly, I will continue to return to migrants' past labour experiences in their home country to make sense of how Japanese themselves understand their work situation in Canada. Similarly, Japanese discourse on gender will also be close at hand. The lasting symbolic power of the housewife, especially, is an important consideration in this chapter. In 2014, when the Culture Convenience Club Company conducted an online survey of 1,525 Japanese people about happiness, housewife or househusband was voted the happiest job, as is often the case in public opinion surveys.[13] For many women, marriage and becoming a housewife is still seen as the ideal way to escape the stressful environment of full-time work, explored in chapter one, and have more flexibility and freedom, especially once the young children are enrolled in preschool for part of the day.[14] Regardless of the fact that becoming a full-

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[12] Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," *New Left Review* 100 (2016): 101

[13] Culture Convenience Club Company, "'A Survey About Happiness': Japanese People's Happiness Only Turns the Corner after 60!? The Highest Happiness Ratings are for Men and Women over 60," *PR Times*, June 27, 2014, accessed November 2020, https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000212.000000983.html. The happiest hobbies were gardening, arts, cooking, and travel- mostly women-dominated past-times which my interview partners often also share!

[14] As Aya Satoh Hoshina notes, a new term for "*sengyou shufu*" (professional housewife) is *youchien* Mama (preschool Mama). *Youchien* in Japan typically end in the early afternoon (around 2 pm) and thus are difficult for working mothers who usually send their children to *hoikuen* (daycare). The *youchien* Mama- is "married (to a high-earning husband
), ha[s] kids, and lead[s] a fulfilling [and flexible!] life". Aya Satoh Hoshina, "A Label for Everyone: The Many Types of Women in Japan," *Savvy Tokyo*, May 18, 2020, Accessed November 4, 2020, https://savvytokyo.com/women-types-japan/

time housewife is the reality for less and less Japanese women, the ideological power it continues to hold[15] will also guide this discussion.

Overall, this chapter pays careful attention to interviewees' descriptions of work and fulfillment in both Canada and Japan. First, I will turn to the stories of interview partners who were employed in the Japan-economy, delving into their specific employment histories by narrowing in on the stories of restaurant workers and language teachers Next, I explore the experiences of Japanese housewives in Montreal while also alluding to their part time work, as well as past employment and school trajectories.

*Stories of the "Japan-Economy"*

In this first section, I explore a central work pattern among my interview partners in Montreal: finding work or self-employment in the small Japanese-based economy in the city, either by choice or a lack of other options. The "Japan-economy", as I term it in this chapter, is characterized by low-paid, unstable work which requires workers – the same internationalist women and men who have been populating the pages of this thesis so far – to perform Japaneseness in varying ways. Perhaps they will work in a kitchen where the language of operation is not the English or French that they hoped they would master, but Japanese. Maybe they are teaching the Japanese language to Montrealers or selling other skills (professional or otherwise) that they possess – such as cooking or baking – under the label of being Japanese. In other words, they have effectively utilized their particular language and cultural knowledge from Japan to financially support themselves in Canada's multicultural environment. I suggest that this strategy can be

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[15] In a 2012 study, Yukiko Inoue-Smith found that about 60 percent of her female respondents (undergraduates at a Japanese four-year university) hoped to quit their job upon marriage and childbirth with about 70 percent of these only imagining a return to the labor market sometime after their child begins elementary school. "Aspirations for Career and Marriage Among Young Japanese Women," *South Pacific Studies* 34 (2013): 41–60.

thought of in two opposing ways: it at once represents Japanese Montrealers' agency and creativity in a precarious job market and the restricted choices offered to many ethnic minorities in contemporary Canada. By monetizing their ethnicity, they reproduce Japaneseness despite carrying dreams of internationalism. Simultaneously, however, the "Japan-economy" in Quebec does offer vindication in one specific way which has much traction with the Japanese people I interviewed: a more flexible lifestyle away from the social pressures of their home country where being a freeter does not buy much cultural capital. In Japan, as well, it is possible to support oneself as a part-time restaurant worker or online teacher. But, it carries with it judgement from a middle class perspective which valorizes full-time salaried office (for men in particular), especially for those hoping for marriage in their future.[16] In Montreal, the flexible lifestyle based in the service industry that the Japan-economy offers is particularly attractive because it is outside of the Japanese panopticon and migrants are unfamiliar enough with Canadian social norms that they can elide at least some of the local pressures- including the racial ramifications of the Orientalizing White gaze in the restaurants. Indeed, while it is important to note that Japan's place in Canadians' imagined racial hierarchy is higher than some other groups, such as those from Africa and the Middle East, Japanese migrants' racialized experiences in Montreal still limit their social and economic choices.

As I introduced in the beginning of this chapter, restaurant work is a key industry of the "Japan-economy" in Montreal. Low-wage, precarious, and exclusive to the ethnic enclave, working in the back kitchens of Japanese restaurants are where many of my interview partners found their first – and for some only – job in the city. Although many of the Japanese restaurants in the city are Korean or Chinese owned, including Kinka, a popular chain of restaurants comprised

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[16] Emma E. Cook, "Expectations of Failure: Maturity and Masculinity for Freeters in Contemporary Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 16, no. 1 (2013): 29–43.

of izakaya and ramen eateries, recruiting for these jobs is often exclusively in Japanese and done through word-of-mouth in the community or on internet job boards such as from-montreal and emaple. Thus, we see a collaboration between non-Japanese business owners with financial capital and "in-between" Japanese whose use their community networks to hire low wage precarious labor. This exploitative dynamic also takes on a gendered dimension as well. The food served in many Japanese restaurants, such as *karaage* (fried chicken), draw on home-cooking lineages performed by housewives, a role taken up by mostly female migrants in back kitchens. Meanwhile, in the majority of media appearances, male owners take the spotlight and critical praise as they simultaneously devalue women's work on their payrolls. For Japanese with less knowledge of the city, its racialized economy, and English and French, there are few sources of employment information outside of sites like from-montreal and emaple. Thus, many of my interview partners found their way into these restaurants via the job boards, which are key to the functioning of the Japan economy. Asami (22), explained to me that she found her Chinatown Japanese hotpot restaurant job on from-montreal,[17] while Takuto (21) called Bistro Isakaya on avenue du Parc after seeing their advertisement on the same site to inquire about a dishwashing and food preparation job.[18]

Some of these workers, such as Asami, Hikaru, and Takuto, are young working holiday visa holders not expecting to stay longer than a year. To help pay for her language school, Hikaru (21) found work doing kitchen preparation at Yokato Yokabai, a ramen restaurant, and Bistro Isakaya, a more formal restaurant, whereas Asami (22) was disappointed to only find work in a Japanese hot pot restaurant in Chinatown.[19] Others, with even less opportunity, are in Canada as

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[17] Asami, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 1 December 2015.
[18] Takuto, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 11 February 2016.
[19] Interview with Asami, 2015.

visitors after their visas expired and have no choice but to work for other Japanese under the table to make ends meet as they continue their sojourn. Kaito (33), for example, who worked in the kitchen at a downtown Japanese pub, wanted to pursue his passion as a musician and needed some extra funds.[20]

Many of my interview partners expressed frustration with the paucity of work opportunities, even for such a short stay. Asami, for example, expressed her desire to be a language teacher during her sojourn on a working holiday visa yet was only able to find employment as a waitress. As she complained in our interview, "I am not satisfied with this job. In Japan, I already had experience in the food and drink services industry, and I wanted something a little newer for myself! I wanted to be a Japanese teacher!"[21]

But, some, like Takuto, accepted Japanese restaurants as the only places who would hire him, given his language skills. Takuto, at 21, was one of my youngest interview partners. Still enrolled as a university student at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, he decided to go abroad on a working holiday visa to improve his English in a native environment. Rather than envisioning a longer sojourn, Takuto knew he would soon return to Japan and to his university, armed with his hopefully improved English to start out strong in his full-time job search. In Montreal, despite wanting to practice his language skills, Takuto could only find work as a dishwasher in a Japanese pub. Resignedly, he described only being satisfied with his job of menial labour in the kitchen because he knew he had little chance of getting a better job with his language skills. As he told me, "[My job is to do] simple cooking tasks, wash dishes, tidy up, do cleaning…that kind of thing. I'm satisfied because I can't speak English very well…" As a temporary Montrealer on a working

