

After Redress

A Conversation with Roy Miki

Through his work as a critic, poet, editor, teacher, community organizer, and activist, Roy Miki has made innumerable and lasting contributions to Asian Canadian studies and to critical thought in Canada. Following the publication of *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (2004), Miki visited Taiwan to deliver a series of talks in the north and south of the island. The following interview took place in Taipei on 13 November 2004. Over the course of this conversation, Miki discusses a wide range of topics, including the challenges of writing a narrative history of the Japanese Canadian redress movement; the late 1980s as a remarkable turning point in the Canadian nation; redress as an unfinished project in Canada; the conflicted cultural politics of the 1990s; historical memory in Taiwan; the question of the nation and globalization; his work as a teacher and his relationship to academic institutions; the current state of CanLit; and, finally, his thoughts on what he calls the “struggles to create the terms of homing and belonging all over the world.”

GB: I’m interested in the way your book *Redress* (2004) explicitly foregrounds a search for a *form* to represent the Japanese Canadian redress movement. In particular, I’m interested in how you think the notion of a “flexible procedure” (xiv) that you mention in the preface might distinguish this particular project from existing narrative representations of redress such as *Justice in Our Time* (1991), or *Bittersweet Passage* (1992), or *Itsuka* (1992; rev. 1993), all of which were published in the early 1990s.¹ What does *Redress* bring to the table?

RM: I had been working on this book for most of the 1990s and trying to find some means of writing a study of redress that would capture the inner turmoil of the movement. I really wanted to revisit its chaos and uncertainty.

Over a period of years, I had accumulated—amassed might be a better word—piles of documents. I'd gone through the files of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), numerous government files, and I'd received important material from individuals who had participated in the movement—so I had boxes and boxes of stuff. But for some reason I couldn't find a voice to lift this research material into a language that matched the intensity of the movement. The standard historical voice, the voice of the historian rigorously tying down the sources for virtually every statement that was made and trying to plod through the factual history of redress—that voice wasn't attractive to me. I initially tried writing parts of the book in that form, but it didn't allow me to be reflexive enough as a writer. I soon became very conscious—and here my literary background was coming through—that in writing a history of redress, I was also creating a narrative and therefore involving myself in a kind of a fictional interpretation based on these documents or facts. But the two sides—the creative and the documentary—didn't come together for me.

I decided to step back from the material. In a way, I abandoned the writing project because I felt at the time—this was the mid-1990s—that whatever I came up with would not be satisfying. Instead, I got more directly involved in a lot of critical race theory. The essays that became *Broken Entries* (1998) were all written when the redress book was set aside. There's one essay on Japanese Canadian identity near the end of that collection—"Unclassified Subjects: Question Marking Japanese Canadian Identity"—in which I began to get a sense of the broader narrative that I later track in the book. It makes use of the opening passage of *Redress* where I situate myself in the House of Commons at the moment that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney recites the acknowledgement. I thought, if I start the book that way, where am I going to take it?

In dwelling on that moment, I became fascinated by the obvious—but for me not so simple—idea that before the acknowledgement Japanese Canadians were unredressed; after the acknowledgement, we were then redressed. So we were no longer the same people. When we sat down to listen to the acknowledgement, we were still in the unredressed state; when we stood up and clapped for the prime minister's statement, we became different subjects. In a way, that essay opened up for me—and I didn't really probe it at the time—an intriguing question: what did it mean to go from this sitting state to this standing state? When we sat down, the members of Parliament and the prime minister looked up at us, and when we stood up we looked down on them. This process of looking up and looking down, this exchange of glances,

suggested to me the passage of a particular identity formation and that I needed to understand what was going on in that moment.

GB: Do you mind if I jump in and ask about the question of “exchange” and the way it is represented in the powerful scene in the House of Commons you return to at the end of the book? In that scene, you note that, “In this brief moment, they [the NAJC delegates] entered into an unprecedented exchange with the Canadian nation and simultaneously underwent a historical transformation with far-reaching implications. . . . In receiving the gift of redress from a nation that had stripped them of their rights in the 1940s, they also gave the gift of redress to a nation that had acknowledged the injustices they had suffered as a consequence of that action” (325). How do you feel this notion of *exchange* or the *gift* can help to understand this remarkable moment?

