

Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies 39.2
September 2013: 119-135
DOI: 10.6240/concentric.lit.2013.39.2.08

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*