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[20] Kaito, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 20 November 2015.
[21] Interview with Asami, 2015.

holiday visa, however, he could afford to switch jobs within the Japan economy frequently, "Soon, like in one or two months, I'm thinking of quitting and moving on to something different."[22]

Many Japanese migrants who I interviewed are internationally-minded, often choosing to come to Canada for a global experience or to master one or two official languages. Their shock and disappointment upon confronting the reality of the labour market in Montreal is not so much related to the manual labour nature of the restaurant jobs which flood the Japanese job boards, but rather to the fact that such work is conducted only in Japanese with no opportunity to interact with locals and practice their linguistic skills. For young people whose sense of self in Japan was partly grounded on being more interested in the outside world, language learning, and travel than the average person, it can be hard to accept that the only work available to you requires little except your Japanese cultural and language skills. The stripping down of the identity from the global player to the ethnic self in Canada's precarious labour market is a crisis that some only resolve through returning to Japan. Furthermore, while they have hopes of learning one of Canada's two official languages, Japanese and non-Japanese migrants alike face an uphill battle in Quebec where social and political pressure to acquire fluency in French ironically comes with few chances to study and develop their linguistic skills. Thus, with the social and linguistic alienation that comes with the Japan economy and Montreal being a key battleground in ongoing language wars, migrants have limited opportunities to integrate into their host society. For some, like Akemi and Yuki, marrying a local was one alternative path to forging a sense of belonging.

Restaurant industry jobs are perhaps the most demotivating for Japanese who live in Montreal for longer and who already had interesting and lucrative careers in their home country. Rio (36), for instance, a part-time worker and housewife, did not come to Canada hoping to work

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[22] Interview with Takuto, 2016.

in a Japanese kitchen. [23] From Sapporo, Hokkaido, in northern Japan, Rio graduated from a technical college after studying accounting and computer science and went on to work, often full-time, at various offices in the city of Sapporo. Her study abroad in Montreal, beginning in 2013, was meant to help her explore her hobbies of French and dance. After meeting her Brazilian husband at the language school ILSC, where she was studying, she excitedly explained her whirlwind love affair. They quickly got married the same year and she then gave birth to her baby daughter Mio.

I met Rio near PIE-IX metro station in a cafe, near where her daughter was in part-time daycare. Over tea and watching snow accumulate outside the window, she explained that when she had wanted part-time employment, she had turned to from-montreal and found a lunchtime kitchen job at Yokato Yokabai, in the Plateau area of the city. She described her job to me as follows: "Because the restaurant is only open in the evening, I do the preparation of the food to be served: I cut vegetables, I make sauce, I make *dashi* [fish stock] that kind of work."[24]

Since she had the time to devote to work while Mio was in daycare, Rio insisted that that she would far prefer to have an office job, especially as she had hoped all the while to improve her French. But, she also knew that it was not a realistic dream in Montreal, given her beginner skills in English and French. As a result of the restricted work opportunities, she shared with me her hopes of returning to Sapporo in the future, where life had been easier and more convenient for her.

Asami, Hikaru, Takuto, and Rio as well as other men and women whom I met did not settle into these positions because they had an intrinsic interest in the Japanese food industry in Canada. Instead, despite hoping for jobs which would align with their educational and work experiences or

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[23] Rio, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 24 February 2016.
[24] Interview with Rio, 2016.

help them acquire the language skills that they had travelled so far to obtain, they were relegated to the back kitchens of Japanese restaurants, jobs which were only accessible via their language skills and ethnicity. The dreams of multilingualism and global selfhoods that begin the journey in Canada can be dashed in the prep station at the back of the new trendy Japanese pub.

The job searches of Japanese Montrealers working in restaurants, then, revolve exclusively around the Japanese community in the city. Migrants effectively mobilize their Japanese language skills, ethnicity, and cultural connections to search for jobs in Montreal's economy, even if the jobs that they find are by nature precarious and temporary. Using connections through the Japan economy allows migrants to easily find part-time restaurant jobs to pay the bills; however, it also represents limits on migrants' potential employment in Quebec, where precarious work based on your ethnic identification often seems like the only way to earn to make ends meet.

A second job market sphere which is accessible for migrants through the Japan-economy is language teaching. In Montreal, three of the four universities (McGill, Université de Montreal, and Université du Québec à Montréal) offer Japanese language classes, as do many of the CEGEPs, and an expanding number of private language schools. Except for a few university jobs, however, all Japanese language teaching in the city is precarious and part-time work, often at private language schools where hourly wage can differ dramatically depending on the institution. The interview partners who identified themselves as language teachers have varied employers, hours worked per week, and goals. Compared to the restaurant work, while the content of the language teaching job is described as being more fulfilling for migrants, the supply of work is extremely precarious.

One interviewee, Satomi (32), had already been in Montreal for four years when I sat down with her. [25] As Satomi told me, before coming to Montreal, she worked as an English teacher in Kumamoto prefecture in southern Japan. Besides being in charge of English classes, she also had to take on extra duties, such as being in charge of the library and head two after-school club activities as part of her weekly responsibilities. After experiencing this kind of full-time working life in Japan, Satomi craved a more balanced and relaxed lifestyle: "To me, I always thought that living in Japanese society was painful. As for my own opinions, I felt pressure from everywhere to make them the same as everyone else's. Because I did not like that, I [wanted to] try to live overseas." She applied for a working holiday visa and arrived in Montreal in 2011. After working at a Second Cup cafe for a few months, she began teaching Japanese at a private language school. Eventually, she struck out on her own as a self-employed language teacher with ten students a week.

Although Satomi's transition from an English teacher in Japan to a Japanese teacher in Montreal seems like a lateral shift – both are positions based on teaching students a second language – they differ in terms of salary, stability, expectations, and qualifications needed. Japanese elementary, junior high, and high school teachers, regardless of the subject(s) they teach, require a university teaching degree. Over the course of their undergraduate studies, as is the case for Canadian teachers-to-be, education students learn about recent pedagogical trends as well as a variety of other skills to round out their toolkit as educators. Upon graduation, although the job hunt and school assignments that follow can bring a great deal of stress, public school teachers are considered government officials, and as such, can depend on stable full-time and lifetime employment. Even compared to other college-educated civil servants, teachers also make a good

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[25] Satomi, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 12 November 2015.

wage which rises every year until retirement at age 60.[26] Private language schools in Montreal, conversely, often require little to no prior teaching experience or qualifications.[27] While resources on teaching in Montreal in Japanese recommend completing 420-hours of Japanese teaching pedagogy or university classes,[28] the actual job ads usually do not ask for more than some kind of stable work experience for two years (in other words, not merely part-time restaurant work in Japan or similar).[29] Even individuals such as Satomi who has experience and a degree should not expect to receive a wage reflective of their skillset. Instead, teaching in private language schools is a minimum or just above minimum wage job with no employment security or benefits. As is the case for many other contract teachers in Canada's education sector, lesson preparation, homework correcting, and report writing time are barely compensated, if at all, and it is rare to earn enough income to support oneself.[30]

Satomi and other interviewees who intended to leave behind Japan's work culture in favor of a more flexible lifestyle in the West can certainly find it. However, that flexibility does not equate a solid salary with free time to pursue and support their personal interests. Rather, the advantages of flexibility are lopsided towards employers; management can employ a large number of part-time low paid contract workers tasked with providing clients with a certain sense of Japaneseness inside and, often, outside of the classroom. Additionally, for short-term migrants

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[26] Hirotoshi Yamasaki, "Teachers and Teacher Education in Japan," *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education of Hiroshima University* Part III, no. 65 (2016): 19–28.

[27] Despite the proliferation of private language schools in Canada from the 1990s onward, provincial governments have yet to regulate these educational enterprises, either for the students' or teachers' benefits. Sherry Breshears, "Stories of Unionization: Four Teachers' Perspectives on Collective Bargaining in Two Canadian Private ESL Schools," (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2008), 4.

[28] For example: Japanese Education Global Support International, "Kanada de Nihongo kyoushi ni naru ni ha,"[How to become a Japanese Language Teacher in Canada], accessed March 2020, https://www.jegsi.com/jlt/canada.

