Post-Redress Memory:
A Personal Reflection on Manzanar Murakami

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Abstract
This is a revised version of a talk whose original objective was to reflect on my past work in the area of Japanese American internment narratives, in particular on one essay entitled “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange,” in which I show how the character named Manzanar Murakami, through an arduous process of voluntary homelessness, traumatic amnesia, and spectacular performance art, transforms his Japanese American subjectivity from being an absent presence in U.S. society to one that can consciously carry an ineradicable painful memory of internment while retaining a vital sense of being at home in America. In reflecting on this paper, I recalled the long process of my coming to recognize a new mode of internment memory which, emerging after the Redress movement had concluded victoriously, pointed to what was missing in extant literary narratives of internment memory. I gave the name “post-Redress internment memory” to this new mode of remembering. My talk on “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange,” expanded and amended, is incorporated here as the second and third sections of the present paper. A first section was added in order to situate post-Redress memory within the rubric of “phantom Asian America,” and a fourth section was added to recapitulate my argument in a different context—the necessity of a fully engaged and pleasurable sensory apparatus for the work of literary criticism and the teaching of critical war memory.

Keywords
Japanese American internment, Manzanar, Redress movement, post-Redress memory, sensory apparatus, trauma narratives, Tropic of Orange
Manzanar Murakami and Phantom Memory

[The “relocation” of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II remains the signal historical event that informs my intellectual/political practice. Speaking about it at any length provokes profound feelings of rage and sorrow and defiance that are in and of the body in ways difficult to describe in words.

—Dorinne Kondo

About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater

There was a moment in the history of Asian American literary studies in the U.S., a rather long moment that spanned the last decade of the twentieth century, when interest in Japanese American internment seemed to have evaporated. Yet during this same period—the first decade following the passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act which marked a successful conclusion to the Redress movement—internment was the subject of dozens of new publications both academic and lay-oriented, not to mention an untold number of other forms of cultural production such as lectures, readings, workshops, discussion groups, conferences small and large, museum exhibitions, and theatrical and musical performances, which all sought to reexamine and reclaim the experiences and meanings of this “mournful reference point” in Japanese American and U.S. history (CWRIC 301). The fact that these two historical processes occurred simultaneously—a striking scarcity of work on internment within academic Asian American literary studies but outside of this domain of reading and writing, a burgeoning of new memory work on the camps—can be understood as one way in which “phantomization” of narratives and epistemologies occurs through the politics of doing Asian American studies. Phantomization as the rendering invisible of certain texts, topics, and methodologies through our different vested interests in determining which specific texts and topics, which particular modes of representation and inquiry, will be prioritized and pursued in our research and teaching.

When I first encountered the passage from Dorinne Kondo’s About Face that serves as an epigraph for this essay, I was struck by the fact that a highly successful and eloquent Asian Americanist was admitting, ten years after the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, to the persistent trauma of internment and even a kind of “inarticulateness” in the face of this subject: “Speaking about it at any length provokes profound feelings of rage and sorrow and defiance that are in and of the body in ways difficult to describe in words” (9). This passage was one of several such articulations that came by chance into my field of observation throughout the 1990s, and I eventually came to see them as being symptomatic of the phantom status of internment studies within Asian American literary criticism. The number of new literary narratives
of internment memory published in the 1980s and 1990s had been substantial, but academic literary criticism had not responded in kind.

But there is another sense in which internment illustrates a case of “phantom Asian America”—in the forms of its absence or presence within Japanese American internment memory. A collective memory of internment has always existed distributed across the personal consciousness of each Japanese American who experienced it directly or learned about it secondhand, and through extensive networks of oral history both informal and formal—stories told at family gatherings or disseminated more widely through communal forms of memory work, including the well-known annual pilgrimages to various sites of wartime “Relocation Centers” but also embracing a much more varied, extensive, and ephemeral range of activities of remembrance. And this collective memory has been primarily responsible for keeping the history of internment alive, before the Redress movement was formally underway, throughout its long struggle, and since its official conclusion. However, at the level of each individual’s particular internment memory, not only can knowledge about, and attitudes toward, the history and legacy of internment vary significantly, but, as expressed in the epigraph above viewed from another angle, internment memory is not readily negotiated even by individuals like Kondo who are trained to think and speak about such matters and willingly do so as part of their chosen way of life.