RM: It’s both a loss and a gain. When you’re dealing with this notion of a wounded identity, as long as you’re in the state of the wound, you’re always moving toward a future where you imagine the pain to be resolved. The paradox is that, if you ever get to that future, you can no longer occupy that condition of consciousness. Japanese Canadians throughout the twentieth century lived with this future before them. In a way, their entire history (I’m talking in broad narrative terms) was constituted on this future moment. They built their lives and negotiated not only within the community but with the state on various levels—economic, social, cultural—always on the hope that this future would come to pass. If it wasn’t the full rights of citizenship, it was being able to live where they wanted to live, becoming members of the Canadian nation, taking their place in the whole drama of citizenship, and so on.

Redress was a thing in the future. When it was done, there was a loss because that history then got absorbed into the official history of Canada. And that official history, of course, to a certain extent is mediated and managed by the state. So here we were in the House of Commons, a group of individuals who had been wronged by the state, in a sense offering up our history to that state so that the state could “redeem” itself. The state—and, at that moment, the nation—strengthened itself by taking ownership of redress. And that’s where the loss occurs, because now Japanese Canadians were a manifestation of the official narrative and were no longer in a condition of lack. The history that got absorbed into the nation and got to be retold through the official history is both ours and no longer ours.

GB: The notion of “surrender” that appears later on that same page tries to name that process in some way.

RM: Yes, I was playing around with a self-reflexive moment.

GB: To refer back to the title of your collection of poetry?

RM: Yes, mainly for fun. But it's also this idea or question: after the redress movement, then what? What happens as a consequence of the settlement? Of course, there are many repercussions in terms of the history of human rights and the way that the discourse of redress will be disseminated. So redress, from that moment, is born as a discourse. We may no longer have control over where that discourse is going to go or how we are going to be framed in it. And we will no longer be able to complain that we are unredressed. We won't be able to say, "We've been shafted! We need to do something! It was unfair what happened to us! Something ought to be done about this!"—which is what so much of Japanese Canadian history has been about. I'm referring to that future where you imagine something to be resolved. That's why I've said that once we—that is, the Japanese Canadians who were interned—gave up our history, we were placed at the heart of the nation, but then we also disappeared in our unredressed state.

I don't think I'm just being romantic about it. The community that was interned was disappearing—in poetic terms and in real terms as well because physically they had aged and were dying in large numbers. The community that was redressed on September 22, 1988, was for the most part made up of older people in their sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties. It was for them a moment of incredible intensity. For my mom, who was in her mid-seventies, it was a moment of historical resolution, something she never dreamt would ever happen in her lifetime. Many people in her generation couldn't believe it. For them, the history had been resolved. Redress brought their life to a meaningful closure.

GB: At the same time that this personal or community closure was happening, there was also a convergence of other events happening almost simultaneously, a convergence that your book identifies and discusses with great clarity. In 1988, we could witness the passing of Bill C-93 (commonly known as the Multiculturalism Act), the negotiated redress settlement that your book represents directly, and the heated debates over the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. What do you feel is at stake in looking back to this remarkable convergence of events?

RM: The way I started to understand it, and why this book started to take on a narrative—i.e., redress as a gift—is that the Canadian nation that had incorporated redress into its official history was already unravelling. That postwar nation, in many ways, had already become obsolete. The government was using redress at a moment in which Canadian unity seemed to be coming

apart in order to reify a notion of citizenship that was already passing. So Japanese Canadians functioned, perhaps, as a means of shoring up a citizenship that seemed to have lost its internal substance.

GB: Or was at a moment of particular crisis.

RM: Yes, I thought there was a crisis in the nation and that Japanese Canadian redress was a way to somehow reaffirm momentarily—and, maybe, the government thought for a long time, because they made a big deal of the human rights aspect of it—the value of citizenship rights at that time. That’s the same time when free trade was being debated. The Free Trade Agreement would cut across the state’s ability to maintain a particular notion of nation. From this angle, Japanese Canadian redress was used by the state, but it was also a moment in which the nation was already shifting to another place.

So there’s another loss, which strikes me as strange and humorous at the same time. It’s that thought: “By the time the Japanese Canadian subject gets into the nation, the nation has gone elsewhere!”

GB: You can have the nation, because the nation has become something else!