[29] Such as this ad on e-maple for a teacher at the Montreal Nihongo Centre in February 2020 which asks for "a visa allowing for legal work in Montreal and over two years of experience as a full-time working adult": http://www.e-maple.net/classified/item.html?no=333060.

[30] Sherry Breshears, "The Precarious Work of English Language Teaching in Canada," *TESL Canada Journal* 36, no. 2 (2019): 26–47.

needing a work visa, the possibility of exploitative labor practices increases. [31] Meanwhile, Japanese people looking to escape work life in Japan enter a Japan economy that carries many of the same trappings they desired to free themselves from: overwork, here defined as working time beyond the expected daily shift and coercion into participating in work events under the guise of volunteering, all without the stability of a well-paying *seishain* position back home. And yet, according to Satomi's narrative, Montreal offered the ability to keep teaching, which she loved, while being freed from the stresses of the full-time teaching job and the pressures she felt were imposed on her by Japanese society. Particularly for people like Satomi who sought to escape the stresses of Japanese work life by turning abroad, the key difference between their reported experiences of work in Japan versus Montreal is mobility. Mobility's function in self-making transformed the idea of work, no matter the similarities between Japan and elsewhere, from oppressive to emancipatory. Yet, examining their work lives reveals further strains in their overseas adventures.

As Satomi also explained, there are drawbacks to the way her life was organized in Montreal: "Well, the content of the job, that I really love, but the reason why I am not 100 percent [satisfied] is the instability, and because there are times when I work at night and on the weekend, my partner's time and…the two of us can't spend much time in our home together. I'm not satisfied with that!" Neither the language school or self-employment could counter the precarity and instability of the job, which led Satomi to anxiously take hours outside of regular working times to earn more money. But, in Montreal through the Japan-economy, she was able to leverage her love of teaching and her experience as an (English) educator in Japan to brand herself as a Japanese language teacher. Looking to Japanese skills as marketable abilities allowed Satomi to bring in an

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[31] An interview partner who asked to remain nameless was tasked with cleaning the house of a language school owner three times a week in exchange for a work visa which was never procured.

income doing something intrinsically interesting yet relegated her to unstable work based only on membership in the Japanese cultural community. Thus, the Japan-economy can both provide a path to professional happiness and denote the limits of earning possibilities by tying ethnic work to precarity. Furthermore, although Satomi's working experience in Montreal seems to be preferable to that in Japan, neither have been able to offer her the balance between steady income and personal time that she was seeking. Finally, for Satomi and other skilled migrants like her, the Japan economy can offer migrants the appearance of a prestigious status, like teacher, which carries more cultural capital than the service industry. However, unlike the same jobs in Japan, these skilled professions are compensated with unskilled wages which lead some to look elsewhere for addition income.

Takemi's story also points to the dualities of language teaching within the Japan-economy. Her story is unique in that she is one of only three interview partners who managed to secure a full-time job in the city, as an accountant. The downside, however, was that she did not enjoy her job. Takemi (50), who came to Montreal first in 2002, had held multiple jobs in Montreal before finding the two she currently holds.[32] A Japanese-French translator for a publishing company in Japan, Takemi originally attempted to work a similar job in Montreal, but was forced to find other means of employment: "When I was in Japan, I worked for a publishing company, and I thought it would be great to do that kind of job [in Montreal]. I found a job like that- I was working as a translator for a publishing company, but…there was not enough work so I could not continue." Despite having exceptional language skills in the two official languages of Canada, she could not find full-time employment in her field in Montreal's economy of the 2000s. After re-training in a CEGEP accountancy program, she found her current job in the West Island, where

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[32] Takemi, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 14 November 2015.

she is responsible for the flow of money within a company. As she explained: "Now, I am working as an accountant by day. At night, I am teaching Japanese at a language school."

She was not happy only working the accounting job although it paid well and was stable: "I'm not satisfied [with my accountancy job]. The reason why is the job is extremely simple…but, since I don't have a lot of experience in this work, it's only natural I think. In Japan, I would not want to do a similar type of job!"  So, she decided to begin teaching Japanese at night which she considered much more fulfilling even though it was very part-time and precarious. As she enthusiastically told me, "[compared to my accountancy job], my job of teaching students, that is fun!"  In this case, the Japan-economy gave Takemi a chance to do remunerated work which she enjoyed, balancing her other more stable yet uninteresting job. Using her language skills and connections with other Japanese thus allowed her to utilize the flexibility of labour markets to her advantage; she could work only few hours a week as a Japanese teacher as an antidote to her dissatisfaction with her day job.

Satomi and Takemi's experiences as Japanese language teachers differ in meaning since one woman is attempting to make a living through private teaching while the other is using teaching as an antidote to a job that is unrelated to her field of study or previous qualifications. Both women agree that teaching Japanese is enjoyable, but as a Japan-economy job, it is inherently precarious. Unlike the restaurant jobs, which seemed to be only tolerated by most I spoke to, teaching Japanese is considered fun and freeing – qualities which align themselves well with many of my interview partners' stated interests in moving to Canada in the first place. Takemi and Satomi's abilities to take advantage of this interesting niche job in the Montreal economy, however, were predicated on other sources of income: Takemi's accounting job and Satomi's (European) husband's primary income as an engineer. In this way, the Japan-economy's ability to function as

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a site of possibility for Japanese in the city is reliant on other vectors of economic stability. As such, for the majority of Japanese Montrealers, the Japan-economy is primarily the last-resort, belying their hopes for a more multilingual and engaging work life in Canada.

My interviewee partners' experiences in the Japan-economy thus demonstrate a reality fraught with contradictions and disappointments. Interviewees working in the Japan-economy held jobs that did not align with their educational and professional backgrounds; well-paid, and well-educated full-time workers in Japan became underpaid, part-time language teachers in Montreal or a set of kitchen hands preparing ingredients for the dinner rush. The flexible lives that migrants desired were unstable and did not offer the work-life balance that they had hoped to achieve. While these experiences are largely a product of shifts towards more precarious labor sources and dissatisfaction with Japanese work culture, they also exemplified the racialized socioeconomic world of the Japan-economy.

Central to the Japan economy is selling Japaneseness to consumers. Customers to a Japanese restaurant or Japanese learners enrolling in a language school can expect an aesthetic experience that relies on both workers and settings approximating, in the eyes of the consumer, the audio, visual, and cultural cues commonly associated with Japan and Japanese people: izakaya staff greet patrons with boisterous calls of "Irrashaimase!" (Welcome!) while language schools hold cultural get-togethers to consume Japanese food and learn about traditional customs. New traditions are also invented in restaurant scenes, such as one establishment's "sake bomb," a call and response drinking activity with no relationship to any drinks in Japan itself that turns alcohol consumption into spectacle. When positioned alongside a collage of "Japanese" images and sounds, however muddled and inconsistent with Japanese cultural sensibilities, the result is the reinvention

of ethnic culture to be commodified, bought, and sold for a mainstream White audience.[33] The marketization of the self, previously discussed as making financial gains based on an individual's interests or skills, takes on an additional racialized dimension in the Japan economy. Furthermore, rather than Montreal being only a tabula rasa for self-making for Japanese migrants, it is also tabula rasa for the "national self" in that Japanese-ness is rendered as uncomplicated kitsch, such as drinking Sapporo beer under a poster of the famed ukiyo-e print, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa". Locked into a "Japan-economy" with little contact outside of the ethnic community, local "nationhood" as well as local politics and inequalities become largely indiscernible. So, when Japanese Montrealers come to rely on the Japan-economy, their Japaneseness functions as the single sellable quality with which they can (barely) earn a living. Only Takemi can make best use of neo-liberalism's touted flexibility by pairing her "fun" part-time teaching job in the Japan-economy with a stable job – albeit one below her education and ability level by her own evaluation.