This essay addresses both kinds of phantomization of internment memory. My analysis of the representation of “Manzanar” in Tropic of Orange expands the discussion of internment memory within the discourse of Asian American literary criticism, while directing attention to certain psychological aspects of internment memory that, for Japanese Americans in the post-Redress era, not only remain unfinished business but perhaps ought to remain so. This essay was first presented at a roundtable, “War and Nation: A South/East Asian Dialogue,” which was part of a four-day Summer Institute in Asian American Studies held at Academia Sinica, in Taipei, from August 1-4, 2013. My objective for the roundtable was to reflect on my past work in the area of Japanese American internment narratives, in particular on one essay entitled “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange,” in which I show how the character named Manzanar Murakami, through an arduous process of voluntary homelessness, traumatic amnesia, and spectacular performance art, reformulates Japanese American subjectivity from a condition of absent presence in U.S. society to a vital sense of being at home in America that is premised on his ability to carry, rather than forget or “move beyond,” an ineradicable painful memory of internment. In looking back on the writing of “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange,” I recalled the long process of my coming to recognize a new mode of internment memory that emerged after the Redress movement had concluded victoriously, and thus pointed to what was missing in extant literary narratives of internment memory. I gave the name “post-Redress internment memory” to this new mode of remembering. The roundtable talk, extended and amended, now comprises the second and third sections of this paper.
I have added this first section in order to situate post-Redress memory within the rubric of “phantom Asian America,” and a fourth section was also added, in which I recapitulate my argument in a different context—the necessity of a fully engaged and pleasurable sensory apparatus to the work of literary criticism and the teaching of critical war memory.

**Manzanar Murakami and Pleasure**

I begin with three sentences from Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Circle K Cycles*, a travel narrative and diary of her six months in the city of Seto, Aichi Prefecture, in 1997. Much of the book first appeared on the Café Creole website of Japanese anthropologist Ryuta Imafuku, who was Yamashita’s sponsor for this trip to Japan. The sentences I will quote are from the chapter called “July: Circle K Rules,” in which the author distills certain traits of national character into a set of rules for getting along with people in that country. She has a set for Japan, for Brazil, and for the USA. Then, she ends with a set called “Circle K Rules,” for the country of her experience and imagination: 1) “Learn to cook your favorite foods;” 2) “Immigrate into your own country;” 3) “Ask the next question” (114). I have used these Rules on many occasions since first encountering them, especially at graduation ceremonies. In just fifteen words, they distill everything you need to remember about living well, for yourself and with respect for the wellbeing of others, in the place you happen to be. Circle K Rules popped into my head again as I was finalizing my comments for the roundtable. Neatly aligning themselves with the keywords for the Summer Institute—“fields,” “formations,” “futures”—they clarified the questions I wanted to pose about the experience of writing “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange.”

1) **What are my favorite foods as a literary critic, and do I practice criticism as the boss of my own kitchen?** How have I chosen the fields, or subject matter, of my research, or how have they chosen me? How did I recognize a field when I found myself standing in it, or near it, and what skills have I acquired from cultivating those fields?

2) **How has moving between Hawai‘i and New England, Hawai‘i and Japan, given me some measure of the critical imagination expressed as “immigration into one’s own country”?** What are the formations, that is, the practices and contexts of cultivation, through which I have navigated various fields of interest?

3) **What futures rested on the questions I was able to ask?** What have been the implications of my fieldwork for the future of Asian American Studies and my own life?

In retrospect, I see how the fields, formations, and futures that found expression in “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange” were built up over many years, the result of moving from Hawai‘i to New England for graduate study, and later from the USA to Japan to live and work. Suffice it to say that I entered the field of internment memory not, like Dorinne Kondo or many other Asian Americanists, through a verbalized family history of direct experience of the internment, but primarily through
geo-political displacements that necessitated a re-viewing of my Japanese American subjectivity, which had previously been only vaguely connected to the intertwined and differentiated histories of Asians in the USA and Hawaii, and a re-thinking of my American subjectivity, which had been ignorant of the specific and extensive unfinished histories of America’s wars in Asia.

But it is remarkable how this narrative of coming into internment memory, with which I have been on intimate terms for so long, and looks so simple after it gets written up like this, was not easy to articulate despite my long familiarity with it. When I chose “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange” as a contribution for the Reader compiled for the Summer Institute, the reason for my choice was simply the extreme satisfaction I had experienced in writing it. At the moment of submission, I did not reflect at all beyond that, assuming it would be a piece of cake to articulate later on what that satisfaction consisted of and why it is a significant thing to share with others, especially young scholars. I found myself writing furiously for fifteen hours on a Tuesday night, flying out from Tokyo early Wednesday morning without having slept a wink, and all I had to show for it were lifeless words in one discarded document after another staring at me from the laptop screen. Like the garbage that washes up on the shoreline where Manzanar stands at the end of Tropic of Orange when he emerges from traumatic amnesia. Still sleepless at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, and exactly twenty-four hours before my presentation, it finally occurred to me that there was a kernel of truth in this offhand comparison between Manzanar and me. Which is to say, I cannot elaborate the meaning of the extreme satisfaction I felt in writing this particular paper unless I recognize it for what it is—an emotional resolution to a problem of emotion, certainly not on the order of Manzanar’s crisis of identity in the wake of being imprisoned by his government at the age of four as an enemy of the country, but, an emotional experience just the same.