RM: I’m not being pessimistic about this shift. I’m simply trying to clarify the complexity of the historical turn that was going on. As a result, the discourse of redress began to move, from its immediate ties to the history of the nation, towards globalizing discourses or discourses around globalization. In the early 1990s, these discourses began to undo much of the cultural politics that dominated the 1980s, especially evident in the antiracism, the anticolonial, the decolonizing movements, and so on. But in the early 1990s, people who never supported these movements were saying, talking about “Thank God, identity politics is dead. We’re now moving into a new era beyond racism, beyond narrow nationalisms. We’re moving into a cosmopolitan, global sphere, where we can reinvent new liberal values.” I didn’t believe in this rhetoric at the time, but that was the talk that started to emerge.

In a way, redress in the form that Japanese Canadians initiated it disappeared in that sphere. But it started to reappear in different forms. For instance, in the Korean comfort women redress movement in the 1990s, a direct link was often made with Japanese Canadian and Japanese American redress. And in other redress movements in the 1990s, even in a time of rapid globalization, different kinds of concerns over redress sprang up.

GB: Some of those concerns are directly related to the public sites of memory representing the 228 Incident we saw earlier today as we walked around in Taipei.² We visited the 228 Monument put up in 1995; we saw an English translation of then President Lee Teng-hui’s public apology given at that

time, as well as a translation of then Mayor of Taipei Chen Shui-bian's inscription commemorating the renaming of New Park as "228 Peace Park" in 1996, as well as visual and textual displays in the 228 Memorial Museum. Is there anything interesting for you in these different sites?

RM: What's interesting is that the time schemes in Taiwan and in Canada correspond in an uncanny way. We're looking at a major shift in Canada in 1988. And then in the late 1980s in Taiwan—

GB: The late 1980s—the end of martial law in Taiwan in 1987 is what you're referring to, right?

RM: Yes, and in the early 1990s, there was a redress movement in Taiwan—a movement for reparations and redress for the 228 Incident.³ There was an attempt to right a wrong, and it involved a whole pile of people coming together to try to resolve that wounded condition. They themselves looked to the future, to this resolved state when they could "transform historical sadness" or transcend that woundedness.⁴ And they did it, but it hasn't solved the problem. So now they are dealing with the postmemorialization period. It's similar to Japanese Canadians, but in our case of course our community is so small, and we don't occupy a geographical site, and we are not a nation and have no potential of becoming one. But I think that the processes and the routes that we went through in resolving what we considered an injustice in the past bear similarities to what we saw in these sites of public memory in Taipei.

GB: In other respects, in Canada, you also acknowledge that redress remains an unfinished project. I'm thinking specifically of your assertion in the preface that "[s]ocial justice for individuals and groups whose rights have been abrogated by government actions and policies remains an unresolved issue" (xi). The preface goes on to mention the abuses in residential schools set up for Aboriginal children, the head tax levied on prospective Chinese immigrants to Canada, and the internment of Ukrainian Canadians during World War I.⁵ What's at stake in attempting to "resolve" these issues?

RM: The language of redress proposes a philosophical way of understanding the relationship between the present and the past and the kind of accountability that always remains when an injustice is inflicted on a group. It's the assumption that, if an injustice is inflicted today, then the future is going to bear the effects of it. In the neoliberal language that we are used to in North America, there is always this assumption that the world is reinvented every day and that the present generation is not accountable for things that occurred in the past. That attitude consistently leads to a covering over of wounded conditions or of groups who have suffered from injustices.

But history has shown us that people who have had to endure injustices don't forget easily. The persistence of those who were directly affected, and their kids, and their grandkids, and whole societies—we see this in Indigenous communities and in other communities as well—by past events, even a hundred or more years ago, is evident in the strength of memory and the discourses through which it can question and shape history. Injustices don't go away. Yet, at the same time, a lot of liberal governments feel that they don't want to be accountable to them. Redress is both a philosophical and political way of addressing the issue of accountability through transformative processes. The danger, of course, is that in some cases redress movements could be reduced to simplistic and sometimes quite violent binaries—a we/they relationship—that don't go anywhere.

What's relevant here is that Japanese Canadians, in mounting a redress movement, had to remake themselves as “proper” citizens of the nation, citizens whose voices could not be denied because they were “of” that nation. Some people might be very critical of this, describing this remaking in words like “compromise” and “complicity” and so on. But I don't think that any resolution can be made unless there is a meeting of the discourses through which redress is sought and the discourses that inform the nation. That's where the gain and the loss are always simultaneous.

Of course, there are so many different ways that the state can devise to both promise something and then withhold it. That is why I point out in my book that the only settlement that we would accept was a negotiated settlement—one that was negotiated directly and not mediated by legal discourse.