Finally, in our explorations of the Japan economy, we see another harsh realization for migrants: for the Japanese people who managed to secure full-time employment, an aspiration evoked by several interviewees, it came with lackluster enjoyment. Takemi was the most direct, saying that she disliked her accounting position, while Hisako from Chapter 5 said her job was "okay." For both, getting these jobs were success stories and the economic benefits were satisfactory. However, the nature of the labour, office work dealing with accounts and finances, seemed uninteresting and was unrelated to their university education. Furthermore, for Hisako, the hour and a half commute meant at least three hours on public transportation, a problem with a job, according to the narrator. Ironically, these jobs in Montreal came across as unfulfilling, a

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[33] E. San. Juan Jr., *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 9.

characteristic commonly associated with work life in Japan. Ultimately, participants leave Japan in search of a better work experience only to find a similarly restrictive economic landscape in the Japan economy or, at best, a tolerable one as a full-time workers.

Yet, depending on the interviewee, these feelings about Montreal's work environment were somewhat tempered by the function of migration in their self-making. Despite the similarities between working in Japan versus Montreal, interviewees framed the latter as liberating relative to the stifling atmosphere back home. Travelling abroad was narrated as an adventure with each nodal point introducing a new cast of characters and backdrops to shape their ideal selves. Montreal served the same purpose as setbacks in the realm of employment, language, and integration appeared in minor roles as experiences deemed successes took the spotlight. This exploratory spirit is significant in understanding how participants make sense of wins and losses in their interviews and life stories.

At the same time, Satomi and Takemi's stories in particular point to the importance of historicizing and contextualizing the idea of agency in the current economic climate. In these women's narratives, the teaching jobs themselves, while precarious and low wage, simultaneously offered something to Japanese in Montreal that other jobs that they had experienced did not: an enjoyable and stimulating experience. Studies of neo-liberal agency typically see subjects as primarily rational, able to evaluate the market to situate their own value and capable of acting responsibly and self-reliantly following the logic of the economy.[34] Yet, as Lynn M. Thomas argues, historical actors' agency should rarely be viewed as so straight-forward; instead people are

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[34] Sumi Madhok and Shirin M. Rai, "Agency, Injury, and Transgressive Politics in Neoliberal Times," *Signs* 37, no. 3 (2012): 648.

often motivated as much by more intangible ideas, like fantasy and desire, which are often bound up in collective ideas of the good life, than by market rationale.[35]

Satomi and Takemi's love for teaching Japanese perhaps represents many of my interviewees' desires for flexibility and intercultural contact/internationalism (in so far as the Japan-economy could offer) which are borne both from market principles extended to individual Japanese selves, but also of their own experiences. These experiences, of tiring and performative work in Japan which left them and their families exhausted, as well as the continuing cultural capital of the West writ broadly, influence their perceptions of their labour in Montreal. The linked economic and social arguments of precarity and racism certainly explain the reality of the Japan-economy with Satomi and Takemi being protected by their other sources of income. Yet, within individual conceptions of lives on the ground, sometimes agency is understood as attaining a long-held desire. When considering individual's agency in the contemporary world, as well as their "paths to happiness" as this thesis has attempted to, it is important to underwrite the appeal of dream fulfillment as well note the historical and economical effects and constraints on these feelings.

*Housewives' Stories*

The Japan-economy was not the only pattern revealed through the interview data. Instead, still other Japanese in Montreal have eschewed full-time paid work altogether, prioritizing care-work as housewives. This sidestep away from the Canadian labor market and into the home sphere is a gendered and cultural choice, which is still related to economic circumstance – often through marriage or labour impasses. And it is also, in a Canadian context, a now unusual step to take for

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[35] Lynn M. Thomas, "Historicizing Agency," *Gender & History* 28, no. 2 (2016): 332.

women in their 20s and 30s. Indeed, in 2014, only 16.2 percent of Canadian families were headed by a male breadwinner with a stay-at-home mother. It is becoming an increasingly rare family arrangement and one not possible for the majority of Canadian workers.[36] Nancy Fraser has argued that the current phase of financialized capitalism in the North Atlantic regions has entered a "crisis of care" in which the capacities of social reproduction are being stretched to their breaking points.[37] She notes in particular the strain of the model of the "two-earner family" which sounds progressive until you factor in the longer working hours required to support a family that have devastatingly been paired with the dismantling of the welfare state. This leaves the chief providers of social reproductive work, women, with little energy left for the care of the young and the elderly that society requires.[38]

Although, as of 2019, the number of households with both partners working exceeded those with a stay-at-home partner, there has not been a complete shift to the dual-income model of economics.[39]  But, while the number of households headed by a male single income earner with a wife who does not work outside the home has indeed been falling steadily since 1980,[40]  it has been argued that many women are essentially *shufu* (housewives) working part-time in unstable labour positions whose continued reliance on their husband's income is statistically hidden by the "rising" trend of women entering the workforce. In 2018, for instance, while women's labour

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[36] Tammy Schirle, "The Demise of the Male Breadwinner, and his Pension," accessed December 2020, https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2015/06/29/the-demise-of-the-male-breadwinner-and-his-pension/.

[37] Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," 100–116.

[38] Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, "Capitalism's Crisis of Care," *Dissent Magazine*, Fall 2016, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care.

[39] The Japan Institute for Labor and Policy Training, "Sengyou Shufu Setai to Tomobataraki Setai 1980-2019" [Professional Housewife Households and Dual-Earner Households 1980-2019], accessed January 2021, https://www.jil.go.jp/kokunai/statistics/timeseries/html/g0212.html; Mizoue Norifumi, "Tairyou no 'Kakure sengyou shufu' to Jyosei Shuugyouritsu Koujyou no Uso" [The Mass of Hidden Housewives and the Lie of Women's Advances in Employment Rate], *PRESIDENT WOMAN Online*, September 25, 2019, accessed January 2021, https://president.jp/articles/-/30075.

[40] Labor and Policy Training, "Professional Housewife Households," https://www.jil.go.jp/kokunai/statistics/timeseries/html/g0212.html.

participation seemed to increase quite dramatically, over 80 percent were working less than 35 hours a week.[41]

Similarly, when you look exclusively at the data on married women between 25 and 34 with children and a husband working full-time, only 17.8 percent of mothers also work full-time. Even excluding the part-timers, some of whom may work only one day a week, double that or 38.3 percent, are housewives. Japan's patriarchal and rigid work structure with little room for the unpredictability of pregnancy, birth, sick children, and aging parents is rightly the oft-named culprit for why women are not entering the full-time workforce. Yet, the conservative ideological power of gendered carework and the still exalted position of housewife also have a strong effect on women's life course decisions. One study comparing ideal and planned life paths, for instance, found that many more women idealized the complete housewife life (that is, without returning to part or full-time work) than were able to achieve it due to husband's falling wages. [42]

As we will see below in the stories of Minako, Yuki, and Akemi by choosing to be housewives and relegating "productive" labour to the sidelines, Japanese migrant women in Montreal import the ideologically powerful image of the housewife from their home country and see their value in care rather than capital.[43] This shift away from viewing the self as a product of market possibilities dovetails nicely with the kind of life that migrants hope for in Canada: more flexible and open, with an improved work-life balance. But, at the same time, they are reproducing gendered scripts that restrict the possibilities open to Japanese women at home and abroad while

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[41] Mizoue, "The Mass of Hidden Housewives", https://president.jp/articles/-/30075.

[42] Tsutsui Jyunya, "Naze Nihon ha Sengyou Shufu Shakai wo Nukedasenai ka?" [Why Can Japan Not Break Free of Being a Society of Professional Housewives?" *PRESIDENT WOMAN Online*, January 20, 2020, accessed January 2021, https://president.jp/articles/-/32375.

[43] This choice is quite at odds with the dominant North American discursive messages directed towards women regarding work/life balance. As Catherine Rottenberg argues, "the underlying message increasingly appears to be that women are responsible for crafting their own personal and felicitous equilibrium between career and family." "Neoliberal Feminism and the Future of Human Capital," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 2 (2017): 335.

often eliding the economic circumstances that also influenced their decisions. In this way, identifying as a housewife can both provide women with a rhetorically emancipating escape from the job market and hide privilege (usually through marriage to wealthy Canadians) and employment disappointment.