By “emotional experience” I am speaking now about knowing what I like, or love, amongst the materials of my work. One thing I confirmed through writing “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange” is that not all great works of literature are equal, and that this is a very natural and good thing. To be intensely receptive to a particular text as well as a particular type of text is to be gifted by those texts. I am not an omnivore. In my forty years as a student of literature, there have been only a few books that lock onto my sensibilities like radar. Books that have possessed me, not only for what I thought I understood, but for certain passages I could not paraphrase, that registered as feelings resisting verbalization for a long time. When I was an undergraduate, those books were Moby Dick, Invisible Man, A Portrait of a Lady, and Middlemarch. Later, when I came to specialize in Asian American literature, only Brazil-Maru and Tropic of Orange had this effect on me, and in the past few years the only other books I have added to this list are some of Murakami Haruki’s earliest and most recent novels.
Perhaps this sounds like a very unprofessional and useless kind of thing to say to young scholars, like confessing that I adore strawberry ice cream but remain unmoved by other flavors. “So what?” you might ask. But, I insist that the point is, precisely, the discovery of knowing what I like and what likes me, that the experience of finding and being found by these special texts, whatever kind they may be for your chosen field, is an essential and necessary joy, akin to the vitality that Manzanar Murakami, in *Tropic of Orange*, finally rediscovered, and feeling it once more, could re-enter the very society in which he had once been overwhelmed by invisibilization.

**Manzanar Murakami and Post-Redress Internment Memory**

Of course, there’s more to “The Transpacific Gaze in *Tropic of Orange*” than this. Between 2003 and 2010, I wrote twelve papers or presentations on this one novel. But “The Transpacific Gaze” is perhaps the last in my Manzanar series, because in it I felt I had finished a giant jigsaw puzzle that had taken almost a decade to complete. So the extreme satisfaction of doing this paper was not just a matter of personal preference for some foods rather than others. But what was the puzzle that I finished?

This paper introduces the concept of “post-Redress internment memory.” The Redress movement was a political action organized mostly by Japanese American Nisei and Sansei, that is, the generation that came of age during the 1940s, and their children, many of whom were in their twenties during the 1970s. This movement is understood to have reached a successful conclusion, as a political action, in the passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act by the U.S. congress, which stipulated, among other things, symbolic payments of $20,000 to each surviving internee, and a written apology from the President of the United States.

The effect of the Redress movement on new investigations of the internment, to take only the work published by U.S.-based authors in English, was huge. As a quantitative phenomenon, the effect of the Redress movement was similar to the influence of Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking* (1997) on reexaminations of the Nanjing massacre in China, Japan, and the United States. But as a qualitative

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phenomenon, still viewed macroscopically, the post-Redress and post-Iris Chang effects were quite different. The post-Iris Chang literature on the Nanjing Massacre fueled a re-installation of memories of this event in America, China, Japan, Taiwan, and elsewhere. It was a public working out of tremendous anger and grief, including the uses of this memory work by politicians and academics to forge a new sense of old-fashioned nationalism in Japan and China. On the other hand, and again, let me stress that I am speaking of this complex phenomenon from a macroscopic point of view—the post-Redress literature on Japanese American internment was, at least to my eyes, tempered by different emotions and purposes. Although it was certainly angry, accusatory, and rent by grief, there was also a sense of closure in the anger, a sense of affirmation in the accusation, a sense of healing in the grieving, all of which strongly supported the idea that American democratic principles do win in the end, and that justice had finally been restored on the matter of Japanese American internment.

