“What Do I Remember of the Evacuation” by Joy Kogawa

What do I remember of the evacuation?

I remember my father telling Tim and me

About the mountains and the train

And the excitement of going on a trip.

What do I remember of the evacuation:

I remember my mother wrapping

A blanket around me and my

Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy

Though I was so excited I couldn’t sleep

(I hear there were people herded

Into the Hastings Park like cattle.

Families were made to move in two hours

Abandoning everything, leaving pets

And possessions at gun point.

I hear families were broken up

Men were forced to work. I heard

It whispered late at night

That there was suffering) and

I missed my dolls.

What do I remember of the evacuation?

I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker

Who still live in Vancouver

And who did what they could

And loved the children and who gave me

A puzzle to play with on the train.

And I remember the mountains and I was

Six years old and I swear I saw a giant

Gulliver of Gulliver’s Travels scanning the horizon

And when I told my mother she believed it too

And I remember how careful my parents were

Not to bruise us with bitterness

And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life

Who said “Don’t insult me” when I

Proudly wrote my name in Japanese

And time flew the Union Jack

When the war was over but Lorraine

And my friends spat on us anyway

And I prayed to the God who loves

All the children in his sight

That I might be white.

“equal opportunity” by Jim Wong-Chu

in early canada

when railways were highways

each stop brought new opportunities

there was a rule

the chinese could only ride

the last two cars

of the trains

that is

until a train derailed

killing all those

in front

(the chinese erected an altar and thanked buddha)

a new rule was made

the Chinese must ride

the front two cars

of the trains

that is

until another accident

claimed everyone

in the back

(the chinese erected an altar and thanked buddha)

after much debate

common sense prevailed

the chinese are now allowed

to sit anywhere

on any train