Like Hisako, whose story rounded out the previous chapter, Minako (43)[44] recalled viewing her life in her 20s and early 30s as being defined by work. Born in Nara prefecture, Minako grew up in Kanagawa and studied English literature at Nihon University in Shizuoka prefecture. After graduating, she worked for 8 years as a full-time language school manager for GEOS, a now-defunct major language school chain in Japan.[45] She was transferred by GEOS to Montreal as a *chuuzaiin* (employee assigned to a foreign office) and worked for 5 years in the same capacity. In her last year working in Quebec, she met her husband. As Minako explained to me over croissants in Montreal's Sud-ouest area, "I thought that I would be transferred by the company to another city when my working visa was up [at that time, the limit was 5 years]. There was talk of Rome, Italy. I did not think I would be able to stay in Montreal."[46] Her goal in Canada was to continue to be dedicated to her full-time job: "Because I came here for work, I expected to continue to work here."[47] She was firm in reminding me that she was in no way expecting what happened after she met her husband.

Their meeting was very commonplace, according to Minako: "I met my husband in Montreal. In the condo that we now live in, my good friend used to live there as his roommate."[48]

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[44] Minako, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 18 December 2015.
[45] Once considered one of the "Big Four Eikaiwa [English conversation]" schools, GEOS was founded in 1973 and filed for bankruptcy in Japan in 2010, with the name and some of the schools bought by G.communications, a parent company which also acquired Nova, another big eikaiwa brand which had filed for bankruptcy three years before. The Montreal branch, now known as GEOS Languages Plus, is no longer affiliated with the Japanese brand.
[46] Interview with Minako, 2015.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

Minako was still working when she met him, as well as dealing with culture shock, even after five years in Canada. She described her feelings in detail:

> At the time, and this is still the case, when I was on my way home from work, I switched at a bus stop in front of Oratoire Saint-Joseph. And, at the bus stop, I used to cry sometimes. I don't know why there…maybe because Saint-Joseph is so huge, but, in any case, you know the way Japanese life is? There's work, the office, and no time for something like sightseeing! And, within this [busy] lifestyle…when I was homesick, I'd look at that big church and somehow I'd start to cry. I remember it [well].[49]

Indeed, the daily pace at GEOS felt overwhelming and gave her little time to settle in and connect to the city she was living in. Luckily, Minako went on to explain that her husband was instrumental in changing her perspective and helping her find the path of her own personal happiness:

> But, these memories are not sad [anymore]. Can I tell you a happy story now? When I told my husband this story, he [made sure to] propose to me, on purpose, in a place where I could see Saint-Joseph. And he said, "because I want this place not to be associated with hard memories…" Oh, my goodness! I've started tearing up! Wow! But, because of this, Montreal's pluses and minuses: I love it all![50]

After sharing her proposal story, Minako spent the remainder of our interview describing her married life in Montreal which has been quite different from her time at GEOS. As a stay-at-home mother, she has spent most of her days chasing after her children, volunteering, and working for a few hours a week part-time, sometimes for the Japanese community and sometimes for her husband's business. Although she was busy, she described this new period of her life as very fulfilling.

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

My interview with Minako was physically as well as rhetorically centred on her choice to become a housewife. We met near her home, in the Southwest of the city, early in the morning- right after she had dropped off her children for part-time daycare. Our interview did not begin immediately since she needed to attend to her home responsibilities first; one of her children had forgotten to bring something to school and she needed to call the teacher. Marriage freed Mianko from the dead end that migrants face when their work visas expire and work runs out. After giving birth to her first child, Minako began to identify as a housewife, forgoing almost all paid work outside the home. Her focus on the care of her home, children, and community (through volunteering efforts) is both a personal choice and a product of the economics around her. Her husband is a trilingual Italian Canadian who owns his own business is in a position to be able to support a family as a single breadwinner.

Yuki (27)[51] also introduced herself to me first and foremost as a housewife, prioritizing her caregiving of her baby daughter. When I first met Yuki, she was taking English courses at one of Montreal's universities and was on her way back from studying; based on her textbooks and outfit, I mistook her for a student during our introductory small talk. Indeed, she was studying at the moment, she explained hastily, but she did not identify as a student but rather as a housewife. Yuki is a permanent resident and wife of a francophone Montrealer living in the East end of the city with her husband and young daughter. Although she has been studying English at various Montreal universities, she was despairing at the time of our interview that her French had not improved at . She thus felt forced into taking a part-time restaurant job, like other Japanese Montrealers we met earlier in this chapter. She explained her decision to work at Japote, a Japanese restaurant located

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[51] Yuki, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 1 March 2016.

in a downtown food court, starkly: "Because I can't speak French… a Japanese restaurant is where I am working."[52]

In Japan, Yuki was trained as an elementary school teacher, which is a well-paying and stable job, even during the post-bubble recession. When she settled in Quebec, she was upset to learn that her teaching qualifications would not be recognized and that she would be required to restart her education in order to work in her previous field. At our interview, she was very much aware of this reality: "My university major was education, but working in education here would be super difficult I think, so I'm not holding onto that hope." Instead, she looked to the future, when her daughter would be starting school, to expand her horizons: "I want a career change! What I'm thinking now is maybe to become a nurse." Yet, again, language emerged as a primary hurdle to these aspirations: "But, to be a nurse, I would need to speak both English and French…Well, maybe I'll go to Ontario! Or, I'll try really hard at my English studying and try to take nursing courses at McGill University. That's what I'm thinking of doing at the moment."[53] When I asked her to reflect on her current job at Japote, she was circumspect: "As for a career for myself, this is not what I was hoping for. But, in terms of the jobs that I am capable of doing now, which basically all involve being employed by other Japanese people…if I think of it in terms of that, it's fulfilling my wishes."[54]

Like Minako, when Yuki married a Canadian man, she knew that she had little chance of obtaining the employment of her dreams in Canada while also raising a young child according to the cultural standards that she set for herself. Her choice to remain mostly outside of the workforce allowed her to be omnipresent while raising her daughter and gave her time to contemplate how

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[52] Interview with Yuki, 2016.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

to solve one of the biggest workplace dilemmas facing Japanese immigrants to Quebec: how to find a rewarding and well-paying job that recognizes university-level qualifications obtained in Japan. She knew that language was one way forward which was why, during the brief hours that her daughter was placed in part-time daycare, she took English classes. Yet, a detailed perusal of Quebec's employment landscape had taught her that English-language skills alone were unlikely to get her the work she wanted. Yuki, then, found solace in her chosen role of housewife which allowed her to step away from a job market that would bind her, in the near future, to the Japanese community and its low-wage unstable labour. She could also be present, as she confided, for the small everyday joys of her daughter's toddler years, helping to mold her and instill her with a strong command of her mother's native tongue from her first words onwards. For Yuki, as for other housewives I spoke to, while there is pride in the cultural capital and sweet rewards of the caregiving role, the disappointment of labour dreams unfulfilled also hover in the background of their life histories.

My interview with Akemi (40),[55] the last housewife whose story will be presented in this chapter, was in the front seat of her car. After going back and forth on when and where our interview would be held, in the end she suggested we meet at the Atwater Market at a bakery. But, since her young daughter had fallen asleep along the way from the suburbs of the city where she resided, she text messaged me and asked me to join her in her car instead so that the little girl could nap uninterrupted. In this way, both housewives' interview content and context were dominated by children and care. Yet, when I had first met Akemi several years prior, she did not identify as a housewife, but rather as the friendly administrative assistant at the language school I had just begun to attend. Like Yuki, Akemi was trained as a teacher in Japan – in this case a Kindergarten teacher–

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[55] Akemi, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 28 January 2016.

before moving to Montreal. As she explained to me in our interview, "I wanted to work when I first came [to Canada] for experience and to practice my languages. My previous job was at the reception of a language school and I quit when my daughter was born. Now, I have a child and I am a *shufu* [housewife]."[56]

As Akemi tells it, her life as a housewife is entirely centered upon her daughter, Arisa. Her choices of social interactions, activities, and vacation itineraries are all with the little girl in mind. As she elaborated when I inquired about whether it was important for her to have friends in the Japanese community: "The Japanese people that I hang out with now are all related to my daughter. We became friends because I sought out people for us to have play dates with. I think that Japanese friends are necessary here because I don't want my daughter to lose her Japanese and therefore creating that 'Japanese' environment is necessary."[57] Similarly, she told me that while she used to take French and yoga classes alongside the ceramics and watercolor courses that she still makes time for, "since having a child, all of my activities revolve around her! We haven't started yet, but in a month or two I want to start her at the pool and maybe skating as well."[58] Trips back to Japan, when not visiting with friends and family are also Arisa-focused, with parks, zoos, and aquariums at the top of their must-see places.