However, from the microscopic point of view, things looked and felt different even after Redress. I will give just one example. In 1996 or 1997, when *Tropic of Orange* was in press or had just been published, I was attending a panel discussion in J-Town, San Francisco, about possible parallels between postmemory survivors of the Holocaust and the internment. A man who looked to be in his 50s or 60s, who could have been a younger Nisei or an older Sansei, asked in a very emotional, aggressive voice, “Where are our writers?” His point being that whereas Jewish Americans have a wealth of novels, poems, dramas, films, etc. to draw upon in working through their feelings about the Holocaust, Japanese Americans are pitifully lacking in such resources. My immediate response was to want to stand up and shout about all the Japanese American literature that had been the subject of my dissertation in the mid-1980s. But I’m glad I didn’t, because in the void of my not responding to him, I kept hearing his question over and over. I remember the scene to this day. I also vividly remember seeing a young woman, perhaps in her twenties, hovering exactly at the entrance to the large room where the panel was being held, neither fully inside nor outside the room. She was with a group of friends, and at first I wondered if they positioned themselves there to express opposition to the event, but they never spoke up, and yet stayed there, restlessly attentive throughout the panel and the Q&A. I thought I recognized this young woman as the daughter of a prominent Sansei psychologist who had grown up in the Northeast but was now working in the Bay Area. By the time the panel concluded and folks were heading home, she and her friends were gone. Several years later when I met up again with the psychologist’s daughter in Japan, I remembered to ask her about that episode. I had in fact identified her correctly, and she also confirmed that she and her friends occupied that symbolic space at the entrance because they were caught between a desire to identify more explicitly with Japanese America, and a feeling that internment was irrelevant to their personal everyday lives. Although it turned out that I had not conjured a phantom presence that day from faulty memory, her hovering at the entrance was another embodiment of the Nisei man’s
perception of an absence of Japanese American creative writing dedicated to the internment, of a phantomization of internment memory within Japanese America. I realized that there was an inexplicable but nonetheless very real gap between academic and lay perceptions of the state of Japanese American internment memory, and between production and public reception of the considerable number of Japanese American internment narratives that had been published and were circulating. After all, this event was being held in J-Town, San Francisco, one of the cultural and political hubs of Japanese America.

This event later clicked in my mind with a few sentences that had startled me at the end of Dorinne Kondo’s first book, published in 1990, about her anthropological fieldwork in Tokyo. Crafting Selves is an account of how Japanese women find ways to empower themselves through the gendered constraints of their workplaces. It is obviously the work of a supremely intelligent, successful and stylish woman, and throughout, Kondo is very aware and articulate about how her being Japanese American alters the dynamics of her interactions with the Japanese artisans and shop staff with whom she is conducting field work. Perhaps because Japanese American subjectivity was so deftly woven into the argument of her book, her statement about the internment at the end of the book took me by surprise. It was a brief bubbling up, a few sentences, a confession of how she is filled with an unspeakable rage whenever the issue of internment comes up. Like the man’s question in J-Town, and the young woman hovering at the entrance, this moment in the book continued to echo in my mind.

And then came my belated discovery in 2003, in a small bookstore in Hawaii, that Lawson Inada, who has, like so many war memory authors, spent his life’s work on the one war that forever altered his fields, formations, and futures, had written a second volume of poems on internment, Legends from Camp (1992), his first book since the pioneering Before the War (1971) which was published before Asian American Studies had become a college major or a profession. At that moment of seeing Lawson Inada’s book, the three things clicked together in my head and I realized that Japanese American internment as a literary narrative had hardly been touched as a field of study, if you are trying to read an internment narrative as a different kind of act of recovery from that enabled by the Redress movement.

2 Unlike my memory of the psychologist’s daughter, this entire paragraph is framed by a false memory: the passage in question, used as the epigraph for this essay, is actually from the opening pages of Kondo’s second book, About Face, which is about relationships between Asian American identity politics and stereotypes of Japan in the American imaginary. Since this error of attribution does not affect the point I make in the paragraph—that it was surprising to see the same feelings and thoughts about internment, well after the end of the Redress movement, being voiced in such different contexts—I felt it would be less disruptive and in no way misleading to just leave the text as it is, while noting the error through this footnote.
Tropic of Orange is the first attempt in Asian American writing, and may be the only one still, to reflect on the memory and meaning of internment through a marked, actually hyperbolic, absence of references to Japanese American history, culture, and Redress politics. In place of these staples of Japanese American literature, we are given a marked presence of Mexican American, South American, and African American life and lives, a presence that must also be judged hyperbolic within the genre of what I call a Redress narrative, that is, with a documentary impulse and an assumption that the ethnic/racial materiality of Japanese American bodies, cultural artifacts, social practices, family life, community organizations and activities, and so forth, are necessary to composing a narrative of internment or its aftermath.

