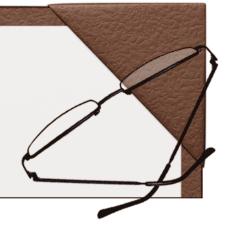


Parliamentary Poet Laureate



POETRY CONNECTION: LINK UP WITH CANADIAN POETRY

Roy Miki (1942 –) was born in Winnipeg but has lived most of his life in Vancouver. He is a professor emeritus at Simon Fraser University and has been very active in the Japanese-Canadian Redress and in significant social events such as "Writing Through Race" and "Truth and Reconciliation." Besides several critical studies and being the founder and editor for many years of *West Coast Line*, he has published his own poetry since the late 70's, his book *Surrender* (2001) winning the 2002 Governor General's Award for poetry. He is a Member of the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia. His current creative practice combines writing and photography.

Poem for discussion:

"A Walk on Granville Island"

From: *Mannequin Rising*New Star Books, 2011

1.

for Rita W

If you were to walk off this landmark pier and hold your pose for a sidelong glance What would it look like on the descent?

Where are the trap

doors that snap shots of the harbour in its comely doldrum?

How to explain to the kids feeding the pigeons the etymological drift of the Arterial Highway?

Look it up in the dream almanac of memorabilia in the lost causes that bewitch the clichéd ambit

There's the still born fancy of one Jack Price (yes Price was his name) who campaigned on the slogan that 'real progress' would entail the removal of all the waters under the bridges and voila so much real estate to boot for jack Price 'False Creek is nothing more than a filthy ditch in the centre of the city'

We could all be skate boarding on False Creek and our civic parties would be free of Dragon Races and regattas of all sorts wouldn t ruin our slumbering condo moment

That viscous wind blown video of pliant asphalt might have been a seawall of the rapt mind

In any case do you remember the lovely Mrs Percy Nye?

She Who in 1891 reported 'False Creek was so quiet on a Sunday we could hear the Indians singing at their services on the reserve as far as our place on English Bay' from our place on English Bay 'we used to sit on the shore and listen'

So let's rendezvous the appellation of muskrats smelts salmon crabs clams the glossary of eco-friendly in the chemical bath of this inlet

Or would you rather wash your hands of this stuff?

2.

for Ayumi K

Where would we be without the sea?

*Likely, not here*Or like, not here

It was the sea carried George Van Couver into English Bay in June of 1792 exactly 300 years after Columbus' historic voyage

English Bay lay in waiting for Couver and his sweet ship June who was descended from a

set of numbers, likely the code for a lucky charm bracelet

Did Couver and Columbus then meet on the seas in a virtual space of mutual refinement? Exactly 300 years is a dead give away for the tags voyage and historic

The question why Couver was born and why in Vancouver of all places is a lacunae in the fold up tale

But listen, mariners charted our globe for us

(Much gratitude

Remade our world from flat to round

(More gratitude

Ushered in the centuries that have given us today's 'global village.'

Now we're getting fusion with the centuries now we're getting baseball teams bowling leagues real estate companies the whole shebang all at once

We mean the sea trade has forged the links that unite the earth's nations in a single marketplace.

Those mariners mapped the seas that joined the nations that sprouted from earth to market

to market to choose a transgenic pig

Sorry not today May of 2010 exactly 97 years after Snauq villagers were uncharted by Couverites on speed

Too much village is infectious was the headline in the daily

For discussion:

- 1. On Wikipedia, look up the following things: George Vancouver in relation to Vancouver City; lacuna in manuscripts; transgenic; etymological drift (under semantic change); Snauq (Senakw); irony. How does this background information help you to understand Miki's poems?
- 2. In what ways do both of these poems discuss people in love with and perhaps duped by propaganda?
- 3. Is Miki in favor of globalization? How does he create an ironic tone about it in both of these poems? Back up your view with as many lines as you can.
- 4. Compare how both poems talk about the treatment of First Nations people.
- 5. Miki includes two historical figures in "If you were to walk": Jack Price and Mrs. Percy Nye. How do they contrast in their attitudes? How does this contrast relate to the guestion at the end of the poem?

Writing prompts:

- 1. Choose a public issue that you are concerned about (it could be the plight of the environment, voter rights, the treatment of a minority, unfairness of public officials or whatever else interests you). Write a page or two of questions about this issue. Then cut up the page so you can experiment with putting the questions in various orders. Use this research to build a poem entirely out of questions.
- 2. Choose a historical narrative about a person or event in your region or neighbourhood. For instance, who were the people whose names got on your streets, highways and towns? Experiment with changing

certain elements of the story, as Miki has done in "Where would we be" (he changes names and blends George Vancouver's story with a nursery rhyme and other narratives). Retell your chosen story in a poem using the most interesting changes you discover.

- 3. Choose a piece of real estate or developer propaganda applying to your region or neighbourhood. Insert the following kinds of material between lines from this propaganda: sights, smells, sounds, tastes, touches, and memories from that area or neighbourhood that show what it means to you. Build a poem from this research.
- 4. Find out who and what was pushed off the land in your neighbourhood or region in order to make way for streets, houses, towns, mines, cities, factories, highways, etc. Build a poem that includes both what's present now and stories or voices of things that were destroyed, excluded or lost as a result of the current streets, towns, factories, etc.
- 5. Choose one of the following phrases from Miki's poems: "a lacunae in the fold up tale," "etymological drift/ of the Arterial Highway," "slumbering condo moment," or "video of pliant asphalt." Rapidly jot down all the things you can think of that this phrase brings to mind. Write quickly, in fragments, paying no attention to grammar, collecting a page or two of ideas, images, memories, words, phrases, rhymes or stories which you associate with the phrase. Build a poem from this research.