Despite leaving a full-time job that she enjoyed where she was practicing French and English, something other Japanese in Montreal were hoping for, Akemi seemed very content with her decision. Of all my interview partners, she was perhaps the clearest about her desire to be a housewife and that it was a path she embraced once it became available to her: "Being a *shufu* is what I want to be doing! Having a child is a once-in-a-lifetime thing and I wanted to go all in,

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[56] Interview with Akemi, 2016.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

especially since I thought that I may not be able to have this experience." [59] Akemi noted that she thought that becoming a housewife would not be possible, a reality which changed after she got married and started a family later in life. But, as we have seen, her having the choice to stay home with her child and not work was also directly related to her family's socioeconomic standing. Although she did not provide details about her husband's job, like Minako's husband, he must be in the unusually comfortable position of being able to support his wife and daughter on a single salary. Since Akemi also mentioned to me that they recently moved to a new house in the relatively affluent West island, it seems fair to assume that her new economic position helped her dream of staying home with her baby.

Although Akemi did not critique her previous employer in Montreal, the language school where she worked was called out by other interview partners for going back on promises to provide visa extensions, as well as pay for all hours worked by Japanese employees. One woman even told me the story of an administrative assistant who recently took time off to have her baby and was promised part-time work whenever she wanted to return. When she inquired about her job several months post-partum, she was told that they would be happy to have her back – on a volunteer basis.[60] Whether or not this was Akemi's untold story, she decided that it was in her best interest to stay home and quit her full-time job after giving birth. Happily for Akemi, she seemed to feel that her choice is allowing her to construct the life that she wants in Montreal: one where caring for child and immersing herself in the Japanese linguistic community is paramount. In doing so, she found her path to happiness by personally stepping outside of the daily grind of work and defining herself solely through care- an aspirational choice for many Japanese women.

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Noriko, interviewed by Elizabeth Tabakow, 5 June 2016.

Women's decisions to become housewives in Montreal are affected by two major factors. First is the appealing rhetoric surrounding *shufu* from Japan which also sounds like a saving grace for work-life balance and the overwhelming burden of carework which faces many women of child-rearing age. Second, is the economic precarity in Quebec for Japanese migrants which makes working opportunities and renumeration- so tightly intertwined with the Japan economy- unappealing for college graduates unable to find stimulating and rewarding jobs.

Many Japanese women's answer to the perceived crisis of social reproduction outlined by Fraser, is to eschew the full-time labour force as much as possible, based on the limitations of their husbands' salaries, and work either a small number of part-time hours per week or not at all while focusing on care in the home. Thus, when Minako, Akemi, and Yuki choose to pour their energies into the care of their children and their community, they are taking a stance in their own work-life balance by drawing on the ideological power of the housewife image from Japan. As we have seen, the housewife is a complex symbol which at once seems to free Japanese women of the carework and paid work friction that Fraser posits. It also, however, allows for the continuation of a patriarchal and socially draining work system that enslaves men as well as women into hours of overtime, falling wages, and little vacation should they enter the full-time workforce.

As I conclude this section, it is worth returning to Fraser's writing once more where she notes that she always thought (the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook) Sheryl Sandberg's popular concept of women "leaning in" to their careers was "ironic." Indeed, women can only "lean into" the high-power careers that Sandberg champions if they also lean on women of color, such as nursing home workers and nannies, to perform the care work which is left behind. [61] Japanese women in Montreal occupy a curious middle-ground in this feminist debate. While they

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[61] Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, "Capitalism's Crisis of Care," *Dissent Magazine*, Fall 2016, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care.

are certainly disadvantaged women of color in Quebec's economy and are performing unremunerated care-work, they are often shielded by Japan's economic prosperity as well as their Canadian husbands' and are making the choice to stay home – albeit a choice strongly influenced by Japanese conservative norms and upper-middle class dreams of a flexible and balanced lifestyle.

*Conclusion*

This chapter turned to the work worlds of Japanese Montrealers and zoomed in on two particular patterns which emerged from the interviews that I undertook. First, many Japanese in the city feel forced into the Japan economy after discovering a paucity of labour possibilities for immigrants lacking a strong grasp of Canada's two official languages and Canadian educational qualifications. In restaurants in particular, migrants' dreams of internationalism fade as they work low paying jobs in the back kitchens of restaurants speaking only their mother tongue. While Asami hoped to teach, and Rio would have loved to work a desk job again, they ended up relying only on their Japaneseness- their Japanese connections and language ability, to secure jobs prepping vegetables with no chance to practice their English. Language teaching in the Japan economy is viewed as more fulfilling, but it is inherently precarious making it only a plausible career choice when other economic activities, such as a husband working full-time, can counterbalance its instability and meagre pay. As Satomi found, working as a teacher in Japan was exhausting while working as a Japanese language teacher in Montreal was flexible but did not constitute a liveable salary. When multiculturalism and neo-liberalism meet, Japanese migrants' labour is often reduced to performing Japaneseness instead of immersing themselves in the new society– for the short or long term– as they had hoped.

The second major work trend emerging from interviews with young Japanese in the city is the prevalence of housewives - women who have opted out of the labour market in Canada to focus on caring for their young children. As I argue, while they are certainly drawing on the still prominent and positive image of the housewife from their home country, they are also making a pragmatic choice to sidestep what Nancy Fraser has termed the "crisis of care" brought on by the necessity of dual-income households in much of the global North. Making use of the ample financial resources provided by their Canadian husbands, the women I interview here see their choice as a step towards the flexibility and family focus that they desire at this stage in their lives. Simultaneously, however, the backstory reveals that housewives often suffer from the same labour troubles as other Japanese women in Quebec where stagnant wages, uninspiring work, and precarity is the norm.

Are Japanese housewives in Canada succeeding in side-stepping the economic pressures of contemporary society by simply stepping aside? Or, as in Japan, does their existence instead point to the last gasps of post-war capitalism's "family wage," preserved only in the upper middle and upper classes?[62] Perhaps the most important analysis comes from the women themselves who expressed their contentment than any other migrants talking about work. As Akemi whispered to me as her daughter slept peacefully in the backseat of her care, "I'm so happy that I am able to do this."

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[62] Ibid. As Fraser writes "the family wage [undoubtedly] institutionalized women's dependency and heteronormativity" and this seems even more true for immigrant women without the advanced English and French usually needed to earn a living in Quebec who are relying on their Canadian husbands.

# CONCLUSION

*Women Friendships, Migration, and the Meaning of Home: An Exercise in Self Reflexivity*

*"Sitting down to write, a woman sheds the clothes of each of the different roles she has played and lets all of the eyes of her experiences come forth as she contemplates her life and begins to put pencil to paper."* – Ruth Behar[1]

Most of my narrators were either distant acquaintances or strangers when we sat down for the interview itself. As such, in the early part of our interactions, my interview partners turned the tables and made me into the interviewee. They asked me a series of questions which repeated so often in the research process that I began to formulate my own set narrative. The first questions concerned my Japanese language skills, which were clearly being assessed in our informal conversation: When, why, and how had I begun learning Japanese? Then, came the more probing questions: Why was I interested in Japan? Had I ever visited Japan? What did I think of the country? And, finally, after I had answered to the best of my ability: Had I ever considered moving to Japan myself? ("You should!" I was often encouraged). In this conclusion, I will begin by answering some of these questions which entails a reflection of my positionality in undertaking this research project. Drawing on the deeply self-reflective writing of oral historians and ethnographers whom I admire, I extrapolate on two interrelated points of friction that arose during my nine years exploring the life-paths of Japanese migrants to Montreal in my graduate work: my friendships with Japanese women and my eventual move to Japan and my reconsideration of the

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[1] Ruth Behar, "Introduction," in *Women Writing Culture*, eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 2.

meanings of "home". Finally, I consider the lessons I learned from the life histories of my interview partners.