As I point out in “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange,” the name “Manzanar Relocation Center” is never actually mentioned; Manzanar, the place, is never explicitly identified as the site of one of the internment camps. The only way internment is technically referenced is through the name “Manzanar Murakami,” which of course is not his birth name but the name he chose for himself when he undertook to be reborn through homelessness and amnesia, via spectacular performance and transmutation of repressed internment memory into an extraordinary musical vision and a visionary musical composition. Before Tropic of Orange, it would have been unthinkable for an Asian American writer to pen an internment narrative without including a single material, historical detail about the camp in question, including its very name. However, the avoidance in Tropic of Orange of the kind of documentary realism that dominates in other internment narratives, even in Perry Miyake’s quasi-science fiction, 21st Century Manzanar (2002), should not be read as a politics or style of magic realism, which is a terminology that I think too many readers uncritically attach to Yamashita’s writing. I prefer to think of her effects as produced through the magic of a certain kind of traditional realism, in the manner of George Eliot—that is to say, a style and representative strategy of tremendous adumbration of nuanced concrete details, rather than the creation of magical, fantastic events or images per se (although of course these do occur in Tropic of Orange).

In fact, Manzanar Murakami’s adoption of the name Manzanar achieves a perfect focus on internment in a way no Redress internment narrative could, no matter how saturated with graphic detail and historical information, because every reference to this character is also an automatic, unavoidable citation of the camp where he was interned, but a citation only. Which is to say, the manner in which Yamashita chose to portray internment is not at all its absence, but rather, its hyperbolic presence embodied as a different kind of presence, rendered through a style more indebted, at the microscopic level of individual word choice and phrasing, to traditional realism than magic realism. The difference that I mark as “Redress” versus “post-Redress” internment memory, is not a difference based on historical time, or literary genre, but on the mode of performance in which internment memory is experienced, evaluated, and represented. Thus, regardless of whether an internment narrative is written or published before or
after the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, or in a style of magic realism or naturalistic realism, the difference between “Redress” and “post-Redress” is the distinction made by Anne Anlin Cheng in *The Melancholy of Race* (2000), a distinction between grief and grievance. Grief is a psychological action and grievance is a political action. Certain aspects of trauma cannot be legislated into recovery. They require other strategies.

Manzanar suffers a nervous breakdown after 1988, in the midst of a thriving career as a surgeon, and thus embodies and acts out the psychic reality of the inadequacy of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act in itself to enable a Japanese American to be at home in the United States. Likewise, Manzanar’s amnesia and voluntary homelessness also expose the suffering hidden beneath Los Angeles’ celebrated multiculturalism and politico-economic importance, which sanctions, or covers over, through the illusion created of the social wellbeing of “Los Angeles” en masse, the physical and psychological homelessness of a large segment of the city’s population. Manzanar’s sudden, inexplicable exit from his life as a surgeon bespeaks a dawning recognition that his very social success may be symptomatic of something ailing him. The feelings that compelled him to leave in the middle of an operation resonate with Kondo’s confession about the undiminished intensity of being always infiltrated by internment memory even fifty years after the end of WWII, that this memory is “in and of the body in ways difficult to describe in words” (*About Face* 9).

Manzanar’s composing and conducting on the Harbor Freeway in view of all the Los Angeles commuters is a grand act of self-indulgence in racial melancholy. Contrary to his medical practice, devoted to the healing of others, Manzanar’s new life is a very “un-Japanese” indulgence in private, internal suffering, a type of behavior that readily evokes the Japanese word *wagamama* (selfish). But at the same time, because Manzanar conceives of his conducting as a recycling of all the recurring yet ephemeral sounds of the city, which are normally perceived only momentarily, if at all, and immediately forgotten or disregarded as useless noise, Manzanar’s music is the expression of a will to bring the existence of all homeless individuals into the range of perception of the comfortably at-home, and to restore to the homeless themselves a psychic sense of at-homeness. In this sense, Manzanar’s daily performance as the Harbor Freeway conductor of the symphony of Los Angeles allies him with the other spectacular performance artist in *Tropic of Orange*, Archangel, whose mission is to bring the global south into the range of perception, into the very private property, of the global north. And for both Manzanar and Archangel, the price for undertaking such unthinkable transgression into the living spaces of economic privilege and cultural hegemony is violent resistance and death. Manzanar’s granddaughter Emi is the first victim in the slaughter of unarmed citizens on the Harbor Freeway, and her lifeless body is the first thing he receives when he finally becomes able to lay down his baton, signaling that moment mentioned earlier when he had finally recaptured a sense of vitality enabling his return to society. When he lays down his baton, symbol of traumatic amnesia and a healing process of grieving, it is replaced by the lifeless hand
of the beloved granddaughter whose identity and relationship to him he is only now finally able to remember.