GB: At this point, I wonder if we can return to a point you made earlier concerning the 1990s as a time of rapid globalization. What circumstances led to your critical turn to this topic?

RM: For me, it's probably the Writing Thru Race conference in 1994.

GB: I was also going to ask about that! Here, though, I was thinking specially about your work from the publication of “Altered States” (2000) onward.

RM: The process began a lot earlier.

GB: How did it begin?

RM: The year 1994 is an important marker for me. If you look at the Writing Thru Race conference in terms of the internal cultural politics of Canada—of the huge amount of antiracism work initiated from the early 1980s to the early 1990s—you can see it as the end result, perhaps even the culmination, of that politics. So much had happened that led to the critique of mainstream institutions such as the Canada Council.

GB: And critiques of the Writers' Union of Canada too?

RM: Yes, a very good example. It was because of pressure from First Nations writers and "minority writers" (so called at the time) that the Writers' Union set up its Racial Minority Writers Committee. I joined the Writers' Union to attend The Appropriate Voice conference, which was sponsored by the Writers' Union in 1992 but organized by the Racial Minority Writers Committee. It was the first gathering of writers of colour and First Nations writers in a retreat, a sign of a momentum developing. As I recall, some sixty or so writers attended the three-day retreat, in Geneva Park, near Orillia, Ontario. Fred Wah dragged me into the event. I wasn't a member of the Writers' Union, but Fred insisted, "You have to come to this conference." I think he guilted me into it! So I went, and I was really moved by the stories of internalized racism told by writers in their dealings with publishers and various writing communities. By the end of the retreat, I was hooked on the issues raised and decided to do something. I think it was then and there that Fred and I pledged to co-edit a special issue of *West Coast Line*, which became *Colour. An Issue* (1994).

I also joined the Writers' Union. The following year, in 1993, at the AGM of the Writers' Union, the Racial Minority Writers Committee called a meeting to talk about follow-up plans from The Appropriate Voice conference. I was sitting at the back of the room. Fred was on the Racial Minority Writers Committee. People were talking about various issues, and I said something like, "Well, I think that a big national conference could probably push this whole effort further."

GB: So this led to Writing Thru Race.

RM: I had opened my mouth! And then Fred and a number of people said to me, "Roy, you should join the Racial Minority Writers Committee. We'll all work together." I reluctantly agreed, joined the committee, and within about an hour I found myself chairing the committee! It all happened so fast. Not only that, but we even passed a motion that we would have a national conference the following year.

GB: It was that quick?

RM: It was that quick. We then placed the motion on the floor of the Writers' Union. And you have to remember that racial issues were creating considerable tension in the Union at the time.

GB: And they continued to raise a lot of tension when the conference actually went forward.

RM: But even before the conference, The Appropriate Voice created a lot of

ruffles in the union. So the next day of the AGM I introduced myself as the new chair of the Racial Minority Writers Committee and presented two motions. One, for the Writers' Union to endorse a national conference in Vancouver—where I lived—for writers of colour and First Nations writers; we didn't have the guidelines worked out yet, except to say that the conference would address internalized forms of racism and that it would encourage strong elements of sharing. Two—this was controversial—I asked the union to provide immediately five thousand dollars seed money to raise more funds. Of course, that generated a lot of debate! But the motions passed. So by May or June of 1993, we had a motion that there would be a national conference for writers of colour and First Nations writers in Vancouver in 1994. Then we decided, "Let's run this conference so it lands on Canada Day." Again, we wanted to play with the notion of the nation that so many writers had felt alienated from. From that point on, we had to work like crazy to raise the necessary funds.

The one thing that the Writers' Union agreed to—which we made a stipulation—was the establishment of a working conference committee made up of both union and nonunion writers. We set up a committee in Vancouver and began holding open meetings once a month, brainstorming for this conference. These meetings were fascinating. They would attract about twenty to twenty-five people. We'd sit around the room and hash out what kind of conference we wanted. A core group soon emerged out of those meetings. Larissa Lai was in it, Scott McFarlane was in it, and a number of other people. They became the conference committee.

GB: The early to mid-1990s was a remarkably volatile time in terms of putting issues on the table and witnessing huge backlashes. Larissa Lai has written about this topic and spoke about it in her visit to National Tsing Hua University, where she noted that a "[m]assive conservative backlash against the activities and organizing of earlier in the 1990s has, in many locations, forced a deradicalization of the language we use to talk about race." What happened?