*On Friendship and Positionality*

In 1996, I met one of my best friends, Chie, the only daughter of a Japanese *chuuzaiin* [company worker transferred overseas] and his wife who had just moved temporarily to Montreal – my hometown. At the time, the only English Chie knew was her name and greetings, but this did not stop us from being the very closest of friends, spending most days and weekends after school together. Through Chie, I had my first introduction to Japan and Japanese, a world that mostly looked like Hello Kitty, Sailor Moon, Tamagochi, as it did for many North American children at the time, but which for me was also peppered with home-cooked Japanese food, piano lessons with a Japanese teacher, and a tiny bit of spoken Japanese, thanks to lessons my friend's family instituted at our elementary school for one year. Although her family only stayed in Canada for a year and a half, even after she returned, we remained in contact through letters (by mail!) and occasional phone calls on birthdays and major holidays. Serendipitously, we met again in person only several months after I started my first serious study of the Japanese language, when we were in our early twenties; she came to a conference in Montreal and stayed at my apartment. Instantly, our connection was re-affirmed and I promised to meet her later that year in her hometown of Tokyo.

Our long-lasting friendship and closeness informed my thinking about this project every step of the way. And, as women from different cultures, we had nonetheless similarly navigated several life course milestones, from our days as overachieving undergraduate students to learning each other's languages as graduate students for our research (Japanese for me and French for her)

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to progressing onto our PhDs in our respective fields, to getting married. As I continued to work through this project, our continuing relationship, as well as my early life experiences with her and her family, were an influence on this dissertation in ways that I understood and acknowledged at the time. Her family's story had inspired me to search for other contemporary Japanese in Montreal whose stories had yet to be inscribed into the historical record. Other influences I came to understand only in later years. For one, as Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni wrote in her ethnographic work, *Housewives of Japan*, where she collaborated with her longtime friend Mariko, "like many other ethnographers who have become aware that being a woman does matter, I have come to appreciate the special qualities that come with the application of feminist perspectives to the research process. I believe that the intersubjectivity that characterized not only my relationship with Mariko, but also with those other women [participants], is one of those special qualities."[2]

My childhood friend is only one of the Japanese women who I have been close to. Some of them I originally met as my research participants. In language school Tea Time conversation practice, for instance, I was lucky enough to meet Yuri, a native of Fukuoka in southwestern Japan, who kindly agreed to be interviewed despite only meeting me once previously. While she was only in Montreal for a few months after our first meeting, we quickly became good friends, meeting in the West of the city at a cafe to drink tea once a week. Even when she returned to Fukuoka, we were in contact regularly, video chatting with each other about everything from Japanese news to relationship woes. As Yuri and I became fast friends, I hesitated to include her story in the dissertation, fearing that our closeness might "cloud" my analytical ability. Similarly, I initially did a "practice" interview with Satomi, my one-time Japanese language teacher who had become a good friend, never intending to use her words in my academic writing. As we had a wonderful

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[2] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, *Housewives of Japan* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 28.

and productive interview, we both agreed that our "conversational narrative"[3] was a "real" usable interview. Yet, when it came time to include her story in a chapter, my confidence waned.

Women's friendships and the interview setting have long been a topic of discussion among feminist oral historians and ethnographers. As Miriam Zukas mused about her oral history interviews with women about their own friendships, perhaps the shared language of womanhood combined with an interviewer's attempt to be open, friendly, and a good listener encourages a feeling of closeness. Although her participants, like mine, invited her to spend time together outside of the interview once it was completed, she resisted, uncomfortable with the unevenness of the initial encounter.[4] More recent work, however, especially from a contemporary feminist perspective, has attempted to normalize the building of relationships after the shared experience of the interview. In *Oral History Off the Record*, editors Stacey Zembrzycki and Anna Sheftel bring together a collection of essays that explore the messiness of oral history encounters to build an ethnography of practice in the field. Their description of this practice as "interviews that acknowledge the interviewer and interviewee, aim to create a collaborative and just interview space, and valorize the relationships that grow out of these encounters" spoke to the anxiety that I had over the intersections between friendship and academia, analysis and closeness.[5] As such, I pushed myself to include their stories in my work while also reflecting on my own practice. As Helen Owton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson note, "friendship as method…demands that as

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[3] For the concept of "conversational narrative," see Ronald J. Grele "History and the Languages of History in the Oral History Interview: Who Answers Whose Questions and Why?," in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing,* edited by Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, 1994): 1–18.
[4] Miriam Zukas, "Friendship as Oral History: A Feminist Psychologist's View," *Oral History* 21, no.2 (1993): 78–79.
[5] Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, "Introduction," in *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice*, eds. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7.

researchers we engage in acute and sustained reflexivity and self-scrutiny, contextually shifting between 'studying them to studying us'".[6]

Indeed, Chie, Yuri, and Satomi, as well as other friends who have gone back and forth between Montreal and Japan over the years, have proven an invaluable sounding board to the ideas developed in this dissertation, both on and off-the-record. Yet, the more I tried to work on the issues of this project, either through musings with my friends or on my own with a computer, phone, or pad of paper, the more that I felt that my interest in migration held an emotional resonance for me – one which was both thrilling and uncomfortable – that was deeper than the dissertation itself.

*Changing "Homes" and the Homestretch*

When I began writing this thesis, I was in my early twenties and had just concluded interviewing Japanese Montrealers for my MA. It was then, as well, that I began to get used to my yearly summertime pilgrimages – for that is what they were – to Japan to gather research materials, to visit friends, and to just be present in the place that I was dedicating so much time to understanding. Those trips were a whirlwind of intellectual curiosity and excitement for me, and the months spent planning my summer trajectory helped to speed up Montreal's cold and inconclusive springs. When I landed in Tokyo, exhausted and jet lagged, I was nevertheless always buoyed by optimism and joy: the first smells of Japan in the immaculate cleanliness of the airport, the first hojicha latte. [7] Every year, on the plane returning to Montreal, I would plan my work and life for the year ahead in a newly minted notebook found in one of my countless hours roaming

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[6] Helen Owton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson, "Close But Not Too Close: Friendship as Method(ology) in Ethnographic Research Encounters," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43, no. 3 (2014): 287.
[7] Japanese roasted green tea.

the stationary sections at Loft or Tokyu Hands, refreshed, but also with an undeniable ambivalence about returning to the only city which had ever been my "home." [8]

The following writing was taken from my research notes written immediately after returning from my first month-long trip to Japan in 2012, when I could speak basic Japanese and read the phonetic language (hiragana and katakana), but not Chinese characters:

> A month after dragging my oversized bags through lines of neatly arranged business people waiting for the train in Tokyo Station in a panicked attempt to find the exit, I can still feel the awkwardness of my travel companions and I, blustering noisily through such a well-oiled system of precise organization as Japanese public transportation, our exclamations of confusion rising higher than the hum of the trains and throngs of disciplined people…
> And yet, as our time in Japan continues, we speak more softly, our comprehension increases, and our train cards are no longer being jammed into the wrong slot of the sensitive machinery. We begin to read, to speak, and, perhaps most presciently, to behave. On the bullet train to Hiroshima, now a gleaming modern city with soundless streetcars and flawless gardens, I realize that somehow these foreign landscapes have become imbued with a feeling previously reserved for the country I was born in; amidst my seemingly endless quest to not lose the food grasped tenuously with my chopsticks, forget to remove my shoes, be late for an engagement, or use improper grammatical forms, I found peacefulness, and, unexpectedly, the feeling of 'home.' [9]

Quite simply, I began to realize more and more that rather than merely writing about mobility and Japan as a scholar, I wanted to be present there, not only for a summer research trip, but to live, for real, with my young family. In other words, the bargain I had made with myself upon starting my graduate research, that it would be more prudent for me to stay close to home

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[8] Japanese "lifestyle" stores with huge floors dedicated to stationary.
[9] Research notes, July 2012.

and have Japan be my work and my holiday base, was, in fact, a sacrifice that I was no longer willing to make. Unfortunately, this mostly secret realization did little for the progression of my dissertation which stalled both to make room for the birth and care-giving of my daughter Emi and to allow me space away from the themes of migration and Japan. On an emotional level as well, I felt paralyzed by the analysis of the narratives that I had collected, which was made all the more obvious by the fact that the chapters on the *shinsho* sources and other textual and visual material had materialized with little hesitation, or procrastination, on my part.