But long before Emi’s death made their separation irrevocable, she and Manzanar had already been cut off from each other because certain modes of internment memory were blocked or disallowed within public remembering. Manzanar went to the overpass and into homelessness and amnesia to find those non-existent or unsanctioned modes of remembering. And yet, the difficult scene of Manzanar being reunited with Emi only after she dies does not at all undercut the significance of Manzanar’s long years of conducting self-recovery. In the eyes of the public before whom he had stood for so many years, the rightness of Manzanar’s long struggle with disabling hauntedness is applauded in the form of grassroots conductors springing up throughout the city: “He found himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor. On a distant overpass, he could make out the odd mirror of his figure, waving a baton. And beyond that, another homeless person had also taken up the baton. And across the city, on overpasses and street corners, from balconies and park benches, people held branches and pencils, toothbrushes and carrot sticks, and conducted” (239). The rightness of Manzanar’s musical work is also confirmed in his own figure. His dignity, strength, silence, tenderness, and resilience when receiving Emi’s body from her comrade Buzzworm attest to his hard-earned ability to keep carrying, without being destroyed by it, the tremendous pain of what cannot be undone.

Japanese Americans living on the west coast were instructed in 1942 to pack “only what they could carry” when they boarded the buses and trains that shipped them to internment camps.3 Lawson Inada, Patricia Wakida, and William Hohri honed in on the potential counter-memory inscribed in these instructions to “all persons of Japanese ancestry” (Inada 8) when they compiled Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience (2000), a multi-media and multi-genre archive of internment history.4 Indeed, the image of Manzanar receiving Emi’s body from

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3 The following instructions are quoted from Civilian Exclusion Order No. 82, dated May 17, 1942: “All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group” (Inada 9).

4 Inada is the sole official editor of Only What We Could Carry, but it is clear from Wakida’s Preface and Hohri’s Afterword, as well as Inada’s special acknowledgment of Wakida’s contributions in his author’s bio, where all three of them are listed under the heading “About the Editors” (438), that both Wakida and Hohri played a major role in the compilation and conceptualization of the volume. The concluding lines of Hohri’s Afterword recapitulate the volume’s keyword—“carry”—in reference to the Redress movement and its legacy: “We uncovered the hidden history of our wartime trauma, the why and how of the camps, . . . [W]e raised the banner—and the money—and went to Congress and into the courts to revisit and repair our injuries. We realized we could carry much more. And we did” (Inada 399). In her Preface, Wakida recounts “an arduous process of gathering material up and down the valleys and coastal communities of California,” from “dark closets and dusty boxes tucked under beds,” “long telephone conversations,” “libraries and historical societies,” and “published novels, short stories, poems, and memoirs” (Inada xii-xiii).
Buzzworm is surprisingly like one of the iconic images from Redress narratives of internment memory, that of the Issei retaining their dignity in the face of “relocation” as “enemy aliens.” But Manzanar steps into this iconic image only after having made a regular spectacle of himself in the eyes of fellow Japanese Americans, who were shamed by his public performance of pain and by his flamboyant style. Thus, when Manzanar’s figure partakes of the Redress narrative’s iconic image of “dignified Issei” at the moment he steps down from the overpass and out of amnesia, this moment also works against the susceptibility of such imagery to romanticization. Manzanar’s citation of Japanese America’s visual archive of “only what we could carry” is utterly silent, and quite brief, recalling the similar silent brevity of the two dozen words that comprise the novel’s sole and indirect reference to Manzanar Relocation Center through a panoramic image of desert and mountains, not the camp itself (170-71). Likewise, Manzanar’s reception of Emi’s body is rendered in just two sentences in which he doesn’t speak out loud: “Buzzworm stood beneath the overpass and raised Emi’s body like a gift” (257). “Manzanar held on [to the helicopter gurney]. He took her hand in his like old times” (257). Thus, even as Manzanar becomes in his final appearance an Issei grandfather, the silent brevity of this deployment of an iconic image from the Redress narrative genre, together with the open-endedness of Manzanar’s exit from his story, represented through yet another iconic image for a different Asian/American war—his being lifted away from the scene of carnage in a helicopter, accompanied by a fallen “comrade”—all combine to underscore, up to the very end, the difference between Redress and post-Redress narratives of internment memory. Manzanar’s grandfatherly image and his literal return to being a grandfather give way in the final moments of his last chapter to a sustained image of his moving line of vision. Manzanar holds Emi’s hand, but his eyes are directed elsewhere: first looking up at the helicopter lifting him away, then down towards the blossoming of airbags on the Harbor Freeway—“like white poppies in sudden bloom”—set in motion by a rain of bullets (258). Manzanar’s moving line of vision is the primary trope throughout his chapters in Tropic of Orange, for his visual mapping of everything he sees, his seeing everything, and his insistence on the rightness and wellness of wanting to see as much as possible, are what constitute the mode of being through which he worked his way out from a position of absent presence in U.S. society.