RM: I should try to place your question in a perspective that relates to the Writing Thru Race conference. When we established our policy that the workshops would be limited to writers of colour and First Nations writers, we got attacked viciously in the media and by politicians. There's a whole documentary record about that public hysteria, and I've written about it in *Broken Entries*. As a result, shortly before the conference, the federal government withdrew its funding of \$22,500. But also our agenda was derailed. All

along we didn't want the conference to be yet another replay of the white/nonwhite allegory about Canadian culture. We wanted to create a provisional and safe space where writers could really speak and share stories about their writing practices. But because of all the public hype, the conference agenda was, in a sense, taken over by the narrative of the "racial divide" in Canada.

The cost of the backlash became evident on the last day of the conference. Our Sunday morning meeting was set up as a session to talk about strategies for future work and for building coalitions. That meeting turned out to be a really strange affair—with people mostly complaining about all kinds of personal concerns. Dissatisfaction emerged, and many present there, I felt, were pulling back into their own enclosed identity formations. It seemed that they were not willing to risk giving up their hard-won identity formations to risk any kind of broad coalition to mount a larger front for antiracist work. Some of us became very frustrated at that point, and of course we were all exhausted by the pressure of putting the conference together in the face of so much public opposition. Immediately after the event, I went into a retreat mode. I realized that the whole struggle—the antiracist struggle in the arts that had been so powerful for the previous ten years—in a sense had exhausted itself. For me, this marks the transition from the heated politics of identity and representation in a Canadian nation context to the emergence of globalization discourse. And in turn, this discourse also brought with it an attack on identity politics and the deradicalization that Larissa talks about.

GB: Alongside that process of struggle, when we go back to your critical writings from this period, we can see that you were developing the notion of *asiancy*, from your paper at the Association for Asian American Studies conference at Cornell University in 1993, to your paper in *Privileging Positions* in 1995, to *Broken Entries* in 1998. How did that particular critical term evolve for you during that volatile period?

RM: At that same time that we were moving through various cultural crises, I still thought that the times, despite the controversies—or even because of them—were really exciting. I felt that many writers and artists were moving radically beyond strictly oppositional tactics and were incorporating new kinds of deterritorializing strategies that were allowing us to reinvent ourselves through formal innovation. So even while the public side was disappointing, in the sense that it was harder and harder to mobilize coalitions and to expect people to think collectively, different forms of writing were emerging.

GB: Can you give examples?

RM: Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) works out of that time period. Writers like Ashok Mathur, Rita Wong, Larissa Lai, Peter Hudson, Scott McFarlane, Wayne Compton, and Hiromi Goto were getting into some serious writing at the time. For instance, Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) deals with antiracism in a formally innovative way. The Writing Thru Race conference, then, was a catalyst that pushed a lot of people forward.

GB: How about for Aboriginal writers? Did it work in quite the same way?

RM: I haven't been able to quantify it. Marilyn Dumont was there. Jeannette Armstrong was there. I don't have a specific figure, but First Nations writers made up quite a large percentage of the writers who attended the conference. The good thing was that, for all the writers who came, the event was a moment of arrival and departure. So many writers of colour and First Nations writers came together for one intense weekend, generating ideas like crazy. But when the conference ended, they spun off as individuals and not as a collective. You could see that they were moving in different directions, and as I look back now I think it was because of the disseminating effects of globalization. After 1995, if you look at the Canadian cultural scene, I can't think of any major collective actions by writers of colour on a national scale. Even the term "of colour" lost its urgency. From 1995 to 2000, as the activist work waned, people started getting more concerned with globalization and commodification. From this point on, economic values began to take on much larger importance in cultural work.

GB: As you look back, what do you think made this critical turn to globalization possible?

RM: The nationalist politics that I had been involved in, I thought, had shifted too much at that point. We had to begin to understand ourselves in relation to other nations and to try to figure out what was going on outside of Canada. We needed to rethink all the ethnic and racialized boundaries that have governed our thinking in the previous two decades. At the same time, I was also beginning to rethink Canadian literature from a critical perspective. I got more preoccupied with critiques of the nation, how it was formed, and the conditions through which difference—or the making of difference—functioned within the nation throughout its history. In other words, I wanted to get inside that history, so we could see both where we're coming from and maybe help open up a more socially just future.

GB: To what extent, then, could an event like the TransCanada conference in Vancouver in June 2005 contribute to these evolving concerns about the nation and globalization?