In her chapter, "A Necessary Crisis," Kirsten Emiko McAllister wrote of her own paralysis when faced with analyzing and presenting the material she had collected in academic written form.[10] Her fear of imposing her own interpretation on the memorial of Japanese-Canadian internment and the elders of New Denver where she had spent two summers, as well as her struggles in processing the difficult emotions of the stories she heard resulted in "writ[ing] listlessly and endlessly, unable to find words to connect with what [she] had experienced."[11] I increasingly had a feeling of incongruency in Montreal; I could not see a way to change my life circumstances, but the pressures of my hometown – familial, social, (neo-liberal) economic – were mounting with little recourse that I could envision. My own desire to move to Japan shaped the way I raised my baby daughter; from her earliest days, I introduced her to both Japanese language and culture. At the same time, I felt increasingly unqualified to analyze my interview partners' life histories of migration. I doubted everything I read and compared every sentence I wrote unfavorably to the academic literature I was reading.

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[10] Kirsten Emiko McAllister, "A Necessary Crisis," in *Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 44–48.
[11] Ibid, 45.

In hindsight, my desire for Japan, and mobility was a mirror of my women interview partners' *akogare* [longing] for the West. In mobility and life abroad, we similarly saw resolutions to the pressures which rendered much of our everyday lives unsatisfying. But, in so-doing, the structural limitations of the spaces we idealized, our new homes across the ocean, were erased within our narratives. As my reading of s*hinsho* demonstrated, Japanese women in the post-bubble period continued to battle with conservative rhetoric that encouraged quitting work upon marriage and childbirth, pressured them to stay with their children exclusively until the age of three, and blamed them for the recent failures of the nation's birth rate and economy. The women in my study, like other Japanese women in the contemporary period, also felt the effects of neo-liberalism and the deregulated labour market arguably more acutely than men as women were more likely to get trapped in the cycle of precarious labour. The social pressure of Japan, which my interview partners often reiterated as "people are always watching you," also had a draining effect on the psyche and served to constrain the types of choices that they felt they could make. Yet, when I looked to Japan as the place I wanted to be, these considerations failed to discourage me from my desire to move.

In Montreal, I also felt that gendered pressures and economics were behind my strain. I saw little room for my own selfhood in the social world of my hometown, with its strongly entrenched networks and obligations. As I struggled to write my thesis, I felt overwhelmed by these responsibilities alongside the carework involved in being a young mother. At the same time, however, I wanted to stay with my new baby which thwarted the cultural expectation that I would soon find full-time work instead, especially considering my advanced degree(s). Neo-liberalism in the academic job market as well was causing economic strain in my family, especially after my daughter was born and we got only fifteen hours of paid paternity leave – a surprise to everyone

with faith in Quebec's social protections. As Nancy Fraser pointed out, in contemporary Western societies, this crisis of care is inevitable as greater capital productivity is required of women who must also shoulder the work of social reproduction.[12] The parallels between my narrators' experiences of gendered and economic structural limitations and my own blocked me psychologically from engaging with my thesis. I almost quit numerous times, even after 75 to 80 percent of my writing was completed. But, after September 2019, when my family and I packed our bags and made the move, relocating to Fukuoka, Japan, I felt far more emotional clarity and could once again open my laptop without a feeling of dread. While neither the pressures of Japan itself nor my thesis had changed, through my migration, I had garnered enough emotional space to return to the world of academia.

In a piece on autoethnography, Carolyne Ali-Khan cautions that "An 'I' filled world has taught [students] to focus on individual stories rather than structural paradigms."[13] In this way, the structural limitations of imagined destinations fade in the face of their positions as glamorous backdrops to our new lives. Mobility thus allows you to step aside from the familiar pressures of your home culture and into a new environment where the unfamiliarity and lack of set social structure allows you to focus on yourself and your own growth, or "invest in yourself" in the language of neo-liberalism. When the fairy dust fades, then you can look at the compromises available at home and in your new destination and see which speaks to you affectively. As Wanda Vrasti has alerted us, the newer "caring" form of capitalism "put[s] forth *credible* affective structures [which] individuals…derive *genuine* pleasure from."[14] Thus, while the structural

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[12] Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," New Left Review 100 (2016): 99–117.
[13] Carolyne Ali-Khan, "Liberation, Mice Elves, and Navel Gazing: Examining the Ins and Outs of Autoethnography," in *Doing Educational Research (Second Edition)*, eds. Kenneth Tobin and Shirley R. Steinberg (Boston: Sense Publishers, 2015), 294.
[14] Wanda Vrasti, "'Caring' Capitalism and the Duplicity of Critique," *Theory & Event* 14, no. 4 (2011): n/a.

limitations of the destination still exist, the desire for change and for an uncoupling from the pressures of home can be, at least temporarily, assuaged by the promises of transnational mobility.

This dissertation has explored the life-worlds of Japanese migrants to Canada in the context of the large-scale social and economic shifts that have rocked Japan in the post-bubble period. As we have seen, the increasing privatization and deregulation have led both to labour market changes providing less stability to young people and an expansion of discourse on *jiko sekinin* – self-reliance and individualism in an age when the government is pulling away social structures. Along with rural migration and in-country entrepreneurship, I have argued that travel and life abroad functioned as alternative life-paths in contemporary youth imaginaries, freeing young people from the contradictions of conservative rhetoric and overwork (if not precarity) at home. Yet, transnational mobility relied on a solid financial base at home, often accrued through the savings of past wealthier Japanese generations. Mobility was thus a double-edged sword, both allowing youth to imagine otherwise and reinforcing existing social hierarchies.

As my narrators arrived in Montreal and the West, they viewed their sojourns abroad as a means to amass new international experiences and cultural capital. Canada in this imagining was a blank slate, a background to dream fulfillment. This explains why many of my interview partners were so surprised to see French in Montreal's cityscape when they landed; the on-the-ground realities of the destination mattered less than the act of mobility itself. As this thesis has suggested, being "on the move" is part of the international, flexible, mobile, neo-liberal self that we are told to fashion in order to better our personal portfolios in the global marketplace. Yet, in Montreal, the racial and economic structures in place frustrated my narrators' internationalist hopes. The mental maps that they annotated demonstrated an insular community with a shared and limited geography while their employment was relegated to the "Japan-economy" in low-wage and

precarious work. And, in Canada, both working women and housewives' narratives of the search for happiness belied the patriarchal structures of home and destination which continued to constrain the choices available to them.

*Postscript*

Our first year in Fukuoka felt emancipatory. I was liberated from the previous social structures to focus on re-building myself and returning to this thesis. Yet, as I navigated the insurance and medical systems as a pregnant woman and started my older daughter in preschool (*youchien*), our second year of life in Southwestern Japan has become less freeing. As I spent hours labelling my daughters' goods for school, crafting cute and healthy *obento* (Japanese lunch boxes), and fostered new relationships with other "stay-at-home" mothers with whom I interacted with every day in the park and when we picked up our children, I began to acutely feel the ideological pressure of womanhood, and especially motherhood, in my new city. With no Japanese partner to guide me through the bureaucracy and as the member of my family with the strongest language skills, perhaps I had to come to terms with the new social and ideological webs more quickly. Certainly, as I participate more actively in the society, the flexibility and freedom that my mobility seemed to offer is fading somewhat as Japan slowly becomes a more rooted and real home.

Maybe many stories of privileged transnational migration in the contemporary world, whether to or from the late capitalist societies of East and West, are haunted by the same kinds of friction and compromises between feelings of freedom and rootedness, agency and oppression, choice and pressure, optimism and disillusionment. Yet, as Vrasti says, if we can "explore the subjective complicities that tie us to neoliberal capital and learn to go beyond them," the search for happiness can expand beyond the fragile joys of consumption and the endless re-making of

better entrepreneurial selves. [15] If working women and housewives could circumvent the duplicitous discourses pitting them (us?) against each other in a race that neither can win alone, maybe Japan Inc. can shift again, not only in the favour of global capital, but to make Japanese society more equitable and family friendly for the next generation. Then, perhaps the young men and women of the post-bubble period, like my friends and interview partners, can imagine alternative life-paths whose roads to happiness also lead back to Japan.

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[15] Ibid.

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