**Manzanar Murakami as Sensory Apparatus**

Pleasure. Post-Redress memory. In a nutshell, this is what I learned from the writing of “The Transpacific Gaze in Tropic of Orange.” “Phantom Asian America” in my case was accessed theoretically and materially through the specific site of internment memory, but it signifies any narrative, including far more than Japanese
American internment, and any method of knowing or narrating, that awaits disinter(n)ment\(^5\) from conditions of absent presence.

Acquiring a new perceptual apparatus for reading phantom forms of internment memory was emotional work, which underpinned the more formal intellectual work of, for example, adapting trauma theory to literary textual analysis. Although I referred earlier to this emotional work as the pleasure of reading, such work also includes moments of crisis in my lived experience of Japanese American subjectivity that are not referenced in this essay, including the day in September 1995 when three U.S. servicemen abducted, bound, beat, and raped a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl. That was my unforgettable introduction to the long history of regular acts of violence by the U.S. military against Okinawan civilians, which seems unlikely to end unless one of two radical changes comes to pass: the U.S. military effectively prevents its troops from committing and wanting to commit crimes against civilians, or U.S. bases in Okinawa are abolished.

Writing and teaching war memory in a Japanese university is difficult and draining work. The vast majority of students are Japanese citizens and ethnically Japanese, and they are thus directly implicated in the critiques of national memory I am asking them to undertake, and in the acts of aggression inflicted and suffered by their grandparents’ generation. Their uneasiness, and mine, are no doubt heightened by the fact of my being both American and nikkei (of Japanese ancestry), a condition that visualizes the always present history of war and peace between Japan and the U.S. Carolyn Chung Simpson has demonstrated in *Absent Presence* (2001) that Japanese American internment was formulated and executed through the same matrix of assumptions about race, gender, and nation that were played out in key Cold War events involving Japan, such as the role played in the American imaginary by Japanese war brides, the hibakusha (persons exposed to radiation from the atomic bombings) brought to the U.S. for treatment through the Hiroshima Maidens Project, and the conviction in 1949 of Iva Toguri d’Aquino for treason, for being the “real” Tokyo Rose, despite the fact that the Office of War Information in 1945 had already officially declared “Tokyo Rose” to be “strictly a GI invention,” and in the face of clear evidence that Iva Toguri had been forced to make a living in Japan after she was barred from returning home to California by the outbreak of war, and the fact that she was coerced by her employer, NHK, into broadcasting prepared propaganda (77). The case of Iva Toguri d’Aquino is especially pertinent to *Manzanar* Murakami, for it was the construction of Japanese Americans as an “absent presence” in the U.S. that enabled the American justice system and the public to see an actual woman as the phantom construction known as Tokyo Rose. This fatal blurring of the distinction between a racist construction of a “Jap(anese)” and the embodied life of a Japanese American

\(^5\) The meaningful proximity of “inter” and “intern” has become a common observation. I first encountered it in Stan Yogi, “Ladies Revealed: Uncovering Buried Plots in the Stories of Hisaye Yamamoto and Wakako Yamauchi.”
individual is exactly Manzanar’s struggle, encapsulated in the generic name he, too, is forced to take. Like “Tokyo Rose,” “Manzanar Murakami” signifies the replacement of a unique birth name with a generic place name, and the struggle that must ensue if one refuses to relinquish the potential for subjective agency of the former for the imposed objectification and disenfranchisement of the latter.