RM: The TransCanada conference attempts, in a critical way, to resituate a cultural history.⁶ This is from my perspective of course. Other people will see the conference from their own perspectives. My sense is that much of the cultural history that has been produced over the last thirty years or more still needs to find a critical base, and it is those teaching and studying Canadian literature in university contexts at this time who are in the ideal position to deal with it critically and ethically. It's not up to me to say where their work is going to go, but it seems to be an opportune time to try to locate that history within institutional frameworks.

I also think that the study of Canadian literature, as a vital intellectual project, has entered into a dormant state. Some or many people would disagree because of all the graduate work happening, but the larger and more fundamental questions are not being addressed in any kind of collective way. For instance, why study CanLit? Are there substantial ethical, cultural, and social reasons why we should devote so much energy to this body of literature? The answer is, for a lot of us, yes, there are, but we have to find new terms. The TransCanada conference has the long-term objective of attempting to create a national collective for the study of Canadian literature. And it may be that a new kind of collective is possible at this moment that is quite different from the collectives that were formed in the 1980s.

GB: Out of the many hats you wear, I'd like to ask you about your role as an educator. You work as an editor, as a critic, as a poet, as a public intellectual—but you're also a teacher. I'm wondering how your work as an educator has informed or intersected with the many other projects you are involved in?

RM: In a life sense, everything is a mode of education—but, in the more specific terms of my relationship to the university, it has never been simple. I've always been very suspicious of academic frameworks, because academics and the institutional contexts they work in are constantly driven by the effort to contain or otherwise assume control over the disorder of human experience. Some people would reply that they're simply making sense of the disorder, but knowledge production remains troublesome because of its lack of accountability in most institutions. This is why I've never felt "comfortable" being an academic. When I was younger, I would have preferred a more open-ended life as a public intellectual, but in Canada, of course, this isn't all that possible if you want some kind of job security, so most intellectuals gravitate towards universities.

On the other hand, I've tried to work in social contexts outside the university so that my non-academic preoccupations have not always been in

sync with my work as an academic. Often I've had to "steal" time from work I should have been doing in more strictly academic forms to be involved in social and cultural conflicts and struggles. At times, I would spend countless hours organizing a community-based conference, raising funds, and writing up reports, instead of writing an academic article. But I've always thought that the non-academic work was worthwhile, because for me it had to do with the public act of educating. So you might say that I'm not a good academic.

GB: You're not an *obedient* academic!

RM: It could be related to class issues too. I grew up on the streets of central Winnipeg, where only a handful completed high school. University education seemed out of reach, and a PhD, and becoming a professor were pretty well unthinkable. As I made my way through various universities, I remained wary of academic life. In rough social times, in the face of social injustices, I noticed that the university as an institution and most of the academics employed in them didn't take the lead in helping the people who were affected. Being in university always seemed so removed from the quotidian sphere of everyday life and especially removed from the kind of social violence I witnessed as a kid growing up in central Winnipeg. The distance between academic knowledge and social injustices has had a deep effect on me. It doesn't mean that I'm an avid social reformer, but it has made me conscious that knowledge production is not innocent and can be used against people. You have to always be cautious about the consequences of the knowledge you produce and the limits of the institutionalization of knowledge.

During the last ten years or so, I've tried to pay more attention to a critique of institutions and have tried to develop modes of critical performance that can help students—and me too—work our way towards knowledge production that can generate ethical forms of interacting with each other. I enjoy seeing students become performing scholars—in other words, scholars who can take control of but also be accountable for their research and their work, right down to the sentences they write. For me, now, working with small groups of students has become a major way of acting in the world!

GB: In the past few years, you've spent more time travelling outside of Canada, whether it's been to Australia or to Japan or now to Taiwan. What has this left you with?

RM: I've gained enormously from meeting people working in scholarship or cultural activity in other social and historical contexts. Such contact feeds my own work. But I also enjoy sharing what we're doing in Canada with

other people. There's always the potential for new forms to emerge out of interaction. I'm always curious about the ways in which people in different regions or nations of the world, who occupy quite radically different spaces from myself, deal with issues that concern me, such as history, memory, and language. You see struggles to create the terms of homing and belonging all over the world.

