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Book Note

Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress, by Jennifer Henderson & Pauline Wakeman (eds)¹

SCOTT FRANKS

AN INTRICATELY CARVED BENTWOOD BOX rests in the first exhibit of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. On loan from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the bentwood box contains the offerings and prayers of residential school survivors and their descendants from across Canada. A braid of sweetgrass rests against each carved panel. Gently lit and protected by glass, the bentwood box is provided little context. Neither the history of the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement nor the text of the 2008 House of Commons apology to Aboriginal peoples is presented. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement at the 2009 G-20 Pittsburgh Summit that Canada has "no history of colonialism" is also absent.² Without this broader context, what does the placement of the bentwood box tell the viewer about human rights, reconciliation, apology, and the politics and culture of redress?

In *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, leading scholars from the humanities, social sciences, and law examine the politics and culture of redress in Canada. Contributors examine the contemporary state's use of social, political, and legal mechanisms to redress human rights violations and other wrongs done to Aboriginal, diasporic, and immigrant communities. Editors Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeman organize "a 'mosaic' of redress cases" according to six discursive themes.³ The editors caution against an approach that

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1. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) 496 pages.
 2. David Ljunggren, "Every G20 Nation wants to be Canada, insists PM," *Reuters* (25 September 2009), online: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>>. For a history of these events, see Eva Mackey, "The Apologizers' Apology" in *supra* note 1, 47.
 3. Jennifer Henderson & Pauline Wakeman, "Introduction" in *supra* note 1, 3 at 18.

reproduces “the dominant logic of multiculturalist pluralism” through a focus on community-specific redress cases.⁴ Rather, a discursive approach critically engages intersecting themes in a multidimensional conversation about the politics and culture of redress in Canada.

In part one, Matt James, Eva Mackey, and Jennifer Henderson examine settler culture and the terrain of reconciliation in Canada. James and Henderson document the state’s framing of redress claims according to nationalist myths of postcolonialism, multicultural diversity, and neoliberal individualism. Mackey interrogates the 2008 federal government apology to Aboriginal peoples and survivors of residential schools. Mackey argues that the apology ignores the necessary connection between Aboriginal culture, land, and resources. In this way, Mackey argues, the apology also ignores how Canadian residential school policy sought to destroy Aboriginal cultures in order to facilitate settler expansion and the expropriation of Aboriginal lands and resources.⁵

In part two, Lily Cho, Dale Turner, and James (Sa’ke’) Youngblood Henderson reflect on the state’s control of citizenship, nationhood, and the law. Cho describes the history of the Chinese head tax redress movement and its competing visions of postcolonial citizenship. Turner and Youngblood Henderson reflect on the contemporary idea of reconciliation described in Mackey’s contribution and propose a stronger, juridical understanding of reconciliation based on Indigenous sovereignty, territory, rights, and constitutionalism.

In part three, Roger I. Simon, Julia Emberley, and Dian Million examine testimony and truth telling in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools in Canada. Simon draws attention to the problematics of listening and reconciliation, and the pedagogical responsibilities of educators and participants in these processes. In part four, Amber Dean and Lindy Ledohowski theorize the affective dimensions of redress claims, including the role of public mourning, grief, and collective memory. Dean explores how power dynamics and racial ideologies shape state sanctioned or permitted public mourning and grief.

In part five, Len Findlay and Anna Carastathis examine the performativity of redress in political theatre and “speech acts,” utterances intended to fulfill a performative or affective function to an audience.⁶ Findlay explores the idea of performativity and rehearsal—the “experimentation, repetition and refinement”

4. *Ibid.*

5. Mackey, “The Apologizer’s Apology,” *supra* note 2 at 50-51.

6. Anna Carastathis, “The Nonperformativity of Reconciliation: The Case of ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ in Quebec” in *supra* note 1, 236 at 238.

of a performance—in the work of Indigenous legal warriors.⁷ Findlay describes the academic and legal work of Indigenous legal warriors—and diplomats, as Youngblood Henderson suggests—to decolonize the colonial control of jurisprudence and lands.⁸

In part six, Roy Miki and Pauline Wakeman explore transnational and global trends in reconciliation, apology, and forgiveness. Wakeman examines the extraordinary rendition of Maher Arar by the United States to Syria and the Canadian government's apology for the role of Canadian officials in Arar's "terrible ordeal."⁹ Wakeman's contribution investigates the state's control and use of social, political, and legal mechanisms in response to historical and contemporary wrongs.

An extensive appendix illustrates the presence of the law in the creation of historical wrongs and provides a source for future scholarship. A wide range of historical wrongs and cases for redress are considered in the collection, including: Aboriginal peoples and residential schools, Acadian deportations, Black Loyalist and Africville injustices, Chinese Canadian immigration restrictions, Indian immigration restrictions and the *Komagata Maru* incident, Ukrainian First World War internment, Italian Second World War internment, Japanese Second World War internment and dislocation, Jewish refugees on the *SS St Louis*, and Doukhobor residential schools. The editors and contributors ask the reader to consider the nature and extent of Canada's "culture of redress" in the context of these and other wrongs.

7. Len Findlay, "Redress Rehearsals: Legal Warrior, COSMOSQUAW, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards" in *supra* note 1, 217 at 218-20.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Pauline Wakeman, "Rendition and Redress: Maher Arar, Apology, Exceptionality" in *supra* note 1, 278 at 284.