Japanese assimilation of “American democratic principles” under the postwar condition of U.S. occupation is perhaps not so different from intra-national, U.S.-based, Model Minority assimilation by Japanese Americans under duress in the postwar period. Indeed, the keyword in the title of John Dower’s magnificent study of postwar Japan is “Embracing Defeat” (1999). Manzanar Murakami probably speaks volumes about how Japanese citizen subjectivities in the present moment continue to be shaped by racial melancholy vis-à-vis the American victory in WWII and the subsequent postwar occupation. A post-Redress narrative might prove useful for re-examining the effects of the official “reversion” of Okinawa to Japanese governance in 1972, and the “end” of U.S. occupation in the rest of Japan twenty years earlier in 1952; it might shed light on longstanding psychic wounds that have not been adequately identified or addressed through political resolutions like declarations of restored sovereignty in governance. But using Manzanar Murakami as a lens on postwar Japanese racial melancholy would not stop there; it would bring the injuries inflicted by Japanese imperialism back home, into the range of Japanese perception. Yamashita’s representation of post-Redress memory is precisely this two-tiered, interactive, critical, “transpacific” gaze, whereby becoming conscious of one’s own racial melancholy is a basis for becoming able to see the racialization of others in which one is inextricably involved, responsible as a fellow citizen for addressing the problem even if not directly complicit in any specific act of racialization and its injurious consequences. Manzanar’s gaze is fundamentally “transpacific” rather than intra-national because it begins as a critical look at the meaning of “recuperation” in the Redress movement, but develops into a critical look at conditions of “redress” across color lines and geo-political borders. As mentioned earlier, he is actually engaged in a duet with Archangel, the other spectacular performance artist in Tropic of Orange, who brings the global south into the field of perception of the global north. Although I have yet to attempt to use Manzanar Murakami in this way, it seems that he could be deployed, via the narrative of post-Redress internment memory, to open up a discussion with students at Meiji University about Japanese imperialism in the mid-20th century, Japanese nationalism today, and the psychology of racial abjection that mutually constructs victims and perpetrators of imperialism and nationalism.

Finally, there is also the issue of the critical apparatus and expressive skills each student brings, or doesn’t, to the subject matter of Japanese/American and inter-Asia war memory. I am speaking not primarily about ESL skills, but analytic and expressive skills in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean, the first languages of nearly all of my students. At the institution where I teach, I am faced with the daunting task, week after week, of
trying to develop the stamina and desire, as well as the communication and interpretive skills, to perform attentive reading and textual analysis. For without some level of these skills and attitudes, any discussion of war memory will be limited to being an ESL activity. But after years of accumulating fatigue in the wake of endless experimentation with reading lists, writing assignments, and discussion formats, my bottom line at present is pleasure, which brings me back to the topic with which I began. *Do I love working with this text? Is it a medium for teaching issues and skills that I am totally committed to teaching?* These two questions are paramount because more often than not, my own pleasure in working with a text is the only thing I can be certain of having accomplished in any given class meeting, and without this pleasure, a week-by-week commitment to teaching anything, let alone critical war memory and critical Asian American studies, would be unimaginable.

The text I teach must provide me with an experience akin to Manzanar’s experience in his Monday chapter, during the time of day called “Traffic Window.” Manzanar relocated himself to the Harbor Freeway overpass, and to the homeless encampments, in order to exist in and through the pleasure of a sensory apparatus:

*Manzanar is so in love with sensory perception and so lovingly rendered in his pleasure that we can almost forget Yamashita is describing a man who has lost his mind and place in society. Beauty, and the feeling of pleasure it affords, is in fact the keynote in the first sentence of Manzanar’s first chapter: “The third movement was excruciatingly beautiful” (33). Nor is it a simplistic or perfectly safe joy; sensory perception is another word for vulnerability. Manzanar is unavoidably bruised in the exercising of an exquisite sensory apparatus because the beauty of vitality is like a beating human heart or the wings of a bird in flight—a powerful engine, but made of soft tissue nonetheless—and so sensation is also “brutal” and “excruciating” even when beauty is being registered on the senses. But if Manzanar is moved by what he sees, he is also moved through an exuberant, incessant desire for sensory perception itself. Manzanar’s responsiveness to the world is the process through which he*
awakens and brings (back) into being a vital sense of being at home in the world, and this capacity and desire for sensory intake of the world is also the basis of imagination, of response-ability to life. To understand Manzanar as a subject of internment memory is inseparable from understanding him as a metaphor and performance of the sensory apparatus. In this latter function and meaning, Manzanar Murakami conducting “Traffic Window” is also a metaphor, and visualization, of the necessity of pleasure in the teaching of texts, separate from any particular themes that are among the reasons for teaching them. The sensory apparatus is the medium of imagination. Imagination is cultivated, among other ways, through loving attention to a writer’s creation of sensory perception through words, not unlike Manzanar’s “coaxing the notes tenderly to brief life, conducting sound into symphony” (35).

Works Cited

6 I am indebted to Elaine Scarry’s Dreaming by the Book (2001) as well as On Beauty and Being Just (1999), for thinking about connections between the sensory apparatus and the reading of poems and stories.


**About the Author**