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NOTES

- 1 See Kogawa; Miki and Kobayashi; and Omatsu.
- 2 The 228 Incident (also known as the February 28 Incident) refers back to state-directed violence by incoming Nationalist forces against the people of Taiwan in the period immediately following an altercation in Taipei on 27 February 1947. The 228 Monument Inscription in Taipei, as one public record of this event, states that, "[w]ithin a couple of months, the people who died, were wounded, or were missing numbered in the ten thousands" ("228 Monument"). Among many thoughtful analyses of the complex cultural politics of remembering the incident, see A-chin Hsiao's assertion that "[t]here are no historical or political issues more sensitive and controversial in postwar Taiwan than the 2-28 Incident" (168), particularly in the context of the increasing freedom of speech following the lifting of martial law in 1987.
- 3 See Hsiao 168–69 for a discussion of the "2-28 Peace Day Campaign Association," a group of opposition activists that organized in February 1987 and subsequently "staged a series of mass rallies and demonstrations in major cities across the island in early 1987, demanding that the KMT [i.e., Chinese Nationalist] government confess the truth of the Incident and rehabilitate the victims of the massacre committed by KMT troops" (168). Following increasing pressure, the Nationalist government of Taiwan provided redress and compensation through the 228 Incident Compensation and Rehabilitation Act, which was announced on 7 April 1995 with an expressed purpose "to deal with compensation for the 228 Incident, to let people understand the truth of the incident, to heal the sadness, and to enhance integration." The act authorized the Executive Yuan to set up the February 28 Memorial Foundation, which was authorized to provide compensation to victims or relatives of victims of the 228 Incident; to hold memorial activities; to introduce facts of the incident to people; to subsidize educational texts or publications about the incident; to subsidize investigations of or research about the incident; to help recover victims' reputations; and to enhance social peace in Taiwan ("228 Incident").

- 4 Miki is referring to the phrasing of a public inscription dated 28 February 1996 written by Chen Shui-bian, then the mayor of Taipei, located near the west entrance to 228 Peace Park in Taipei. On this public inscription, Chen asserted that “Taipei Park [also known as New Park] is renamed 228 Peace Park to transform historical sadness.” On a similar register, then President Lee Teng-hui announced in a speech one year earlier on 28 February 1995 that the newly completed 228 Monument in Taipei “symbolizes our firm determination to bid farewell to historical sadness.”
- 5 There have been various attempts to “resolve” these issues since the publication of Miki’s *Redress* in 2004. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, signed in May 2006, acknowledged that its signatories “desire[d] a fair, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian Residential Schools” (6) and set out specific terms for redress, healing, and commemoration. The Settlement Agreement was followed by the formal establishment of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 1 June 2008 and an apology delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on 11 June 2008. For further discussion of these developments, see Episkenew, who acknowledges that the Harper apology was “positive and, as many Indigenous political leaders mentioned, long overdue” (188) but also sharply observes that “[b]y only apologizing for one element of its genocidal policies—the residential schools—Canada implicitly refuses to take responsibility for the trauma that the remainder of its policies continue to cause” (189-90). Likewise, Prime Minister Harper apologized on 22 June 2006 for the Chinese head tax and provided, through a non-negotiated settlement, redress for living head tax payers and the living spouses of head tax payers. As I have noted elsewhere, “Harper’s announcement subsequently generated a complex mix of euphoria (that the federal government of Canada had finally acknowledged its wrongdoing) and critique (that the “symbolic payments” were to provide compensation to living head tax payers and to the living spouses of head tax payers only—and thereby redress only a fraction of the Chinese immigrants and their Chinese Canadian descendants affected by the head tax)” (Beauregard 19). Finally, the federal government of Canada announced on 9 May 2008 that it would dedicate ten million dollars from its Community Historical Recognition Program to “the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Teras Shevchenko to establish an endowment fund to support initiatives related to the First World War internment experience that predominantly affected the Ukrainian and other East European ethnic communities in Canada”; see “Government.”
- 6 Our discussion here addresses the anticipated impact of “TransCanada One: Literature, Institutions, Citizenship” held in Vancouver in June 2005. Subsequent TransCanada conferences have been held at the University of Guelph in October 2007 and at Mount Allison University in July 2009; for further details about these conferences, see “TransCanada Institute.” See also Kamboureli for a succinct overview of the broader objectives of the TransCanada project, which she describes as “a provisional site, one enabling a collaborative endeavor through which we could begin to rethink the ‘disciplinary and institutional frameworks within which Canadian literature is produced, disseminated, studied and taught’” (xiv).

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